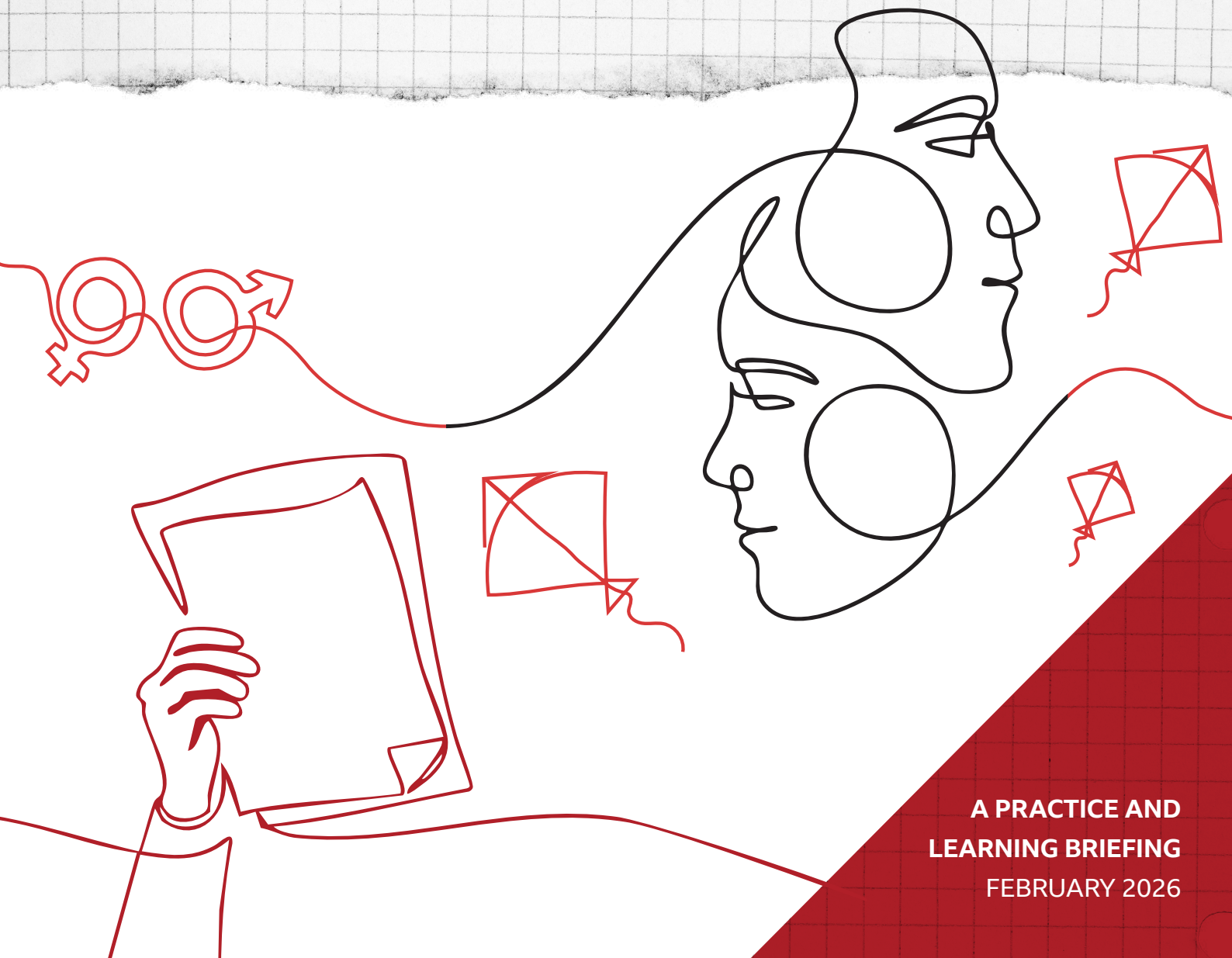
BBC MEDIA ACTION

Using media and communication to support social norms change:

Flip the script



A PRACTICE AND LEARNING BRIEFING

FEBRUARY 2026

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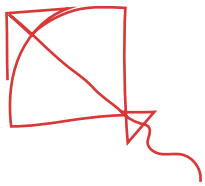
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Introduction



BBC Media Action operates primarily in low-resource and conflict-affected contexts to influence social and behaviour change (SBC) and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.[1] All programmes are grounded in behavioural theory and shaped by the voices and lived experiences of affected individuals and communities to ensure authenticity and impact.

Historically, programmes aiming to change social behaviour have focused on individual knowledge, attitudes and practice. Increasingly, BBC Media Action has recognised and taken steps to address the important role of social and gender norms in dictating collective behaviour.

This brief draws on BBC Media Action's learning from social norms work conducted across diverse and fragile cultural and geographic contexts. Supported by academic evidence, it is intended for researchers and practitioners designing norms-focused media programming. The objective is to build knowledge, inform future interventions, and recommend areas for further exploration in this field. The focus is on how media can more effectively influence collective behaviour – by understanding norms, designing content that sparks reflection and supporting the media ecosystem.

This brief complements a broader learning and practice briefing on gender equality.[2] It uses case studies* to illustrate effective norm-shifting approaches and corresponding insights are organised into the following five sections (click to read more):

SECTION 1 The importance of social norms and media's role in shifting them

SECTION 2 Designing programmes for norms shifts

SECTION 3 Developing media and communication content for norms shifts

SECTION 4 Supporting changes in the media sector for sustained norms shifts

SECTION 5 Areas for future exploration

[1] https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/

[2] Advancing gender equality through media and communication

* Information about research for the case studies and project examples cited in the document are on pages 26-27.

Section 1

The importance of social norms and media's role in shifting them

Definitions used for the purpose of this brief and their source are identified below:

> "**Social norms** are unwritten 'rules' governing behaviour shared by members of a given group or society. They are informal, often implicit, rules that most people accept and abide by. In contrast to individually held attitudes or beliefs, a social norm is defined by beliefs that are shared about a behaviour or practice."

Source: Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change (n.d.) How and Why Norms Matter for Sustainable Development[3]

> "**Gender norms** are a sub-set of social norms. They describe how we are expected to behave as a result of the way we or others identify our gender. In most contexts, gender norms are framed in binary terms (female and male) and erase non-binary or gender-fluid identities… Gender norms often reflect and reinforce unequal gender relations."

Source: ALIGN Platform[4]

Many define the difference for descriptive and injunctive norms.

> **Descriptive norms** are "what people in a group believe is typical, that is, their perceptions of typical behaviour or expectations about what people do."

Source: Alight Platform[5]

> **Injunctive norms** are "what people in a group believe is appropriate, that is, their perceptions of what others consider appropriate, or expectations about what people should do."

Source: ALIGN Platform[6]

BBC Media Action considers it useful to distinguish functional and deeply rooted norms for designing entertainment media. Particularly when designing shorter term interventions.

> **Functional norms** are defined as "immediate, situational rules that influence what people do day-to-day."

Source: University of California San Diego 2025 (hereafter referred to as UCSD evidence review)[7]

> **Deeply rooted norms** referred to as 'foundation norms' or 'meta-norms'. "Evidence suggests that deeply rooted norms help sustain a broader system of functional norms that inform daily actions. These deeper norms may fall into broad categories like gender ideology, authority, or protection. While

[3] Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change (n.d.) ALIGN Platform, How and why social norms matter for sustainable development

[4] https://www.alignplatform.org/about-norms

[5] ALIGN Platform, 2020, The Social Norms Exploration Tool (SNET).

[6] Ibid.

[7] State of the Evidence Effects of Social Norms on Health and Livelihood Outcomes for Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, UCSD 2025. Adapted from Social Norms Atlas, 2021 ALIGN Platform.

functional norms may be more feasible to shift in the short term, these foundational norms often require longer-term efforts and may resist change without broader cultural or structural transformation."

Source: UCSD 2025[8]

Dynamic social norms convey how collective behaviour is changing, motivating people to align with emerging trends and anticipate future social standards.

Source: Research Gate[9]

Reference groups, or referents are networks of people with whom a person identifies and to whom they compare themselves. These are the people whose opinion or behaviour matters to an individual for a particular behaviour, belief, or norm and within a certain context. Referents therefore serve to inform a person's ideas about what is socially acceptable.

