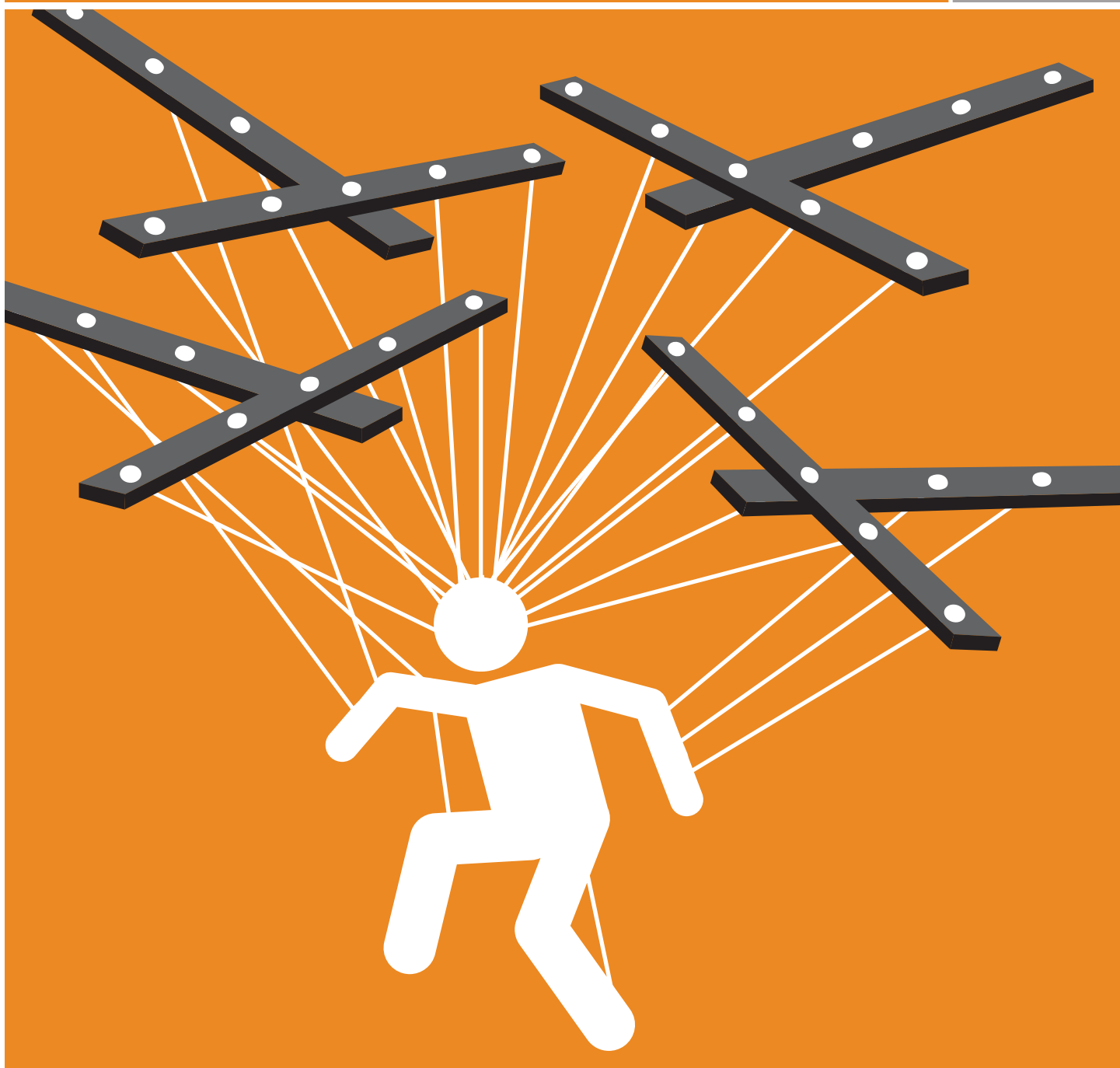# Integrating Social Norms into Anti-Corruption and Accountability Programming

