Understanding Social Norms

A reference guide for policy and practice

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THE FLETCHER SCHOOL
TUFTS UNIVERSITY

CORRUPTION, JUSTICE & LEGITIMACY PROJECT

The Corruption, Justice & Legitimacy Project is committed to improving the effectiveness of anti-corruption programming in order to dismantle the barrier to development that is systemic corruption.

Starting with the assumption that the traditional, simple strategies used to combat corruption do not align with the complex nature of the problem itself, this project developed an alternative analytic method that reflected the full range of factors, such as political dynamics and social norms, that drive corruption. The conceptual foundation for this work is laid out in our first paper, *Taking the Blinders Off: Questioning how international aid is used to combat corruption.* Originally based at the CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, the project initially focused on the criminal justice sector in fragile states.

In 2017, *Understanding Corruption in Criminal Justice as a Robust and Resilient System* offered an explanation of our corruption analysis methodology. It had been tested in three contexts: Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2014; Northern Uganda (*Facilitation in the Criminal Justice System*) in 2016; and Bangui, Central African Republic (*Pity the Man Who is Alone*) in 2017. The 2017 publication provided a detailed description of the analysis process and the systems thinking tools at its core with the intention of providing a resource for other researchers and practitioners on the ground.

The next phase of the project, now housed at the Henry J. Leir Institute at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, focuses on the nexus of social norms change and corruption. Advances in this work, plus that of others, can be found on the *Corruption in Fragile States Blog* hosted by the Corruption, Justice & Legitimacy Project. The blog challenges thinking about established practices in anti-corruption programming in fragile and conflict-affected states with a combination of in-house and guest posts.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Cheyanne Scharbatke-Church is a Professor of Practice of Aid Effectiveness at the Leir Institute for Human Security, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Her work on corruption has evolved from a broad corruption and conflict interest to a focused inquiry on the nexus of corruption and justice in fragile and conflict-affected states. With almost 20 years' experience, Cheyanne has led programs on the ground, advised on donor strategies, been an organizational change catalyst on effectiveness issues, and contributed to the scholarship of the evaluation field.

Diana Chigas is Professor of Practice of International Negotiation and Conflict Resolution at The Fletcher School and Senior International Officer and Associate Provost at Tufts University. She has 30 years of experience as a facilitator and consultant in negotiation and conflict resolution, and as an advisor and evaluator of peacebuilding programs and strategies and systems approaches to conflict analysis. Her work on corruption in fragile and conflict-affected states focuses on bringing systemic approaches to analysis and strategy development to developing better understanding of corruption dynamics and effective anti-corruption strategy development.

ICON KEY

Icons have been used throughout the guide to help direct the reader.

Corruption in Fragile States Blog

Defining Terms

Example

Recommended Reading

Reference in the text

Remember

ACRONYMS

CAR   Central African Republic
CDA   CDA Collaborative Learning Projects
DRC   Democratic Republic of Congo
FCAS   Fragile and Conflict-Affected State(s)
NGOs   Nongovernmental Organizations

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Prologue

How two peacebuilding scholar-practitioners came to work on social norms and corruption

Our journey into the world of social norms officially began in 2015 when our research team attempted to identify social norms as part of our analysis of the system of corruption in the criminal justice sector in Uganda. But our interest in this issue began years earlier when as peacebuilding practitioners we became curious about corruption's contribution to conflict. As peacebuilding scholar-practitioners with 50 years of experience between us, we observed that corruption was part and parcel of most conflict environments in which we worked and was considered by many people in these contexts to be a significant driver of conflict. In these environments corrupt acts were rarely the aberration; they were normal—so normal in fact that there was no sense of shame associated with blatant abuses of entrusted power for personal gain (i.e., corruption) perpetrated by people at all levels of society.

We were puzzled by most anti-corruption programming in fragile states; our experience had been that effective peacebuilding strategy and programming needed to be based on a robust conflict analysis. Applying this to corruption, we thought it would be important to understand not only the **enablers** of corruption (i.e., conditions in the environment that allow corruption to happen) but also the factors that **drive** (i.e., cause or motivate) patterns of corrupt behavior in these contexts. Yet, at the time, this did not appear to be common practice in the anti-corruption community.