Source: Social Norms Lexicon IRH[10]

Gender transformative "programmes [that] specifically aim to challenge or transform unequal gender and power relations, promoting equality in addition to their specific programme outcomes. Gender transformative programmes typically include participatory processes that foster critical and personal reflection about gender roles, norms, and inequalities; promote positive, more equitable behaviours and norms; and where possible, aim to transform the underlying norms, structures, and policies that sustain inequality."

Source: Prevention Collaborative[11]

Please refer to ALIGN Platforms Social Norms Exploration Tool (SNET) and Social Norms Lexicon – Institute for Reproductive health for further definitions and descriptions of wider terms such as attitude and behaviour.[12]

Without addressing the social norms that sustain inequity – such as gender roles, power hierarchies or stigmas – social, political and economic progress is likely to remain constrained.

Shifting social norms is a complex often long-term process that is rarely linear. Media has a clear role in highlighting, shaping and disrupting social and gender norms.

Regular exposure via trusted and credible media can contribute to shifting discriminatory social norms at scale because, like those norms, it can operate and influence across all levels of society.

Development practitioners increasingly recognise that SBC interventions that do not integrate social norms into design often achieve limited impact – either by reducing effectiveness on targeted outcomes or by missing broader, group-level change.

For example, family planning programmes that focus solely on individual knowledge and attitudes without addressing gender norms around male decision-making often fail to achieve sustained contraceptive uptake, even when awareness improves.[13] Similarly, handwashing initiatives that rely on hygiene messaging without tackling community norms – such as perceptions of water scarcity or collective expectations – frequently see behaviour revert after project funding ends, highlighting the need for norm-sensitive design.[14]

[8] Ibid.

[9] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320115570_Dynamic_Norms_Promote_Sustainable_Behavior_Even_if_It_Is_Counternormative; https://lifestyle.sustainability-directory.com/term/dynamic-norms/#:~:text=Academic,a%20minority%20of%20a%20population

[10] Social Norms Lexicon – Institute for Reproductive Health

[11] Prevention Collaborative. Date accessed 20/01/2026

[12] https://www.alignplatform.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/social_norms_exploration_tool_snet.pdf

[13] Breakthrough AXTION (n.d.) *Using Social & Behavior Change To Improve Family Planning Outcomes*; Gender norms and family planning decision-making in Tanzania: A qualitative study | Schuler | Journal of Public Health in Africa

[14] USAID (2021) *Social and Behavior Change for Water Security, Sanitation and Hygiene*. Water and Development Technical Brief 10.

Section 2
Designing programmes for norms shifts

2.1 Understanding norms to inform project design

BBC Media Action's approach to identifying, understanding and measuring social norms draws on learning from established frameworks and practical experience to ensure that its interventions are both informed by best practice and contextually grounded. It harnesses learning from academic research-based frameworks such as the Social Norms Curriculum.[15] It also uses tools and guidance from the Social Norms Exploration Tool (SNET) developed by the Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University,[16] CARE's Social Norms Analysis Plot, and resources developed by leading theorists in the field.

Research approach

To build a comprehensive picture of how social norms are formed and maintained, and how media interventions can influence them, BBC Media Action conducts research using a mix of desk research and qualitative, quantitative and participatory research techniques:

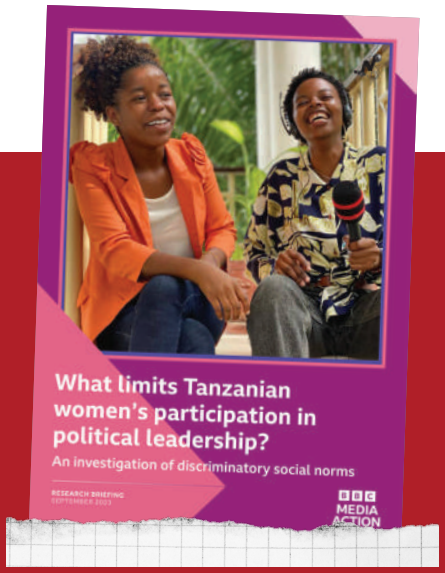
- **Desk research** – (e.g., internal findings and literature reviews) – to identify drivers of norms and opportunities for deeper investigation and scalable interventions
- **Qualitative methods** – (e.g., focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews (IDIs) and key informant interviews (KIIs)) – to uncover beliefs, expectations, and social pressures shaping behaviour
- **Participatory tools** – (e.g., community mapping, problem tree analysis and vignettes) – to explore sensitive topics and reveal how norms operate
- **Social network analysis** to map reference groups and networks that reinforce norms
- **Quantitative surveys** to measure the prevalence of specific norms and how norm shifting interventions work

[15] https://www.irh.org/social-norms-training-curriculum/

[16] https://www.alignplatform.org/resources/applying-theory-practice-cares-journey-piloting-social-norms-measures-gender-programming

Case Studies

The following are brief descriptions of the use of:



A. Vignettes (storytelling) to explore a sensitive topic

Where: Tanzania.

Focus: Understand gender norms that inhibit women's political participation and leadership (2023–2024).[17]

Approach: Participants listened to scenarios of women of various ages standing for political and leadership positions and then voiced their thoughts on these, enabling them to talk freely about sensitive issues. This revealed patriarchal norms that inhibit women's participation in political leadership, such as perceptions that they should act as nurturers and caretakers, not decision-makers.

Outcome: Findings informed the *Niambie* (Tell Me) radio and social media project, and themes in other projects addressing women's political participation in Tanzania. One example was to build on areas where women have shown strong leadership (such as in churches, social groups and mosques) to encourage women's and girls' participation in political leadership.

B. Participatory, peer-led approach in low-resource settings

Where: Sierra Leone.

Focus: Investigate social and gender norms around the use of, and access to, contraceptives and adolescent girls and young women's (AGYW) sexual and reproductive health (2024).[18]

Approach: Recruited trained young people from three districts (Pujehun, Koinadugu and Freetown) to use approaches such as the Problem Tree to leverage their deep understanding of the context.

Outcome: Findings highlight the contradiction between knowledge and behaviour, and between descriptive and injunctive norms. Accessing and using contraception is seen as a woman's responsibility. Recommendations include normalising sex for unmarried adolescents and youth, so that it can be talked about; strengthening the already nascent idea that contraception is a marker of education, because education is aspirational; and using media to provide accurate, balanced information.

C. Addressing functional norms in humanitarian contexts[19]

Where: Bangladesh.

Focus: Understand how gender norms contribute to the acceptance of gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage and sexual abuse.

Approach: Qualitative research (using storytelling in FGDs, IDIs and KIIs) with Rohingya people in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Outcome: Findings that GBV is often seen as normal or justified informed a radio drama to raise awareness and encourage discussion about these issues. Carefully crafted positive deviants in the drama (Hear Me Too) demonstrate achievable change in functional norms. In one scene, a man took care of and cooked for his wife when she was sick. This motivated other male audiences to emulate his behaviour, despite social norms that women are caregivers and responsible for household chores.

[17] BBC Media Action (2023) *What limits Tanzanian women's participation in political leadership? An investigation of discriminatory social norms*. Research briefing.

[18] BBC Media Action (2026) *Understanding norms that influence use and uptake of contraceptives by young people in Sierra Leone*.

[19] Multiple sources: BBC Media Action (2018) *Violence against women within the Rohingya community: Prevalence, reasons and implications for communication*. Research briefing; UCSD (n.d.); *Shaping Narratives, Shifting Norms: Evidence on Social Norms for Adolescent Girls' and Young Women's Well-Being.*

Case Studies

D. Mixed method norm diagnosis approach

Where: India.

Focus: Understand the intersection of gender norms and digital use and access among young girls and adolescents.

Approach: Mixed methods using immersion sessions, large-scale quantitative surveys, qualitative enquiry to explore deep cultural issues, segmenting participants by age and gender.[20]

Outcome: Identified that young men are the most regressive demographic about gender roles but have progressive digital attitudes, providing an entry point for interventions and a lever for change.



2.2 Engaging and creating content for audiences and reference groups

Media interventions designed to drive normative changes need to engage influential reference groups like families, peers, elders and religious leaders. The opinions and behaviours of these groups shape community norms, making them critical in either enforcing existing norms or endorsing new ones. For example, media interventions can include content that show reference groups and key influencers role modelling new norms.