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CORRUPTION, JUSTICE AND LEGITIMACY PROGRAM

The Learning Series

Version 1

Integrating Social Norms into Anti-Corruption and Accountability Programming

The Learning Series

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Corruption in Fragile States Blog

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms

CJL   Corruption, Justice & Legitimacy Program

M&E   Monitoring and Evaluation

About the Authors

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Cheyanne Scharbatke-Church is a practitioner-scholar with a lifelong interest in governance processes that have run amok. She has significant experience in peacebuilding, governance, anti-corruption, evaluation and learning across the Balkans, West and East Africa. She currently serves as the Executive Director of Besa Global, where she also co-leads the Corruption, Justice & Legitimacy (CJL) Program. In this capacity she has pioneered the application of systems thinking to corruption analysis and the role of social norms as a driver of corrupt practices. Cheyanne taught on the intersection of conflict and corruption as well as program design, monitoring and evaluation in fragile contexts at the Fletcher School, Tufts University for 15 years. Prior to this, as the first Director of Evaluation for Search for Common Ground she developed the organisation's initial strategy to institutionalize an evidence and learning culture and practice. Her interest in understanding peacebuilding effectiveness started during her role as the Director of Policy & Evaluation at INCORE, University of Ulster. She has had the privilege of working in an advisory capacity with a range of organizations such as ABA/ROLI, CDA, ICRC, IDRC, UN Peacebuilding Fund and the US State Department. She can be commonly found in the Canadian Rockies with her fierce daughters and gem of a husband.

DIANA CHIGAS

Diana Chigas is Co-Director of the Corruption, Justice and Legitimacy (CJL) Program at Besa Global, where she leads the work streams on the intersectional (i.e. gender, faith) nature of social norms as they relate to corruption and anti-corruption in places of conflict. She has worked with governmental, non-governmental and inter-governmental partners in Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa as well as Europe and the US to conduct corruption analysis and support program design and monitoring and evaluation. Prior to joining CJL, Diana co-led the Reflecting on Peace Practice project at CDA. She has worked for 25 years as a facilitator and consultant in negotiation and peacebuilding processes, as well as an advisor and evaluator of social change programming in conflict-affected countries, including in the Balkans, East Africa, El Salvador, and Cyprus, as well as with organizations such as the OSCE and the United Nations. Diana also holds a position as a Professor of the Practice of International Negotiation and Conflict Resolution at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Diana received her JD from Harvard Law School and MALD from the Fletcher School at Tufts University.
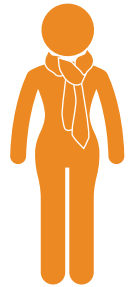
1 Introduction
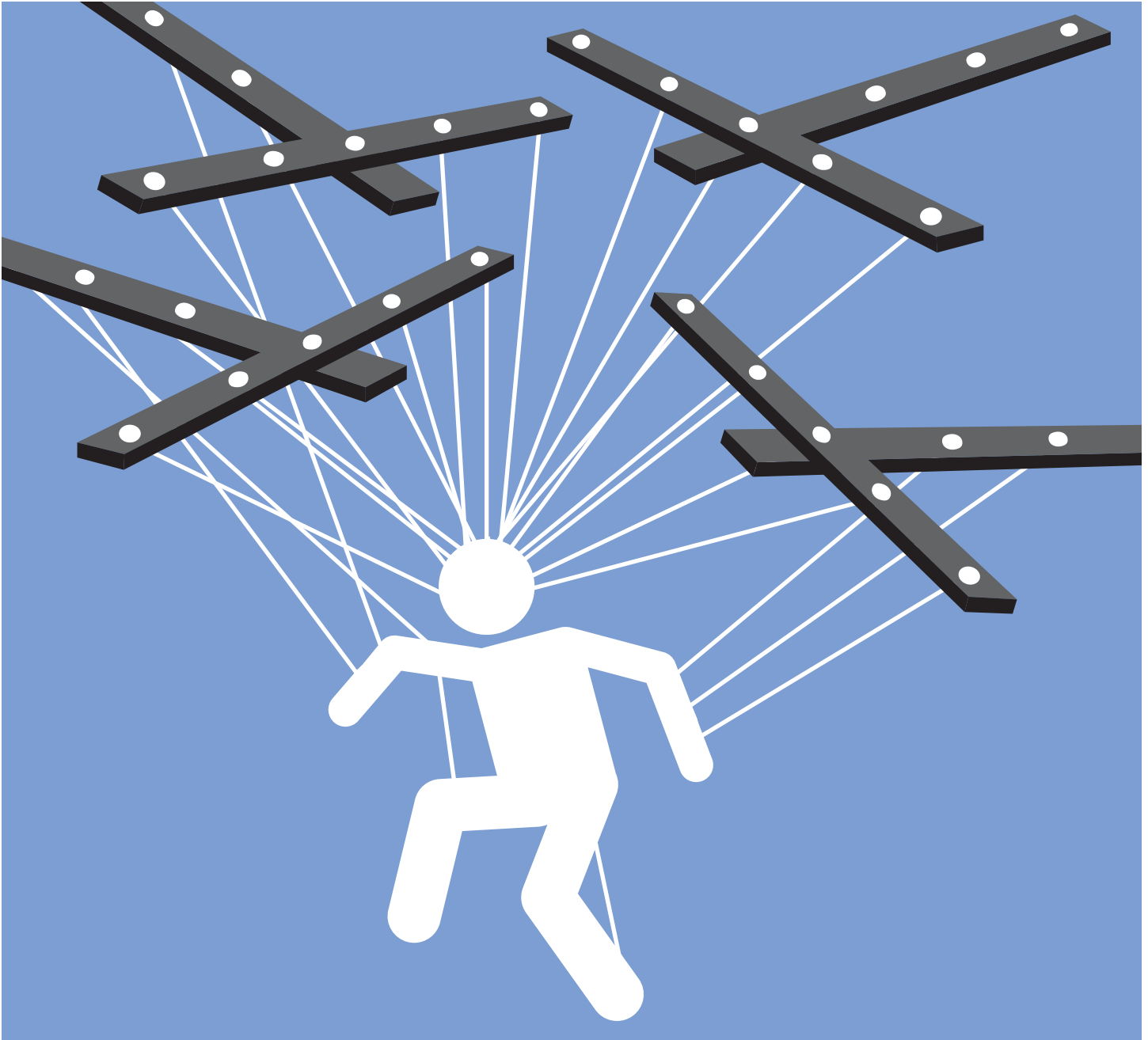
Integrating Social Norms into Anti-Corruption and Accountability Programming