We also found a significant mismatch between the social dynamics in conflict contexts and the technocratic and formulaic anti-corruption programming we encountered. Our observation aligned with much of the research being published at the time, challenging the effectiveness of classic anti-corruption programming and questioning the assumptions and approaches informing it.[1] We concluded that one reason for the mismatch lay in the kind of analysis that served as the basis for such programming—analysis of "gaps" in accountability, transparency, or monopoly, for example. This kind of analysis did not delve into the drivers, but instead focused largely on the enablers.

Thanks to a forward-thinking program officer at International Narcotics and Law Enforcement at the U.S. State Department who provided funding, we were able to pursue our inquiry into analytic methods that foster strategic programming.

TO LEARN MORE

Useful resources are recommended throughout the text. Look for the book icon! These, plus many others, are also found in the Bibliography.

CASUAL LOOP MAPPING

An analytical tool and a visual representation of how the factors in a system interact and maintain the system.

OUR ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Read *Understanding Corruption in Criminal Justice as a Robust and Resilient System: An Analysis Process Using Systems Thinking Tools, Version 1.0* for a step-by-step explanation of our corruption analysis methodology.

The **goal** of that project was to develop a corruption analysis methodology specific to fragile states that could be the basis for more relevant and effective anti-corruption theories of change. Because these are contexts in which, as many scholars have noted, corruption is not the exception but rather the rule, our analytic method needed to help understand what kept that rule in place.[2]

This initial work, housed at the CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA), focused on developing a methodology that could capture the dynamics of the system of corruption. We chose causal loop mapping, a systems tool CDA had used to do conflict analysis that had proved helpful in developing more effective peacebuilding strategies and programming.[3] This approach allowed us to look at a broad set of factors affecting corruption—structural, political, economic, historical, social—and the interactions among them. It also offered a way to understand the complexity of the problem and its systemic nature.

Although we had integrated social norms as one factor in our initial draft methodology, this fell victim to the scale of the project in the first case study in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). By the time we had completed the first test of the methodology, it was clear that social expectations and pressure had a big influence on the behaviors of criminal justice system actors and citizens engaging in corrupt practices. Our understanding of how social norms influenced behavior, however, was insufficient.

Integrating social norms into our corruption analysis methodology has proven to be a far bigger lift than we had anticipated. There have been a number of challenges:

a. **The state of the literature does not lend itself to practice.** The social norms literature is confounding, especially for practitioners trying to identify whether social norms are relevant to the issue they are trying to address and to develop programming. It is highly academic (anathema to practitioners), hard for non-academics to understand, and sometimes contradictory. There are differing theoretical camps and interpretations of what constitutes a social norm. And the examples used do not always illustrate theory consistently, making it difficult to develop a sufficient enough understanding to operationalize the concepts for the world of corruption. Moreover, the social norms literature mostly deals with contexts that have nothing to do with corruption, such as gender, health and sanitation, drinking in university environments, and so on, so it is not obvious how these insights even apply to anti-corruption efforts.

b. **Large-scale surveys are generally not feasible for the average anti-corruption agency.** Finding a methodology to identify whether social norms are contributing to corrupt patterns of behavior (or undermining anti-corruption efforts) is also challenging. We were committed to developing a methodology that could be implemented by practitioners—considering their limited budgets, short timelines, and existing in-house competencies.

Large-scale quantitative surveys favored by the public health domain seems unrealistic for the average anti-corruption agency.

c. Social norms need to be understood in relation to other factors. Social norms are only one of many possible drivers behind corrupt patterns of behavior. They interact with other drivers and enablers of corruption. Any analysis needs to clarify these relationships if it is to be helpful in determining the best approach for catalyzing change through integrity promotion or anti-corruption programming. The few tools that did exist focused exclusively on social norms, rather than positioning them in relation to other factors.