BBC Media Action's Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER)[21] project in Sierra Leone (2019–2023) focused on supporting adolescent school dropouts to return to education by addressing barriers such as gender discrimination and early marriage.

The project targeted caregivers and community stakeholders through a radio drama *Kotoku Baray* (Open Secret) and factual show *Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap* (When the Girl Child Stands). It also facilitated community discussions and involved influencers in scriptwriting and outreach activities. The endline evaluation found that the radio programmes encouraged more frequent discussion of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues and actions in support of girls' education.

However, persistent gender roles such as girls doing domestic chores were harder to shift, showing that more targeted approaches focused on shifting gender stereotypes are needed.



Critical to involving reference groups is considering particularly how to engage men and boys in gender-transformative work. BBC Media Action's project in Somalia (2018–2021)[22] addressed gender norms around women working outside the home by engaging men as allies. With local partners, the project involved

[20] BBC Media Action (2024) *How do gender norms affect digital use amongst young women from small towns in India?* Insight brief.
[21] BBC Media Action (2023) https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/documents/eager-research-briefing.pdf
[22] BBC Media Action (2022) https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/documents/research-summary-sweet-evaluation_july2022.pdf

co-producing *Mawjaddaha Baraarugga* (Making Waves) – a radio drama combined with a discussion programme and social media.

Male characters in the drama were shown navigating financial stress and learning that supporting women and sharing caregiving responsibilities strengthened family resilience. There is some evidence that male listeners have discussed the role of women in business and the importance of men supporting women. Some listeners said they were able to change their peer group's perceptions that a woman's role is limited to the home.

"There is a friend of mine… he believed that women can't do anything and their responsibility is to be at home. He was impressed when I sent him the programmes… He said, these are one of the things that changed his mind and we discussed it."

Male business owner and Mawjaddaha Baraarugga *listener, Mogadishu, Somalia*

2.3 Involving people with lived experience to ensure authenticity and amplify their voice

While not explicitly framed as a norm-shifting project, the BBC Media Action (2022–2024) project[23] *Untuk Manusia* (For the People) in Indonesia's Jambi and North Kalimantan provinces integrated media, storytelling and advocacy to equip indigenous groups to protect their rights, cultural traditions and address pressing livelihood challenges in response to deforestation.

The project was designed to put the power of storytelling directly into the hands of the communities it served. Formative research used Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), an approach that shifts the role of researchers from "data extractors" to facilitators supporting



the community's own analysis, to gain in-depth understanding of the socio-economic realities of their lives. This informed implementation activities, including discussion clubs, workshops, community dialogue and a 40-episode audiovisual focusing on relevant topics.

A mixed method endline evaluation of *Untuk Manusia* that also used the Most Significant Change method (a participatory evaluation method) identified growing confidence, and increased dialogue on rights and livelihoods, among people exposed to the project. They had greater access to information and more motivation to act in relation to their rights and livelihoods, with 95% reporting having increased knowledge and awareness in processing products from available natural resources. It also observed a shift in functional social norms recognising the importance of adult education to learn new skills, and acceptance of men joining rattan weaving activities.

"If we receive large orders of 50–100 accessories, we will distribute them among other members, including men."

Female member of Rattan Handicraft Group, Metut, Indonesia

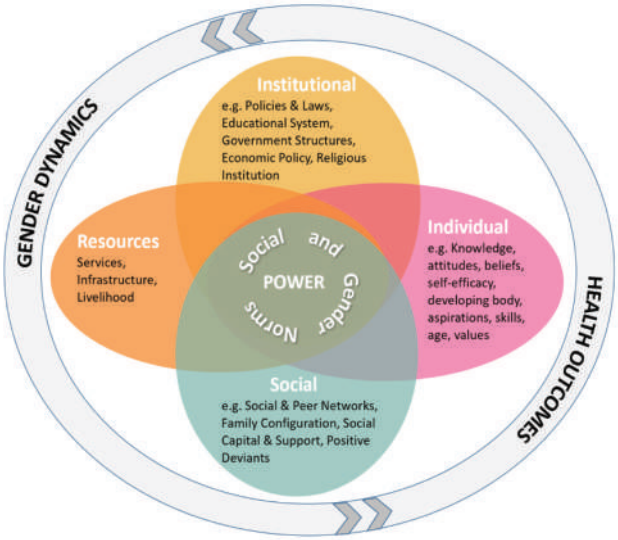
[23] BBC Media Action internal document (2024 endline evaluation).

2.4 Using behavioural theory for programme design

BBC Media Action's approach draws on behavioural theory to ensure its influence is strategic and effective. Two key frameworks guide this. The Socio-Ecological Model,[24] which considers behaviour across individual, interpersonal, community and structural levels, and the Flower for Sustained Health (see Figure 1),[25] which emphasises the role of power – particularly gender – in shaping norms.

These models help BBC Media Action understand how norms intersect with other factors and why addressing them is essential for lasting change. In practice, this means placing norms at the centre of programme design and using media to highlight, question and disrupt harmful social and gender norms.

Figure 1: The Flower for Sustained Health



Creating effective programming to shift social norms requires project design that clearly articulates those norms. For example, an ongoing (2025) BBC Media Action project looking at the digital gender divide among AGYW in North Nigeria and Bangladesh identified that 'control' excercised by gatekeepers maintains gender hierarchies in



the digital sphere. This is institutionalised through family roles (fathers, husbands, mothers-in-law); normalised through moral and religious narratives and internalised by girls themselves, who adapt through secrecy or compliance. This reveals that digital exclusion is not accidental – rather expressed through norms that treat digital access as a privilege earned through obedience, showing a worthy purpose for its use rather than a right.

This knowledge supports developing a targeted theory of change (ToC) around addressing functional norms such as silence in families around AGYWs' online experiences, and that AGYW's digital access and use should be monitored as it is unsafe, inappropriate or harmful. A communication framework, monitoring and evaluation framework and tailored project interventions are addressing these norms.

BBC Media Action's current work prioritising norm shifting interventions are:

- Incorporating participatory approaches involving target communities, widely recognised as critical for effective social norms change[26]
- Identifying norms to shift and pathways to change for different groups articulated in a ToC
- Addressing and mapping both descriptive and injunctive norms
- Monitoring and evaluation of norm shifting interventions
- Considering the unintended consequences (positive and negative backlash)

[24] SBCC (Social Behaviour Change Communication) and Gender: Models and Frameworks, SBCC Implementation Toolkit, 2017, John Hopkins University. Accessed here: https://sbccimplementationkits.org/gender/sbcc-gender-models-and-frameworks/

[25] Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change (2017) *The Flower for Sustained Health: An integrated socio-ecological framework for normative influence and change*. Working paper.

[26] Cislaghi, B and Heise, L (2018) *'Theory and practice of social norms interventions: eight common pitfalls'*. *Global Health* **14**, 83.

Section 3

Developing media and communication content for norms change

BBC Media Action's social and behaviour change projects aim to shift people's knowledge, attitudes and practices, which requires addressing the social norms that shape what communities see as typical and appropriate. These influence how people think and act, and are therefore central to enabling meaningful and sustained behaviour change.

In this section are outlined strategies that have been found to be effective in driving positive social norms change in BBC Media Action projects:

1. Grounding interventions in local and cultural realities
2. Reframing harmful norms using inclusive concepts grounded in local culture
3. Portraying new positive behaviours as gaining acceptance
4. Using humour to normalise taboo topics
5. Using real-life stories to create relatable role models
6. Creating trusted fictional characters and drama for emotional engagement
7. Modelling new norms using long running, trusted brands
8. Selecting fit for purpose media platforms
9. Taking steps to mitigate risks

3.1 Grounding interventions in local and cultural realities

Shifting how people think about a problem and see their roles in society requires media interventions that are grounded in peoples' realities and how people make sense of complex cultural concepts. For example, "child spacing" is the most acceptable term for family planning in some states in north Nigeria, and so this was used by a Hausa language BBC Media Action radio drama, *Madubi* (Mirror) and related social media content that aimed to improve access to family planning services among people with disabilities in the region.[27] Such interventions grounded in culturally resonant concepts, build trust and engagement allowing it to spark sustainable reflection among audience members.