Version 1

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Introduction

The idea that social pressure can drive corrupt practices comes as no surprise to those with experience working in contexts of endemic corruption. Stories of familial demands, peer pressure and community shaming — all classic signals of social norms at work — are abundant. They are so pervasive that, in some contexts, proverbs have emerged that capture the expectations with surprising lucidity, for example: A man must "eateth where he worketh" in Uganda[1], "*kula uliwe*" in Tanzania (in order to eat you should allow others to eat from you)[2] or "*papaya servida, papaya partida*" in Colombia (one must seize opportunities when they are presented regardless of the ethics or legality).[3]

Eateth where you worketh　　**Allow others to eat from you**　　**Seize opportunities**

The anti-corruption field is showing increasing interest in understanding how social norms drive corrupt practices and block anti-corruption action. This interest stems from the very real need to close the 'results gap' that has plagued so many conventional anti-corruption mechanisms, from laws, compliance standards, and oversight and enforcement processes, to codes of conduct, e-government, media investigations, etc. In the words of one expert, "significantly and sustainably reducing corruption has proved extraordinarily difficult."[4] We believe that social norms, where contextually relevant, may offer the field a tangible way not only to improve results, but also to increase the durability of those results.

Believing that **the field should engage** with social norms is a different matter from **knowing how to do it.** How does one know if social norms are an active contributor to the problem? How does one integrate social norms identification into corruption analysis? Which approaches work to shift social norms? What is the best way to integrate social norms change into a multi-faceted program? How should one monitor and evaluate progress? How should one anticipate, track and mitigate against backlash?
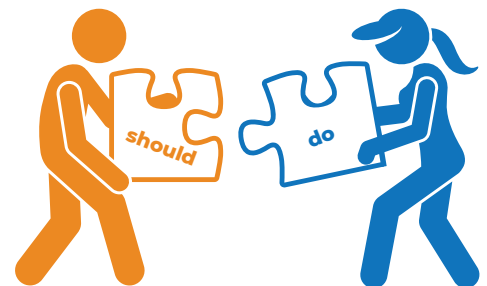
The purpose of the Integrating Social Norms into Anti-Corruption and Accountability Programming Learning Series is to **fill these gaps in know-how**.

1. What Are Social Norms?

Social norms are mutual expectations about the right way to behave within a group. These mutual expectations represent what is accepted as appropriate and typical behavior for that group in a particular context. To be mutual, the expectations must flow both ways within the group — between people who matter to each other.[5] Mutual expectations are made up of two components: descriptive and injunctive norms.

DESCRIPTIVE NORMS	INJUNCTIVE NORMS
What we believe **other people do**	What we believe other people **think we should do**
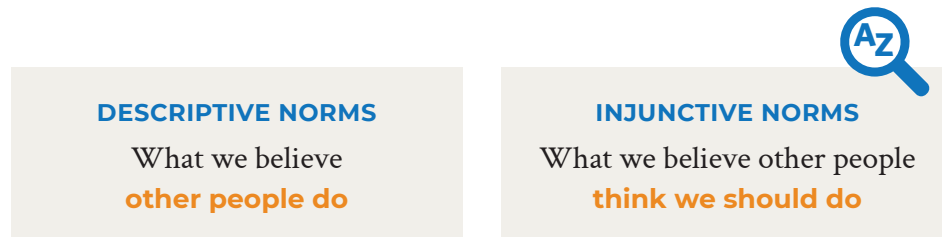
For social norms, 'groups' consist of people who identify with or are important to one another in some way and among whom mutual expectations about appropriate behavior are generated and maintained. This means the group's perceptions of a specific situation or behavior need to matter to the person engaging in the behavior — in other words, the person needs to care about the perspectives of the people in the group, regardless of whether there is a direct personal relationship. This is often called the 'Reference Group'.

Individuals comply with social norms because behaving in the expected manner generates rewards (i.e. positive reinforcement like social recognition), which builds a sense of esteem and belonging. Alternatively, noncompliance leads to punishment (i.e. negative social sanction like disapproval, rejection or embarrassment) that they want to avoid. The influence of these rewards and punishments ranges in strength and may even exist only in the minds of individuals.

SOCIAL NORMS:

MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS

BELIEFS about what others **DO.**

BELIEFS about what others **THINK** we should do.

REWARDS & PUNISHMENTS
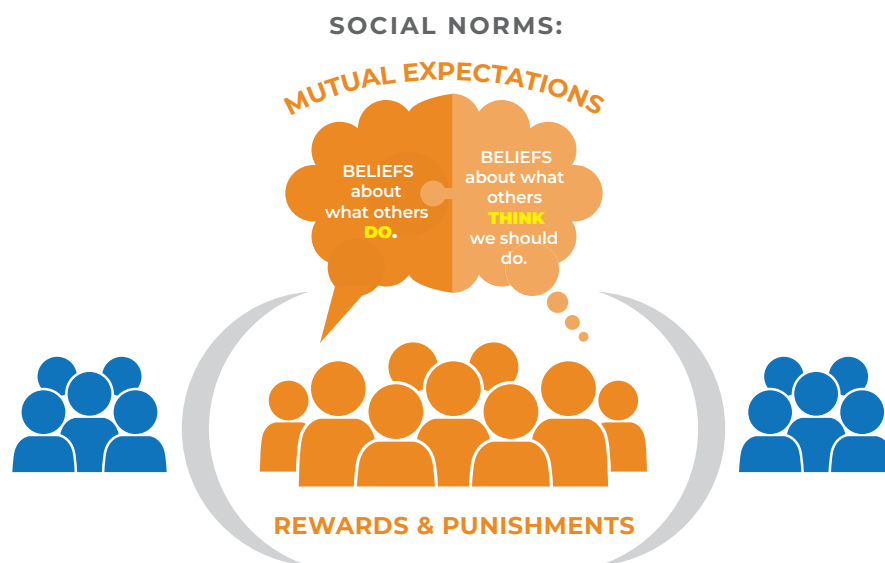
Using sexual corruption as an example, Table 1 identifies a possible social norm driving this behavior and unpacks its various components to illustrate these concepts.