In our first attempt to identify social norms as a factor in corruption dynamics in northern Uganda, we added a few questions to interviews. This had the advantage of efficiently integrating social norms into an existing analytic process, but that data alone was not enough for us to confidently identify specific social norms and their role in corruption. It was through additional participatory workshops that we were able to solidify our analysis. They added depth and nuance to our understanding, without much additional time or budget. Based on this experience, we altered our methodology for our final corruption analysis test in Bangui, Central Africa Republic (CAR), in 2017. Drawing on CARE's social norms and gender work, we developed a vignette approach to identifying social norms and integrated it into the broader corruption analysis.[4]

In the years since we first integrated social norms into our corruption analysis methodology, **we have been struck by how difficult it has been for non-specialists—from development workers to local anti-corruption practitioners (including us)—to understand and use the concepts effectively.** We would frequently lament that no practitioner on the ground would have the time or the patience to try to understand the literature and integrate social norms change aspects into their anti-corruption programming. Bridging this gap for practitioners and policy makers seemed to us to be a needed contribution to the field.

To do so we used an iterative and highly consultative process to understand and adapt the material on social norm change into language and tools that are easily understandable and usable in anti-corruption efforts in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (FCAS). Our team has reviewed academic and practitioner literature, distilled it through the lens of relevance to corruption in FCAS, integrated and tested it in our corruption analysis methodology, reflected on the lessons, and returned to the literature with additional questions. As the literature does not have one cohesive viewpoint on many elements of social norm theory, our criteria for including content was less about picking camps and more about utility for action. We also tested the clarity and utility of the results of our efforts with practitioners from a variety of fields.

USING VIGNETTES

A detailed description of the vignette methodology used in CAR, including our lessons learned, is available on the Corruption in Fragile States blog: *Research Methodology for Identifying Social Norms that Catalyze Corruption.*

It needs to be stressed that **most of social norms research used in this paper (and generally, in the social norms field) has been conducted in stable environments and/or in fields not related to corruption.** We have tried to develop guidance that is relevant to fragile and conflict-affected contexts, building on our own experience in peacebuilding and development and through ongoing discussion and testing with practitioners and researchers working in anti-corruption and governance in these contexts. But our conclusions and adaptations have not been proven empirically. This report is therefore very much a work in progress, and we look forward to revising, deepening, and providing greater nuance to this guidance as we learn more about what is helpful and what challenges practitioners encounter in the field.

Introduction

Corruption in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) is not the exception; it is the rule. Understanding the factors that have created and maintained this rule requires us to go beyond traditional thinking and embark on a journey into the world of social norms.

"If we decide not to respond to family request, we disturb the balance."

"We are surrounded, above, below, on the sides, by corruption, so why shouldn't we?"

". . . Once you get an opportunity to get a public service job, most individuals create networks tended towards the time. Should you lose your job, these people who you recruited will stand with you."

"If someone asks for a service, you are required to do it, even if it goes against your own ethics. To refuse is to put oneself in opposition and this can be dangerous."

"You cannot live among thieves and be happy. They will see you as a traitor, as a roadblock."

Figure 1: Observations from Two Fragile and Conflict-Affected States[5]

To start, let's explore a typical scenario:

Corruption, in all its forms, is entrenched in every aspect of life in a fragile state recently emerged from violent conflict. The criminal justice system has normalized corruption to such an extent that the actors in the system are seen by citizens as predators, not protectors. Judges, magistrates, police, court clerks, and prison officials regularly seize opportunities for personal enrichment at all stages of the process. A citizen needs to pay to get the police to come when a crime occurs. Or he might be arrested because the other party in a land dispute pays to get him detained as a pressure tactic to encourage settlement. His spouse will need to pay to get him out of prison, or to ensure he has food and medical attention while incarcerated. He will need to pay the court clerk to file any claim. Then pay again for the clerk to process his case and to not "lose" the file. Prosecutors and judges will charge "judge fees" to decide a case. The judge, who got her job because of her connections to the president, will demand (or accept) a bribe to decide a case in a particular way. The exchange of funds is so pervasive that it has become an expectation—among both officials and citizens—of how things should work.

FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED STATES (FCAS)

FCAS are typically contexts where society is fragmented, the social contract is fraught, state institutions are weak, power is contested, and/or the country is destabilized by violent conflict.

SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION

Corruption is commonly defined as the *abuse of entrusted power for personal gain.* This reflects a conceptualization of corruption as an individual deviating from the prescribed formal rules and procedures in order to attain personal enrichment. It is a useful framing to understand corruption when it is the exception; that bad apple!

Systemic corruption, on the other hand, refers to contexts where *corruption is an integral part of the state's functioning at all levels*—so much so that corruption is expected and, in many ways, rewarded, while integrity is punished. Citizens have no alternative but to deal with corrupt officials. It is also called endemic corruption.

This is how Ugandans described the way in which the criminal justice system operates in northern Uganda. "This is Uganda," they responded when we asked why corruption is so pervasive in the justice system. Yet Uganda has an impressive array of legal mechanisms to prevent and punish corruption. There is an Anti-Corruption Court and transparency, oversight, and disciplinary mechanisms such as the Judicial Services Commission and the Inspectorate General, police disciplinary courts, and a human rights and corruption complaints desk, not to mention training and education for integrity. And donors have supported media campaigns against corruption, citizen education on their rights, as well as several "I paid a bribe" type efforts providing platforms for citizens to report paying bribes, among many others. Yet as the Inspector General in Uganda has noted, "Despite this strong framework, corruption remains a menace in our society." In 2018, Transparency International ranked Uganda 149 out of 180 countries, with a score of 26/100 (with 0 being highly corrupt and 100 very clean) in its Corruption Perception Index.

Why does Uganda rank among the worst countries in Africa on corruption? There are many reasons why corruption persists in Uganda or any similar fragile and conflict-affected context. FCAS are marked by **systemic corruption** where all aspects of the state's functioning are imbued with abuse of power for personal gain, and citizens have no choice but to deal with corrupt officials. These regularized acts of corruption can come in a variety of forms: bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, sextortion, embezzlement, and favoritism, among many others. This is coupled with uncertainty about the future, survival-desperation and structural factors resulting from the legacy of colonial power structures to individual attitudes, laws, mental models, morals, resources, or accountability structures, and, we believe, social norms. One of the largely unexplored reasons for the ineffectiveness of the Ugandan framework is the role of social expectations that require people to abuse entrusted power for personal/familial/network gain—in other words, social norms that support corrupt behavior. In our Uganda example, one critical social norm that influences corrupt behavior is *"members of the criminal justice system should demand financial gain in return for service."* If justice officials take alternative action, they suffer negative consequences. As one official in Uganda clearly expressed, "If a magistrate told a clerk they could not take money, what would happen? Nothing. The clerk would wonder, are you a whistleblower? We will start to separate from you and keep a distance."

Consideration of social norms is a key component missing from many anti-corruption efforts, and we believe this absence partially explains the difficulty the sector has experienced in stimulating lasting behavior change away from corrupt practices. This is particularly true in fragile and conflict-affected states. Yet they are often overlooked in efforts to understand why corrupt patterns of behavior (regardless of the form) exist and why they are so resilient to intervention.

Social norms are the *mutual expectations* held by members of a group about the right way to behave in a particular situation. They matter tremendously to the choices an individual makes about how to behave in certain situations because people want to be liked and to belong. We often follow prevailing group behaviors to gain or avoid losing social appreciation, respect, and acceptance.

Whether a corrupt act is supported by mutual expectations within a group will influence an individual's choice to participate in or resist the corrupt practice in a particular context. The desire to belong and behave "correctly" may lead the individual to engage in corruption, even if he or she believes corruption is wrong and that people should act with integrity. The importance of belonging can override contrary attitudes, morals, and even the prospect of legal penalties, particularly in fragile states where uncertainty and insecurity prevail and one's social connections are key to survival.