[27] BBC Media Action (2024) *Using radio drama to tackle attitudes towards family planning in Northern Nigeria*. Research insight.



3.2 Reframing harmful norms using inclusive concepts grounded in culture

Reframing concepts can be central to driving normative change, especially in contexts with entrenched beliefs and social structures.

Media can play a powerful role in reframing social norms that cause harm by offering new, progressive and inclusive interpretations of values and identities. Through storytelling, dialogue and representation, media interventions can help to reframe prevalent thinking.

In India, BBC Media Action's Pathway to Respect, Identity, Dignity and Empowerment (PRIDE)[28] project is using a multi-phase social media campaign (#Invaluables) to shift negative cultural perceptions about informal waste pickers in Bengaluru and highlight their contribution to society. Formative research revealed that informal waste pickers are stigmatised and "invisible" to other city residents. This project aimed to emphasise their value, positioning them as "invaluable friends", and reframing the relationship through the concept of friendship, highlighting their worth.

An evaluation found that awareness and appreciation of waste pickers, and discussions about them, increased after the project. The campaign will continue to build on this.

"[Waste pickers] are the hero of the ecosystem."
Male in-depth interviewee, Bengaluru, India

3.3 Portraying new positive behaviours as gaining acceptance

Media programming can play a critical role in highlighting "dynamic" social norms – those that are beginning to shift – by showing that new, positive behaviours are gaining acceptance. In Ethiopia, radio programmes giving the impression that men's involvement in maternal health was becoming more common helped to normalise supportive behaviours even if those behaviours were not yet widespread.

BBC Media Action ran a project in Ethiopia from 2012–2017 (under the Global Grant)[29] to increase knowledge around maternal and child health practices, and to facilitate decision-making that supports healthier behaviours. This initiative used radio magazine programmes *Biiftuu Jireenyaa* (Dawn of Life) and *Jember* (Maternal Light) to reach women aged 15–45 and their husbands.[30] The shows included segments (e.g. Husbands' corner) that specifically aimed to encourage men to engage with these issues.

While men's support for their wives' ante-natal care was still far from universal after three years of programming, qualitative research and audience feedback suggested that men who listened to the programmes demonstrated more supportive behaviours than non-listeners and the programmes contributed to normalising the idea of men taking an active interest in their wives' ante-natal care. Note that the radio programmes may have given the impression that healthy behaviours were more prevalent than they really were based on quantitative research.

BBC Media Action's *Vydymi* project[31] challenged stereotypes about women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or queer, intersex and other (LGBTQI+) people, and showcased their contribution to the war effort, humanitarian action and society in 2023. This series of 10 short documentary films, commissioned by Ukrainian public broadcaster *Suspilne* (Public), each profiled

[28] BBC Media Action (2022) *Can social media output help shift perceptions about informal waste pickers in Bengaluru, India?*

[29] https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/programme/GB-CHC-1076235-GB-1-202629/summary

[30] Multiple sources: BBC Media Action (2017) https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/pdf/research-summaries/research-summary-ethiopia-norms.pdf; https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/pdf/research/Ethiopia-country-report.pdf

[31] BBC Media Action (2023) https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/where-we-work/europe-and-caucasus/ukraine/visible-films

a woman or LGBTQI+ individual and their diverse wartime experiences.

The project also included localised media content, supported by community-based group discussions to help shift attitudes. Research indicated that the films were emotionally engaging and fostered empathy and tolerant discussion, helping to normalise LGBTQI+ lives. Notably, however, most participants – despite adopting more positive perceptions of LGBTQI – remained resistant to full equality, intimacy and family rights for LGBTQI+ individuals linking back to challenges around shifting deeply rooted norms.

In both cases, programming played a vital role in drawing attention to evolving social norms, demonstrating that emerging positive behaviours are becoming more widely accepted.

Studies highlight[32] that mass media's ability[33] to signal what others are learning is more effective than the individual channel. Research on the BBC's flagship show *Strictly Come Dancing* talks about how dance on TV can serve to both resist and reinforce societal norms[34], highlighting the importance of equitable representation in shaping public perceptions of gender and disability. These examples demonstrate that media interventions can work well to reshape descriptive norms while injunctive norms (perceptions of what others think one should do) can be more complex to shift in some cases, requiring further investigation.

3.4 Using humour to normalise taboo topics

Using humour to normalise taboo topics through creative storytelling and engaging brands can provide opportunities to address a norm, even in challenging contexts. For example, the 2007–2009 Condom is Just Another Word[35] media initiative delivered by BBC Media Action India aimed to get men talking about condoms in a country where they were a taboo subject.



The award winning creative initiative reached around 140 million adult men nationally through public service advertising, using playful, participatory storytelling to normalise saying "condom." It used a contest/riddle engineered to spark peer conversation, then a *Kabaddi* spot that reframed "being a real man" as the smart, responsible choice to use condoms, explicitly targeting social expectations and the freedom from judgment men seek when talking about condoms. The campaign used humour, with a puppy named "Condom" and a using an acapella ringtone at a wedding – offering multiple ways for people to engage and addressing stigma. The ringtone exceeded 750,000 downloads.

Research conducted by BBC Media Action before and after the adverts aired showed that embarrassment around purchasing condoms decreased by 21% among those exposed to the messages compared with a 6% decrease among men who were not exposed to them. The campaign also got men talking: reports of discussing condoms in the past 30 days rose among those exposed; perceptions that condom use reflects smart and responsible behaviour improved ; and fear of ridicule fell among exposed men "friends will look down on me if they see me buying condoms" dropped 9% among exposed men vs 2% unexposed men, indicating shifts in social acceptance and norms through the use of humour.

[32] https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/political-science-research-and-methods/article/how-does-media-influence-social-norms-experimental-evidence-on-the-role-of-common-knowledge/23D65E06CAB2876B08F12E23CD5C0539

[33] https://gap.hks.harvard.edu/how-does-media-influence-social-norms-field-experiment-role-common-knowledge

[34] *Subverting Norms and Shaping Perceptions: Strictly Come Dancing as a Site for Social Change?* – Coventry University (embargoed)

[35] BBC Media Action (2013) https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/where-we-work/asia/india/condom-condom



3.5 Using real-life stories to create relatable role models

BBC Media Action's Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) project (2014–2024)[36] promoted girls' education through media and community mobilisation. The project produced *Our School*, a factual radio series featuring real-life stories of girls, families and schools to highlight the benefits of education and role model positive behaviours.

Evaluations showed a shift in norms toward prioritising girls' education, with regression analysis showing that regular listeners were more likely to discuss education with their daughters than non-listeners, even when other factors, such as age, gender and education level, were taken into account. And, critically, listeners with a daughter were significantly more likely to say that she was in school than non-listeners. The project's community mobilisation component was also effective in increasing parents' understanding of the importance of saving money for schooling and using cash transfers appropriately for girls' education although entrenched preferences for educating boys persisted during times of economic hardship.

"I had a chat with my daughter, she refused to attend school because I married at 12 years and therefore she also wanted to marry at [an] early age. And indeed, she got pregnant and conceived at the age of 16. However, the programme taught us that such children should be able to return to school, and my daughter is now in school and I take care of the baby."

Female community mobilisation participant, Juba, South Sudan

3.6 Creating emotionally engaging storylines and characters

In South Sudan, the BBC Media Action programme Life in Lulu has been on air for 10 years.[37] Its storylines have covered beliefs about gender, health, conflict and peaceful coexistence, with its main characters journeying through life's ups and downs along with its audience. Many storylines have focused on shifting norms and attitudes through characters who exhibit different gender roles to the norm. In Series 6, Samuel often gets drunk and beats his wife, Monica. During a violent argument he accidentally sets fire to their house, almost killing Monica and their daughter. Monica's father demands that she is granted a divorce and the case is heard at the village council. During the hearing, Faida, a female character, speaks out about the violence Monica has experienced, and Monica tells Samuel how much his behaviour has hurt her. Eventually, after Samuel apologises in front of the whole community and starts treating Monica with more respect, she accepts him back. The story showcased women having the confidence to speak up and being supported by influencers to be able to do so.