TABLE 1: COMPONENTS OF A SOCIAL NORM[6]

Behavior
Male Departmental Heads trade career advancement for sex with women.

Social Norm
Male Departmental Heads within the municipality expect each other to demand sexual favors from junior female staff in exchange for a promotion.

Descriptive Norm:	Injunctive Norm:
What we see or believe others typically do	What we think others expect us to do/what they think is the appropriate thing to do
"My male colleagues all joke about the 'price' the women in their department paid for their promotion."	*"My male colleagues expect me to exchange promotions for sex. They comment on different female members of my team and what I could 'charge' them. When I do promote a woman, my peers always assume I got sex in return."*

Reference Group
The group is made up of the top leadership within each of the departments of the municipality. These men have all worked within the municipal government for several years and know each other well. As a small group, they interact regularly in their professional capacities, but also maintain personal relationships through, for example, informal lunches and activities outside of the workplace.

Rewards & Punishments

The rewards: "When I go along with the jokes and assumptions, my colleagues slap me on the back, laugh and nod knowingly. I am one of them." This quotation suggests that compliance with the norm creates a sense of belonging and camaraderie within the group.

The punishments: "But when I suggest that this is not right, that this woman is good at her job and deserves to be promoted, they get quiet. They ask me if someone is causing me problems and tell me it is okay. I don't have to pretend that she is the most qualified. Or they joke that I am not man enough for that woman." As this quote illustrates, noncompliance with the expectations of group members is received with negative mocking that challenges one's masculinity. The position within the group and reputation as a man are harmed by taking this action.

2. The Learning Series

The Series curates the Corruption, Justice & Legitimacy (CJL) Program's lessons learned from collaborating with big and small organizations on the integration of social norms into programming. Lessons are in the form of Do's and Don'ts aimed at practitioners. They reflect all stages of the program cycle — from the organizational preparation needed to engage in effective social norms change to corruption analysis, social norms diagnosis, program design, and monitoring and evaluation.

The Series will be updated and expanded as our learning evolves, making it a living document. As each chapter is completed, it will be published online so that the latest material is available in a timely manner.

A LIVING DOCUMENT

The Series will evolve along with our learning and practice. We will add new chapters and refine and remove others as we continue to work with partners.

Our work has been in contexts where corruption is **endemic** (also called 'systemic') and often fragile or affected by conflict. In these contexts, corruption is not a series of one-off opportunistic transactions between individuals acting for private gain — even if the number of transactions or individuals involved is large. Rather, endemic corruption is part of a resilient system. To put it simply, corruption is **not an exception** to the norm — it **is the norm.** It is the way things are done. While social norms may play a role in corrupt practices in any context, in places of endemic corruption — especially where there is conflict — they tend to play an outsized role, as they are often critical to people's physical, political, social or economic survival.[7]

Where Do These Lessons Come From?

The do's and don'ts are a synthesis of lessons from our experiences across several processes.

Working with Organizations: CJL has had the privilege of working with several dynamic teams to test approaches to integrating social norms into programming. While our initial work was predominately in sub-Saharan Africa, the experience base for this series now also draws on work in Jordan, the Philippines and the West Bank.

OUR THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS:

- Accountability Lab: Nigeria & South Africa
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- Policy Innovation Centre, Nigeria
- Regional Dialogue, Uzbekistan
- RTI International

- Strengthening Uganda's Anti-Corruption Response Facility (SUGAR)
- The Hague Academy
- The USAID/Philippines Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans, and Landscapes (SIBOL) activity
- Transparency International, Madagascar

Our experiential learning to date has been in the context of anti-corruption or governance programming. However, through the course of The Series, we will highlight how these lessons are also applicable to development, humanitarian or peacebuilding institutions addressing corruption that is acting as a barrier to their outcomes.