The influence of social norms on decision-making can help us understand the limited impact of many traditional anti-corruption programs in FCAS. Interventions that tackle policies, laws, and competency or knowledge gaps, among other factors, rarely take into account what drives group behavior. While these areas of intervention are necessary, they are rarely sufficient to reduce corruption sustainably. Indeed, **even if all the other aspects of a robust integrity system are in place, the system of corruption will endure if the social norms affecting people's decisions to engage in corruption are not addressed.** Research in other fields—particularly gender equality, gender-based violence, and international public health—has demonstrated that social norms are able to act as a brake on sustainable behavior change.[6]

Anti-corruption theory and practice have dabbled in the social norm sphere over the past decade. Donors and NGOs have shown increasing interest in the behavioral dimensions of corruption, and many programs have claimed that they address social norms. On closer examination, however, we have found that the initiatives lacked the depth or nuance of understanding of the dominant frameworks in the literature or latest research to develop programming that effectively catalyzed social norm change.

Programs often conflate many types of behavioral phenomena under the name "social norms," when they are in fact working on attitude or behavior change and **not** addressing the **collective** aspect of social norms or the role of social pressure. Some initiatives, such as awareness-raising programs or anti-corruption campaigns, are designed in ways that social norms research has demonstrated actually can make the situation worse (by reinforcing the perception that everyone does it).[7] Misunderstandings of social norms often result in less effective, and sometimes harmful, programming.

RESEARCH FROM OTHER FIELDS

To learn more about social norms research from other fields, see Appendix 1 (page 77) for recommended readings.

Our Purpose

This paper translates, distills, and adapts the vast amount of material on social norm change—often developed in other fields and different contexts—into an accessible document for anti-corruption and integrity promotion practitioners. **It provides practical guidance on what social norms are, explains why they should matter to anyone working to diminish corruption in fragile and conflict-affected states, and describes how social norms influence corruption in these contexts.**

The paper is organized in four sections:

SECTION

A

The Importance of Social Norms addresses the critical role of social norms in influencing corrupt patterns of behavior in FCAS and the need to include social norms as part of corruption analysis.

SECTION

B

Understanding Social Norms and Corruption is broken into two parts. **Part 1** unpacks the concept of social norms—what they are and how they are often confused with other factors, such as attitudes. **Part 2** explores the role of "the group" in creating and maintaining norms.

SECTION

C

How Social Norms Influence Corrupt Behaviors discusses why and how social norms influence corrupt patterns of behavior.

SECTION

D

From Theory to Practice provides a worksheet to be used in an initial analysis of whether social norms are influencing particular corrupt patterns of behavior. Structured as a set of questions, the worksheet should help a program team determine whether social norms need to be included in programming and what deeper analysis is necessary.

This paper is the first in what will be a **series of publications** on social norms and corruption in fragile and conflict-affected states. Future publications will offer guidance on data collection and diagnosis of social norms, social norm change strategies, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks; all aimed at supporting the anti-corruption and integrity policy and practice community.

IMPORTANT SCHOLARSHIP

The bulk of social norms literature in international development draws in some way from the scholarly work of Professors Cristina Bicchieri and Gerry Mackie.

We have relied heavily on these important scholars, as well as others, to inform this guide. In an attempt to keep the guidance simple and accessible we have not included citations for every idea, but have included a comprehensive bibliography.

A

The Importance of Social Norms

Professionals dedicate their lives to fighting endemic abuse of entrusted power for personal gain or promoting integrity with the hope of making a difference. Despite good intentions and significant effort, the evidence that anti-corruption mechanisms implemented through development assistance are working is mixed at best.[8] Indeed, there is strong evidence that some very popular interventions—such as anti-corruption authorities, civil service reform, and aid conditionality—are ineffective. Of greater concern is research showing anti-corruption efforts resulting in increased corruption.[9]

The field needs to think differently if we want to act differently and make a difference. This starts with how we understand, or analyze, corruption and how that understanding informs programming choices.

A1. How do prevailing approaches to corruption analysis limit anti-corruption success?