Listeners found the story about Samuel and Monica engaging – it prompted debate on live call-in discussion programmes about whether Monica should go through with a divorce. Listeners interviewed as part of the research mentioned learning about the importance of avoiding drinking too much alcohol and discussing problems calmly rather than quarrelling and using violence. Some listeners said that they had changed the way they interact with their spouse as a result. Series 7 focuses on the marriage between Victor (a former soldier) and Ellie. Initially, Victor believes that men need to control their wives but over the series he realises he was wrong and becomes more

[36] BBC Media Action (2012-ongoing) https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/where-we-work/africa/south-sudan/girls-education
[37] BBC Media Action (2014-ongoing) https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/where-we-work/africa/south-sudan/lulu-turns-ten



supportive of Ellie's choices. By showing Victor's gradual transformation, the drama models positive masculinity and equitable relationships. Characters in the stories sometimes engage in negative behaviours and the idea is to engage the viewer emotionally in what the character is going through so that they keep thinking about and discussing the characters actions.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the fictional radio character featured on public service announcements, Captain Suleiman in Somalia[38] was portrayed as a trusted, authoritative yet empathetic figure who counters misinformation and promotes preventive health behaviours. His character normalised mask-wearing, handwashing and social distancing. Through humour and cultural sensitivity, Suleiman reduced resistance to change and fostered incremental shifts in attitudes toward public health norms.

"I like the way [Captain Suleiman] says goodbye to the virus. He says, 'Can you hear me? I am Captain Suleiman, bye, bye COVID-19'. I find the storyline very interesting and always listen to it with happiness and it never bores me."

Young male COVID-19 Captain Suleiman's Public Service Announcement listener, Kismayo, Somalia

3.7 Modelling new norms using long-running trusted brands

Modelling new social norms requires more than isolated messaging: it demands sustained, credible engagement that enables audiences to gradually internalise and practise alternative behaviours. Long running, trusted brands are uniquely positioned to fulfil this role. By leveraging their legitimacy, authenticity, and accumulated social capital, brands can introduce, reinforce, and normalise aspirational behaviours while remaining grounded in the cultural and social contexts of their audiences.

Key strategies used by enduring brands to influence social norms include drawing on existing expectations within their sectors, developing aspirational characters and personas, and employing multifaceted communication across legacy and social media. Through relevant and relatable narratives, these brands engage individuals in ways that gradually translate into collective behavioural change.

Addressing regressive gender norms requires long-term, contextually grounded approaches that foster trust and allow audiences to observe and internalise alternative models of behaviour. Long running media brands – such as Life in Lulu (South Sudan), *Tikambe!* (Let's Talk) (Zambia), *Klahan9* (Brave9) (Cambodia), and *Niambie* (Tell Me) (Tanzania) – show how consistent, culturally sensitive storytelling can create space for audiences to explore and absorb new norms over time. For example, characters and narratives



[38] BBC Media Action (2012) https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/publications-and-resources/research/briefings/africa/somalia/hbcc-reach-engagement-2021

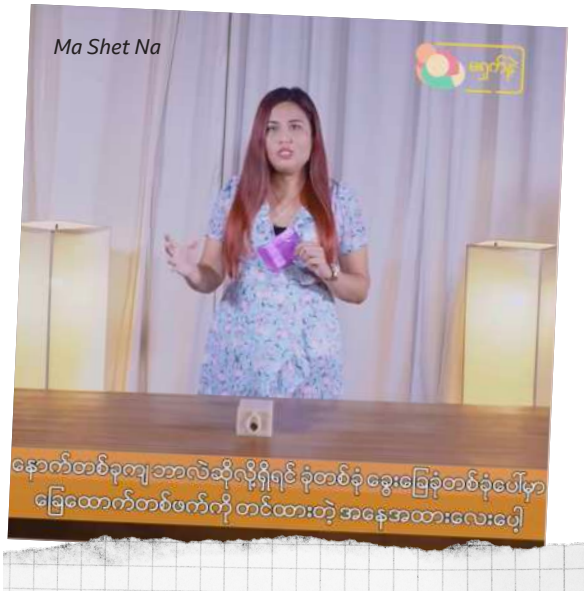
demonstrate how change is possible and beneficial, while still aligning with prevailing cultural and religious values.

Niambie, with over a decade of continuous engagement, exemplifies the impact of a trusted, long-running brand. Its combination of an interactive radio format, music and active social media presence provides young Tanzanians with dependable information on issues central to their lives. Reaching 3.9 million listeners as of February 2025, the programme offers role models who not only present positive alternatives but also embody the importance of understanding and exercising rights and responsibilities. The programme's longevity enables it to address increasingly complex and sensitive issues as audience trust deepens, thereby creating openings for gradual normative transformation.

"The community needs to understand that the world is changing. People have different dreams, not everyone is going to be a doctor or a teacher. Some DJs will be born, some musicians will be born…"

Aisha or as she is popularly known 'Hijab DJ' is the first woman DJ in Zanzibar. She fought stigma from her community and even her own family to become one of the most popular DJs in Zanzibar featured in *Niambie*.[39]





3.8 Selecting fit for purpose media platforms

BBC Media Action projects meet audiences where they are. The organisation uses mass media (radio, TV, Outreach) to reach marginalised populations – reaching over 90 million people across the countries where it works. Increasingly using digital platforms to reach young people.

Shame and taboos persist around sexual and reproductive health in Myanmar, particularly among young people. Since 2019, BBC Media Action's *Ma Shet Ne* (Don't Be Shy) social media programme has broken barriers among digitally connected young audiences, providing trusted information on a wide range of sexual health topics, and supporting them to become more open-minded and confident in discussing these issues.

The project produces content on Facebook, YouTube, TikTok and Telegram, and has a chatbot to help answer questions, most commonly relating to contraception and menstruation. Its Facebook page has nearly 2.1 million likes and more than 3.3 million followers, and its video on how to use a female condom has received more than 33 million views. Engaging content such as unique stories or interviews with celebrities' prompt online discussion among audience members.

[39] BBC Media Action (2022) https://www.bbc.com/mediaaction/stories/faces-of-tanzania-a-gender-transformative-photo-series

Working with youth in university settings such as Thingyan (water) festivals[40] facilitated user-generated content for *Ma Shet Ne*. Student contributors shared the posts they featured in, increasing the project's reach. Working with social media and youth influencers as agents of change also proved to be useful.

Evaluations found that *Ma Shet Ne* audiences are significantly more confident than their peers to discuss SRHR topics offline with medical professionals, friends and partners – a key achievement for the brand.

3.9 Taking steps to mitigate risks

Media interventions to shift social norms often confront entrenched beliefs, which brings a risk of backlash, misinterpretation or resistance among audience members and commentators.

For example, young women who publicly engage with SRHR media content may face online harassment or social exclusion, reinforcing the very norms an intervention seeks to dismantle. And reference group members may try to reassert control in the face of changing behaviours and attitudes that threaten to shift power dynamics.

Cognisant of the additional risks posed by social norms change initiatives, all BBC Media Action projects use several safeguarding strategies in addition to standard project ethical and safeguarding procedures. The following strategies are used throughout the project lifecycle to help protect against community backlash to norms change:

- Investing in understanding the context, through strong audience research to understand gender and power dynamics
- Ensuring content models respectful disagreement in line with traditional beliefs or practices. This includes avoiding using fear to create change or being too 'preachy' which would turn people off or exacerbate existing tensions.
- Moderating comment sections on online platforms
- Pre-testing content, monitoring feedback and tracking sentiment to spot any negative sentiment or repercussions from content created
- Engaging community gatekeepers through listening groups, consent from adults, partners
- Providing ongoing training and support to researchers, project implementers, producers and partners

[40] UNESCO (n.d.) *'Myanmar traditional New Year Atā Thingyan festival'*. Web page.