Reflective Practice: The lessons are based on a process of reflective practice with partners and within the CJL team. Sometimes the lessons reflect successes — things that we have tried and have worked well. Equally often, however, they are lessons drawn from things that did not work. Where possible we have reshaped these experiences into 'do statements' to make them more actionable. This has required our team to extrapolate our best thinking about what should be done to address the gap. As we gain more experience, we will improve the guidance offered.

Research-to-Practice Translation: We also draw on the limited, but excellent, work that has been done by other colleagues who have rigorously evaluated their social norms intervention experiments in the anti-corruption field,[8] as well as those in other sectors (e.g. domestic violence, reproductive health) who have pioneered addressing social norms as a catalyst for behavior change. Some of those practices are transferable to anti-corruption and governance work, but some need to be modified, and others are less suited.

A Roadmap

This chapter outlines the four-step social norms integration process as the foundation on which the rest of The Series is based. Chapter 2 looks at the lessons we've learned at the organizational level. This includes a deeper dive into the similarities and differences between gender and social norms, to help those with gender transformation expertise self-assess the applicability of their skillset in this area. Finally, we offer a Glossary of key concepts used throughout The Series.

All the chapters use a common structure for ease of reference, but also to ensure that practical application remains at the forefront of the process. Each chapter covers:

| WHAT?	SO WHAT?	NOW WHAT?
What we have learned	Why the lesson matters	Where we need to go from here
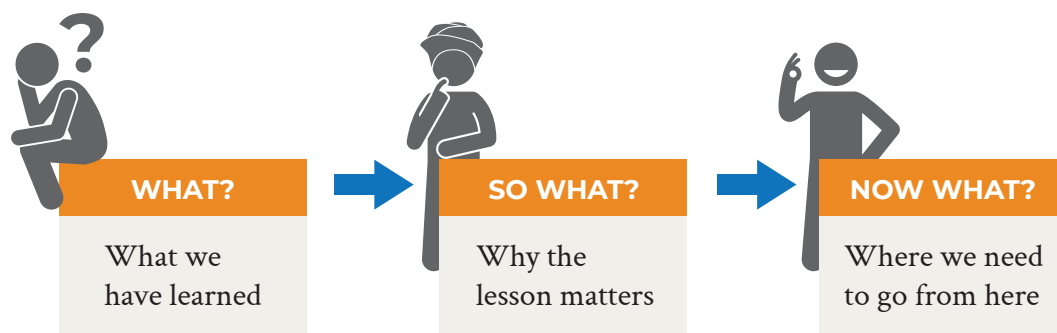
Running throughout the chapters will be reflections on the role of gender as well as other identities where there is experience to draw on.

Looking ahead, our next chapter will focus on the lessons we've learned from identifying corrupt behaviors and the social norms that drive them.

3. An Overview of the Social Norms Integration Process

The simplicity of the idea that social norms impact behavior is beguiling. It creates an expectation that integrating norms change into a program will be just as simple. And while not as difficult as astrophysics, it does require a multi-step process implemented by teams with a sufficient blend of social norms competency, contextually grounded experience and expertise in context analysis and program design.

Before we lay out the process, a quick word on why we are talking about 'integrating' social norms into a project. Habitual corrupt practices are rarely caused by one thing. They are driven and enabled by a multitude of factors other than social norms, ranging from flawed procedures to extreme need, patron-client expectations, and inconsistent law enforcement, among others. Our belief is that focusing solely on the social norms that drive a behavior would be insufficient to create a sustainable change in the corrupt practice. Instead, we think of multi-faceted programs that address strategic combinations of drivers and enablers, with social norms being one possible element.
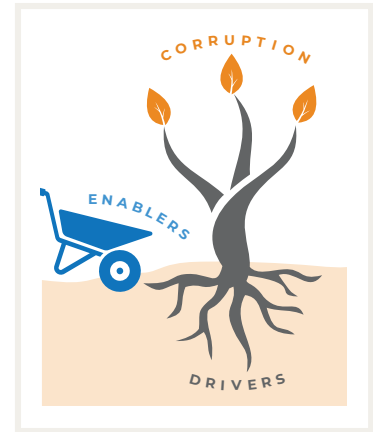
If you are new to our work, it may be helpful to jump to our **Glossary of Key Concepts.** All of the underlined words in the Learning Series are explained in greater detail in the Glossary. .