Typical corruption analysis that is intended to inform program design is often too narrow. It tends to omit many critical factors that drive corruption or it focuses on what is happening without sufficient inquiry into why.

Experience in aid effectiveness shows us that contextually grounded issue analysis—in this case corruption analysis—enables the design of programs that are more relevant and effective.[10] This is because understanding what **drives** and **enables** corrupt patterns of behavior in a particular context allows theories of change to be developed that are specific to the context.

Where the anti-corruption field tends to fall short is in how it approaches this critical first step in the program cycle: analysis. First, the typical approach of measuring the amount of corruption, either in scale or frequency, may be helpful for determining whether a change has happened, but does not help us understand what is driving or enabling corruption. Establishing a baseline is not equivalent to conducting a corruption analysis.

Similarly, understanding the flow of corruption—tracing the money—provides a helpful understanding of who, when, where, and how corruption works so that one can attempt to block the flow or catch the perpetrators. But this approach does not tell us **why** the corruption is happening. As a result, we may, for example, stop court clerks from demanding illegal filing fees, but they are likely to figure out alternative ways to achieve the same outcomes, as the drivers behind

THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of change is used to describe a process and a product. A theory of change process is a methodology to design a program that makes assumptions about change explicit. The product, also called a Theory of Change, articulates how and why a program will work.

ENABLERS AND DRIVERS

Enablers are the conditions in the environment that allow corruption to happen.

Drivers are the factors that cause or motivate patterns of corrupt behavior in these contexts.

the behavior have not changed. With no understanding of **why** the corruption occurs, integrity promotors and anti-corruption activists are in a perpetual game of "whack-a-mole!"

Second, analytic efforts typically revolve around attempts to understand how the principal-agent relationship has broken down: a very simple framing of the problem. Following the "Klitgaard Equation" (Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability),[11] practitioners attempt to determine whether they need to restrict monopoly and discretion or increase accountability in order to limit corruption. Such "recipe"-driven analysis looks for what is lacking in the context—such as oversight—and often overlooks factors and dynamics that influence corruption in specific contexts. As a result, many programs in FCAS based on the principal-agent theory are not effective in reducing corruption.

Recognition of the limitations of principal-agent analysis has recently led to the emergence of collective action as a competing explanation of how corruption happens.[12] This approach finds it inappropriate in non-Western states to see corruption as a failure of leaders or citizens to control or hold accountable those who fail to act with integrity. The collective action argument suggests that in these contexts, principals are often not "principled" and consequently cannot be expected to maintain or demand a rules-based order, while, at the same time, people have no incentive to be non-corrupt because they cannot trust that others will follow suit. In this view, analysis should therefore focus on the "coordination" problem of developing sufficient intra-group trust that people will be willing to change their behavior because they have developed mechanisms that enhance confidence that others will do the same.

We believe that both approaches—principal-agent and collective action—offer important insights. **Yet both approaches tend to be narrow and acontextual; they identify a very limited number of general factors (and solutions) without situating them in the specific political, social, economic, and historical context in which they operate.** As a result, they do not account for a wide range of factors that also cause and sustain corruption, including the aspects of fragility and conflict that distinguish these from more stable contexts—such as weak institutions, low state capacity, violence, oppression, polarization, extreme poverty, uncertainty, lack of trust, and gross inequality.

PRINCIPAL-AGENT VERSUS COLLECTIVE ACTION

We describe the two dominant approaches and how their "simple" approach does not fit with the "complexity" of corruption in greater detail in *Taking the Blinders Off: Questioning How Development Assistance Is Used to Combat Corruption.*

IN SUM . . .

The traditional forms of corruption analysis are too narrow in their approach for a FCAS, missing critical factors that explain why collective corrupt practices are occurring in a particular context. It is only in knowing what drives people's choices that integrity promotion and anti-corruption efforts can effectively address corrupt practices without having them reappear in a different form elsewhere.

A2. How does corruption analysis need to expand?