Section 4

Supporting changes in the media sector for sustained norm change

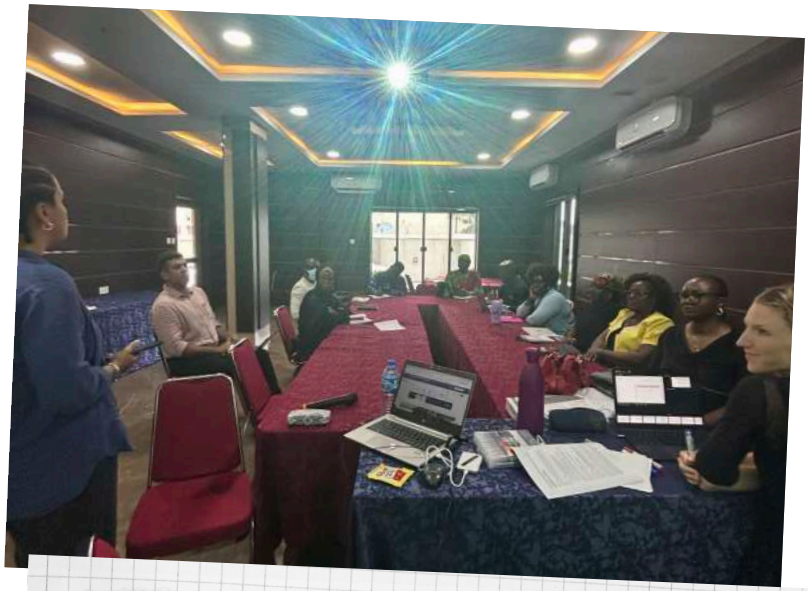
Strengthening media partners and transforming the media ecosystem are critical for sustainable social norm change. According to the UNICEF and UNFPA Norms for Change manual,[41] building the capacity of media practitioners ensures that content is contextually relevant, ethically sound and strategically aligned with behaviour change goals. BBC Media Action's approach equips local media partners with skills and policies that foster inclusion and accountability, in addition to strengthening their editorial and technical capacities.

BBC Media Action supports a global network of female journalists and women-led media across 30 countries who are amplifying diverse voices and directly challenging restrictive gender norms – for example, that women should not speak publicly or hold leadership roles in the media.

Support includes financial grants and editorial and technical assistance for women-led outlets operating in restrictive contexts such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh, for exiled media from Myanmar, and for gender rights programming and investigative reporting in Tanzania, Ukraine and Zambia.

4.1 Strengthen media partners' understanding of social norms

Training content creators in inclusive reporting and storytelling also contributes to norm shifts around gender and identity.[42] BBC Media Action's multi-pronged approach to media development helps to create sustainable, locally owned solutions that support the public interest, local needs, quality standards and positive shifts in norms. This involves equipping local media partners, project participants – and ultimately audience members – with knowledge and skills that will last after a project ends. Often this includes working with local media partners through a participatory process of training, mentoring to consider which norms need to be shifted, how and for whom.



[41] UNICEF and UNFPA (2024) *Norms for Change: Training Manual for Facilitators.*

[42] Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms (ALIGN) (n.d.) '*Case studies series: Norms and broadcast media*'.

Social norms masterclasses for media



In August and September 2025, BBC Media Action led **Flip the Script, Social Norms Masterclasses** for media partners, programme-makers and researchers in **Kenya**, **Nigeria**, **Bangladesh** and **Tanzania**.

These masterclasses were developed by academics and technical experts and drew on several resources including UCSD evidence review.[43] Over 60 participants received face-to-face or online training to help them build skills in producing media content to shift social norms, comprising a balance of theory, practice and internal reflection to embed learning.

Course modules covered:

- Journeys of change: why people change their behaviour, highlighting the importance of gender norms in behaviour change interventions
- Looking within: understanding gender norms and identity
- Understanding norms and the role of media in challenging harmful norms
- Behind the curtain: formative research
- Designing entertainment media that shifts norms
- Monitoring and evaluating norm shifts

This training also led to identifying key target audiences and their reference groups, creating and developing ToCs, communication frameworks and interventions for an ongoing project to address the digital gender norms in Nigeria and Bangladesh.

> **"The masterclasses made me think a lot on what we could do together to change norms around digital access for girls. [I] very much appreciate the openness to reflect and share without judgement, and this is something I am taking back to my organisation."**
> *Programme Director, Bridge Connect, Nigeria*

BBC Media Action's Kenya team are currently applying the learnings from the social norms masterclasses to the design of a project on early marriage.

[43] Center on Gender Equity and Health at UCSD (2025): https://geh.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/0.-UCSD-Report-Overview-Section_Effects-of-Social-Norms-on-Health-and-Livelihood-Outcomes-for-Adolescent-Girls-and-Young-Women-in-Low-and-Middle-Income-Countries.pdf; geh.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/3.-UCSD-Report-Entertainment-Media-Module-3.pdf

In Tanzania, BBC Media Action projects have focused on mentoring and training local partner radio stations to equip them to address workplace inequality and produce content that addresses discriminatory gender norms that hinder women's and girls' ability to participate in political leadership, and access SRHR and education.

This approach included working with radio stations' management teams to develop an inclusive workplace culture and policies that promote gender equality. Monitoring in August 2025 found that employees were using and sharing the new or updated policies that encourage inclusion and protection of women's rights.

> **"We now have anti-harassment and maternity leave for female journalists in our policies. This was only started after the training from your mentors."**
> *Journalist training participant, Tanzania*



4.2 Shift the media ecosystem for sustainability

While media can catalyse shifts in individual and community norms, lasting transformation requires institutional-level change. Media organisations must both internalise and model equity, inclusion, diversity[44] and accountability – not only through content but also within their own structures.

BBC Media Action's 2020–2023 **Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development (PRIMED)** programme exemplified this, demonstrated that shifting institutional norms is a long-term process but a feasible one. The initiative supported media partners in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone to address gender inequality within their workplaces, produce gender-sensitive and gender-balanced media content, and increase their reach and appeal among women. PRIMED responded to local realities and introduced tools like the BBC 50:50 initiative[45] to promote gender balance on air.

Building on this, the BBC Media Action **Public Interest Media and Healthy Information Environments (PIMHIE)** initiative now works globally to promote gender equality, combat disinformation and support inclusive, locally owned media.

BBC Media Action also continues to support women journalists and women-led media outlets in Afghanistan. Current restrictions in the country mean that media now plays an even more important role in the lives of women in Afghanistan, who rely on radio, TV and social media for information, entertainment and connection.

In the UK, the Creative Diversity Network (CDN)46 launched Diamond in 2016 as the TV industry's first standardised diversity monitoring system looking at gender, gender identity, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability – for both on-screen and off-screen roles. Data is gathered to ensure compliance across major networks including the BBC.

Diamond addresses industry norms that shape hiring, commissioning and representation. By making diversity data visible and embedding accountability into contracts, Diamond challenges these norms and creates incentives for inclusive practices.

[44] Berry, M, Dooley, K and McHugh, M (n.d.) 'Fostering Diversity On and Off Screen'. *Alphaville* editorial.
[45] https://www.bbc.co.uk/5050
[46] Creative Diversity Network

Impact includes a rise in off-screen disability representation to 9.7%, more than doubling since CDN's Doubling Disability initiative began in 2018. While there is progress in ethnic and gender diversity, gaps remain in senior creative roles. BBC Media Action would like to explore what is effective and can be applied in the different contexts where it operates.

These media ecosystem strengthening approaches align closely with the Flower of Sustained Health model (see Figure 1, p10), which emphasises the interconnected factors for systemic shifts in restrictive social norms. This approach is increasingly important with new norms around digital media, which bring their own challenges and implications for inclusivity and equity.

A new multi-country study examines sexual harassment in media workplaces

Sexual harassment remains a persistent feature of media workplaces worldwide, according to a new multi-country study released today by World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), Women in News and City, St George's, University of London, with support from BBC Media Action.