A Four-Step Process

We follow a four-step process to integrate social norms change into programming. It can be used in conjunction with a new program design, or it can be used to identify how to integrate social norms into an ongoing anti-corruption program. If there is sufficient time left in the program to implement the social norms change component, there may be benefits to having a program running before initiating this process. For instance, starting this process after good relationships have been established within a target institution may make accessing the right people for the diagnostic and gaining good information much easier.

❶ **Corruption analysis.** The first step is a corruption analysis that identifies *specific* patterns of behavior of concern and explores what drives and enables those behaviors in that context.[9] In anti-corruption, these habitual behaviors are generally thought of as corrupt practices (e.g. charging a fee for free services, demanding sex for grades), but can also be commonly practiced behaviors that obstruct the implementation of accountability or transparency measures. When seeking to address patterns of behavior, you first need to

understand all the drivers and enablers so that you can decide whether social norms are important to address at all, and, if so, which ones?
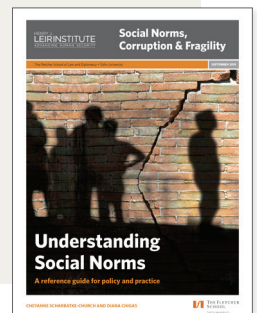
2 **Social norms diagnosis.** Where there are indications that social pressure or expectations may be driving commonly occurring corrupt practices, or blocking efforts to deal with them, a deeper diagnostic is the next step. The diagnostic confirms the specific expectations of the norm, namely: what we think others typically do (descriptive norm), and what we think others think we should do (injunctive norm). It also maps the reference group and assesses rewards for compliance and punishments for breaching the norm. Having data on the component parts of a social norm is key to understanding the best way to change it as well as how to mitigate potential harm to participants.

3 **Design social norms change strategy.** This step involves determining the best strategy to change norms, as one part of a theory of change that addresses several different factors, to shift the pattern of behavior in question. Many of the tools and activities used in social norms change are familiar to development and anti-corruption practitioners, including capacity building, empowerment, awareness campaigns, dialogue, etc. However, decisions about which tools to use, in which combination, and how to adapt them to address the particularities of social norms change can be the difference between successful and ineffective programming. The requisite nuanced understanding of how these common tools and approaches need to be adapted to address the mutual expectations at the root of the social norm comes from the social norms diagnosis.

4 **Monitoring, evaluation and adaptation.** Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) provide the data to inform how to adapt your program to generate greater, more sustainable results as well as to ascertain whether mitigation measures to protect participants against backlash are effective. It is wise to assume that program adaptation will be needed, given the propensity of reference groups to punish those who do not conform to the norm, and the currently limited knowledge base about social norms change relevant to corruption.

M&E of social norms change is not as straight-forward as it is for many other issues in the greater development field. First, tracking changes in behaviors or attitudes is not suffi-cient, as these do not necessarily mean there have been changes in the underlying social norm. Second, assessing social norms is not tracking changes in just one thing (like a behavior or a particular attitude), but rather in multiple components of the norm. This means that social norms-specific indicators and M&E processes need to be developed, and their results integrated into program decision-mak-ing.[10] The good news is that the social norms diagnostic can also serve as the M&E baseline.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For a deeper dive into social norms and their relationship with corruption, we recommend CJL's *Understanding Social Norms: A Reference Guide for Policy and Practice.* This publication explains the importance of social norms to corruption, what social norms are, and how they influence corrupt behaviors.

FOUR-STEP PROCESS

1 **Corruption analysis**

2 **Social norms diagnosis**

4 **Monitoring, evaluation and adaptation**

3 **Design social norms change strategy**

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