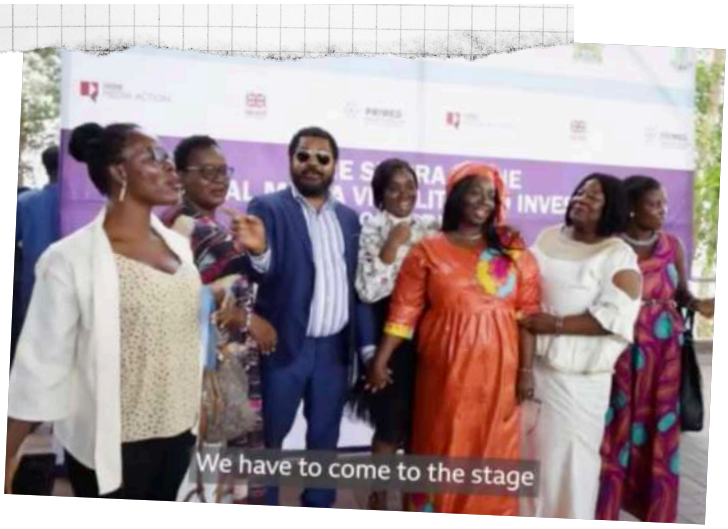
The research follows a landmark 2020–21 global study, which found that sexual harassment was pervasive across newsrooms, disproportionately affecting women and gender non-conforming media professionals, and that the majority of incidents went unreported.

Five years on, the new study asks a critical question: **has enough changed?**

The study, conducted end of 2025, draws on responses from more than 2,800 media employees, making it one of the largest datasets on sexual harassment in newsroom workplaces to date. Respondents span a wide range of roles, including journalism, administration, HR, production, marketing, and management, offering a comprehensive picture of how harassment is experienced across media organisations.

Conducted across more than 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab region, Southeast Asia, and Ukraine, the new study finds that on average, 26% of media professionals globally in these countries reported experiencing sexual harassment in 2025, a decrease from 30% in 2020. While this represents a modest decline, the findings point to continued structural barriers to reporting and accountability across media workplaces. Fear of retaliation, lack of trusted reporting mechanisms, and low confidence in organisational response remain key reasons why harassment goes unreported.

Ultimately what happens off screen, impacts what ends up on screen. And, as demonstrated above, media and the narratives that are developed have significant implications on social norms. Understanding norms held within the media industry and what might be needed to shift them is important to understand how to improve media content. Working with media organisations to challenge their own norms, stereotypes, internal biases and power dynamics would be first step to challenging who controls the narratives, the stories that are told ultimately influence norms that govern society.



Multiple approaches to shifting SRHR norms in Zambia

Through a systematic review of 49 media interventions, the UCSD evidence review[47] identified effective "norms-shifting mechanisms of change". BBC Media Action's *Tikambe!* (Let's Talk) project in Zambia used several of these mechanisms.



> **"Before the [*Tikambe!*] programme it was hard to talk to our children… about issues to do with sex."**
> *Parent, Kitwe, Zambia*

Tikambe! was a 2014–2024 radio, social media and community-based initiative across four Zambian states that aimed to change gender discrimination in SRHR attitudes, practices and norms. Its Facebook content had a total reach of 25.2 million, and its radio content reached 35% of Zambians in the focal states from 2022–2023.

The project involved working with partners provincial and national Zambian media partners – eight radio stations in Lusaka, Central, Copperbelt and Northern provinces – and the state broadcaster Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation.

Project components included TV, online media and interpersonal communication. It engaged young volunteers in peer-to-peer education, delivering youth-friendly services in health clinics and teaching comprehensive sex education in schools.

Project design and implementation involved target audience members. Throughout the project, young people aged 14–24 helped to ensure that the media formats, language and presentation reflected their needs and preferences. The project engaged traditional and religious leaders, and other influencers who appeal to young people, to help challenge and shift harmful norms around early marriage. Young people also shared their real-life experiences and modelled positive SRHR behaviours.

The project engaged communities and sparked discussions. Through meetings, awareness-raising events and radio debates, the project enabled young people to engage with decision-makers and community leaders. For example, young people checked whether all clinics had youth-friendly spaces as specified in Zambia's Adolescent Health Strategy, interacting with leaders through *Tikambe!* platforms to ensure they took action.

BBC Media Action and its local partners also aired weekly programmes and ran listening groups to promote community discussions and source audience feedback. These programmes used dramas to spark discussion on SRHR topics, such as by highlighting the importance of normalising acceptance of women carrying condoms and equipping young women to bring up sensitive topics with their partners.

Formative research by BBC Media Action identified that young girls and boys were already showing more gender-equal approaches to decision-making around SRHR. **The project focused on this 'crack' in the social norm around relationship decision-making and on challenging entrenched gender expectations.**

Using regression analysis and controlling for other factors, such as age, gender, relationship status and province, the *Tikambe!* endline evaluation found that people exposed to the programme were 2.1 times more likely to say they were "very likely" to talk with a potential partner about preventing HIV. And **people who were regularly reached by *Tikambe!* content were 1.9 times as likely to say that they "strongly agree" that girls/women in their community should decide if they want to use contraception.**

[47] Multiple sources: https://geh.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/3.-UCSD-Report-Entertainment-Media-Module-3.pdf; https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/documents/bbcma-tikambe-briefing.pdf

Section 5
Areas for ongoing exploration

BBC Media Action operates primarily in low resource and conflict affected settings to influence social and gender norms and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. Its programmes are grounded in behavioural theory, informed by a rigorous understanding of underlying norms, and shaped by the lived experiences of affected communities to ensure contextual relevance and impact.

As illustrated throughout this brief, the organisation has supported shifts in harmful norms and the social acceptance of positive behaviours through a range of evidence based approaches, including humour, real life narratives, relatable role models, trusted fictional characters and long running media brands that foster emotional engagement and model alternative norms. Content is delivered through platforms appropriate to local contexts and audience needs.

In parallel, BBC Media Action strengthens the wider media ecosystem by building the capacity of media partners to understand, reflect and address social norms, contributing to more sustainable and locally driven change.

Despite these achievements, gaps remain in building the most effective strategies for norm shifting interventions across diverse contexts and platforms. The priorities outlined below identify areas for further exploration to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of norms focused programming.

5.1 Ongoing collaboration with the media ecosystem and local media organisations

BBC Media Action recognises that close collaboration with the media sector is critical to increasing the production of inclusive, gender-sensitive content that effectively shifts social norms. While progress has been made, further investment is required to strengthen capacity and deepen understanding of norm-shifting approaches within the industry. BBC Media Action aims to equip media professionals with practical tools – such as those featured in BBC Media Action's Flip the Script, social norms masterclasses (see page 19) – to embed norms thinking into project design and storytelling.

In addition, there is a need to develop a compelling business case for addressing social norms. This involves engaging the wider media ecosystem to demonstrate how norms influence the communities served by media, as well as identifying and addressing norms within media organisations themselves. Key priorities include:

- Identifying social norms within the media sector and developing strategies to shift them.
- Understanding how organisational norms interact with community-level norms, such as limited female leadership.
- Evaluating the impact of greater diversity and representation in media on audiences.

5.2 Learning how norms play out in the digital world

As digital technologies become central to social interaction, they are reshaping norms in complex and often contradictory ways. Digital platforms and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can both challenge and reinforce social and gender norms. On the one hand, tools such as chatbots, private messaging, and AI applications create opportunities for positive norm change by enabling individuals to explore sensitive topics in safe, anonymous spaces – breaking silences and challenging stigma. On the other hand, these same features can facilitate harmful behaviours, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV).

The digital environment reflects existing societal power structures, including patriarchal norms. Algorithms amplify this dynamic by prioritising engagement-driven content, which can normalise harmful behaviours or unrealistic standards. Rising misinformation and limited digital literacy further deepen divides, disproportionately affecting women, girls, and other excluded groups. These contradictions demand nuanced approaches to content creation and engagement to address gender norms effectively.

BBC Media Action is committed to documenting, exploring, and assessing how digital platforms and AI influence norms across all projects. Priorities include:

- Exploring and testing approaches to address TFGBV.
- Further developing understanding of the effects of digital media literacy (DML) on digital norms
- Identifying content strategies that support shifts in expectations related to masculinity and femininity this sphere.

5.3 Understanding the role of channels and strategies to address restrictive norms

It is essential to determine which norms – such as those linked to stigma, identity, or gender – are most effectively addressed through different media channels. Digital platforms offer speed and interactivity but can also amplify misinformation and fragmented content. In contrast, traditional media such as radio and television provide curated, culturally grounded narratives that reach broad audiences simultaneously, creating shared moments of engagement. Deepening understanding of the changing nature of media consumption and respective impact on social and gender norms is an organisational priority.

Some areas where there is organisational need for additional evidence to inform the channel or strategy choices best suited to shifting norms (among certain populations, for certain behaviours and time horizons) include the following:

- Investigating emerging evidence[48] that men are more influenced by their peers whereas women respond more to anticipated approval or disapproval.
- Exploring "invisible" norms, including those related to adolescent sexuality, bodily autonomy, and intersectional norms shaped by disability, class, and ethnicity, and identifying the most effective media strategies to address them.
- Assessing the role and importance of sustained, long-term media interventions in shifting deeply rooted norms vs short term interventions in shifting functional norms.
- Strengthening approaches to measure whether norm shifts are sustained beyond programme lifecycles.[49]
- Improving programme documentation and cost effectiveness analysis.

[48] Costenbader, E et al. (2019) '*Getting to intent: Are social norms influencing intentions to use modern contraception in the DRC?*' *PLoS ONE* 14(7): e0219617.

[49] UN Women (2023) *Social Norms, Gender and Development: A Review of Research and Practice*. Discussion paper.

Conclusion

The world is changing. This inevitably creates new challenges. However, sometimes changes can leave gaps or areas where new norms can develop or give space for existing norms to shift for the better. Whether that is women's role in climate adaptation, providing space for women's leadership, or conflict shifting the roles people play in society.

Media and communication are powerful tools for shaping perceptions, challenging inequities and modelling alternative possibilities. Sustaining progress in shifting social and gender norms requires the involvement of the media and its practitioners as change agents to ensure that impactful narratives and stories are told. This involves strengthening institutions, practitioners and structures that create and disseminate those narratives.

By deepening collaboration with media actors, creating content that reflects lived experience of audiences, and by supporting audiences to see themselves – and their futures – differently, BBC Media Action can continue to support environments where equitable norms take root and endure.

By doing this, we might just flip the script, together.



Appendix

Research details for the case studies and project examples cited in this document.

Page	Name of project	Research stage	Methods used and sample
7	***Niambie* (Tanzania)**	Midline – informing future programming, 2023	SNET methodology using FGDs with male and female listeners of Niambie and IDIs with leaders, influential individuals and women trailblazers (to understand how they had negotiated norms) with a focus on using vignettes within sessions.
7	**UNFPA (Sierra Leone)**	Formative research 2024	Qualitative research using SNET- Rapid Interviews, FGDS, Transcet Walks conducted by 'peers' of AGYW who had been specifically recruited from the communities in question (Freetown, Pujehun and Koinadugu) and had received training on SNET.
7	**Here Me Too (Bangladesh)**	Formative research	Qualitative research using FGDs, IDIs in Rohingya camps with men and women focussing on story telling#.
8	**Norms Diagnosis (India)**	Mixed method formative and baseline	Immersion sessions with cross functional teams in three cities across Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Quantitative: Household survey: 1,085 women aged 18–25 and 998 gatekeepers (as defined by the study). Qualitative: IDIs 73 women and 18 gatekeepers, 35 FGDs with male and female gatekeepers.
8	**EAGER (Zambia)**	Mixed method endline evaluation 2023	Quantitative: 3,048 respondents aged over 15 in all 16 districts of Sierra Leone and 555 adolescent girls aged between 13 and 19 years who participated in the EAGER project in the 10 implementation districts. Qualitative: FGDs and IDIs with key target audiences and their influencers in six out of 10 districts of project implementation.
8	**SWEET (Somalia)**	Endline evaluation and Sensemaker 2022	Qualitative: 12 FGDs with target audiences and 5 KII) with influential men and women working in the formal business sector. Capacity assessment to explore effectiveness of mentoring five local radio stations through IDIs at stations. Quantitative data using the 'sense maker' approach collected to understand the impact of the business development training.
9	***Untuk Manusia* (Indonesia)**	Mixed method endline evaluation 2024	Most Significant Change (MSC) technique to collect, discuss, and select change stories via FGDs in each village and facilitator observations, with final selection in a workshop. Quantitative: Face to face survey with the same respondents as baseline, 2 per village, total of 46. Qualitative: 14 in depth interviews to verify and explore the MSC stories in detail.
10	**Digital Norms (Nigeria and Bangladesh)**	Formative research 2025	Mixed-methods SNET conducted in two phases across Dhaka/Khulna (Bangladesh) and Kano/Kaduna (Nigeria): Phase 1: Rapid interviews (RI) with 106 AGYW in Bangladesh and 117 in Nigeria. Phase 2: RI with reference groups, FGDs with AGYW & reference groups and IDIs with AGYW and Key Stakeholders
12	**PRIDE (India)**	Quantitative evaluation 2022	A rotating longitudinal audience panel of 1,800 social media users recruited face to face. The panel distribution is representative of the social media universe of Bengaluru city and was recruited using listings of 8628 households.
12	**Global Grant (Ethiopia)**	Mixed methods evaluation 2017	Quantitative endline household survey using regression and structural equation modelling (SEM); the sample covered the general population in Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR, including women of reproductive age and men/new fathers;(pregnant women2,642, new mothers 866, husbands 919 WORA (Women of Reproductive Age) = 925. Qualitative social norms exploration 8 IDIs with new mothers (from Amhara and Oromia regions) and supporting interviews with key reference groups.
12	***Vydymi* (Ukraine)**	Endline evaluation 2023	Qualitative research through ten online focus group discussions with participants from 17 locations across Ukraine.
13	**Condom Condom (India)**	Endline evaluation 2009	Quantitative: Multi state KAP survey of men 15–49 (TV viewers) in four states (AP, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka); random samples with booster samples and weights, exposed n = 3,615; endline unexposed n = 957 (baseline n = 3,209 shown for comparisons).

Page	Name of project	Research stage	Methods used and sample
14	**Our School (South Sudan)**	Mixed method endline evaluation 2023	Quantitative: cross sectional survey of 15 + adults across 6 states Central and Eastern Equatoria, Jonglie, Upper Nile, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Lakes with a sample of 3245 (including a booster of 600 Community mobilisation participants listeners). Qualitative: FGDs and IDIs in 3 locations.
14	**Life in Lulu (South Sudan)**	Mixed method evaluation 2023	Quantitative: a representative sample of 3,192 respondents in 6 states: Central Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Lakes, Upper Nile, Jonglei, Warrap, and Wau town. Qualitative: conducted with listeners; comments from listeners calling into radio stations. Mixed methods capacity building endline evaluation.
15	***Klahan9* SPACE (Cambodia)**	Mixed Method endline evaluation 2024	Quantitative: A face-to-face nationally representative survey of 912 people aged 15–55. Qualitative: FGDs, IDIs follow up to understand why change has happened and documenting audience's stories of change. Digital evaluation using social media metrics to analyse online discussions. RCT of 873 young people to assess the impact of media outputs. A panel study with 102 parents of young people aged 15–30 years.
15	***Niambie* (Tanzania)**	Quantitative evaluation 2025	Quantitative: a nationally representative survey with 2000 respondents.
15, 22	***Tikambe!* (Zambia)**	Endline evaluation 2024	Quantitative evaluation in 16 districts across the four focal provinces (Central, Copperbelt, Lusaka and Northern) with a sample of 1,411 young men and women aged 14–24 years old and 311 interviews with purposively selected young men and women across schools in Kabwe and Kasama districts to evaluate the interpersonal initiatives from Restless Development.
16	***Ma Shet Ne* (Myanmar)**	Quantitative evaluation 2021, Social media analytics	Quantitative evaluation with 675 Yangon youths (18-24 yrs) took part with an equal split of men and women (approx. 1/3 natural audiences; 1/3 exposed through experiment only and 1/3 not exposed).
20	**PRIMED (Multi country)**	Mixed methods study 2020-2023	Ongoing audience measurement through baseline/midline/endline using structured surveys (typically 40–70 interviews per media partner at baseline) plus in depth qualitative interviews with a subset of survey participants, disaggregated by gender/locality/language. Ad hoc audience insight from bespoke primary data collection, desk research, partner workshops, and analysis of digital/social analytics to test concepts or specific content. Practitioner research to evaluate support — Immediate post training feedback survey, a 3 month follow up structured survey (scaled items + open ends), qualitative in depth interviews with a smaller, pre selected group of practitioners, and periodic interviews with senior managers.



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