Corruption needs to be analyzed as a complex system, not as the product of a single, most important cause or the sum of many parts that can be addressed independently. This involves expanding analysis to include different types of causes of corrupt patterns of behavior, and especially factors that drive, as well as enable, them. How these factors interact with each other to make corruption a functional response to the surrounding context, rather than purely a moral ill, is also important to explore.

Collective Action and Drivers

The factors behind a "collective action problem"—such as lack of adequate intra-group trust and communication needed to achieve sufficient coordinated action—can be seen as drivers of corruption. While these factors can be important reasons for the persistence of corruption and its resilience, they are not the reasons people resort to corruption.

The notion of intra-group trust is complex in relation to people's corrupt behavior. Indeed, intra-group trust may perpetuate corruption when people call on social obligations and loyalties to obtain services.

Most corruption analysis identifies and addresses **enablers** of corruption: factors that facilitate or make corruption possible, such as insufficient legal framework, poor oversight, or centralization of power. These are of course important and for that reason have been the focus of much scholarly, policy, and practitioner attention.[13] Working on the enablers is necessary, but it is not sufficient in FCAS to stop corruption. **Enablers are not the reason corruption happens.** One is not corrupt, for example, simply because one has a monopoly, or because of insufficient transparency, oversight, or accountability.

Analysis in FCAS also needs to identify drivers: those factors that cause people to partake in abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. These can exist at individual, institutional, societal, or structural levels. Drivers may include broader political and economic dynamics such as competition for power, alignment of the interests of powerful actors with anti-corruption strategies, the "functions" corruption serves for people, scarcity of resources, and greed.[14] They can also include need, survival, insecurity, status or reputation, social pressure and social norms. Drivers tend to receive less attention in corruption analysis, even though they are often what make corruption so resilient.
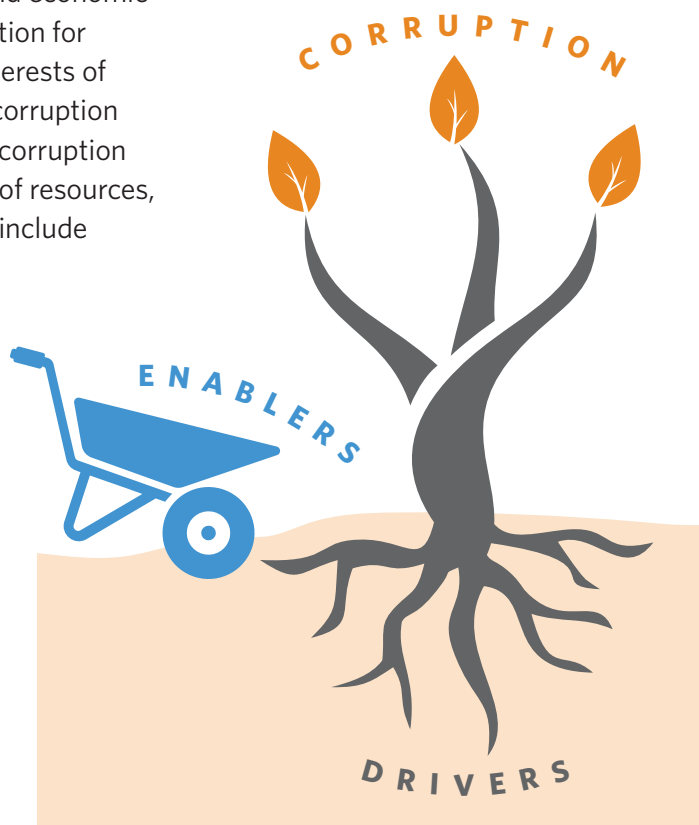
It is not enough simply to develop a robust list of enablers and drivers, or to understand the relative importance of these different causes in a particular context. One must also analyze how they interact with one another to produce systemic patterns of corruption. We have used a systems thinking tool, causal loop diagramming,[15] as the basis of our analysis methodology. It produces a systems map—a visual picture of how the multiple factors interact to generate patterns of corrupt behavior, helping analysts and practitioners develop a broader view of the problem than what they usually assume or experience, and understand the underlying dynamics that drive it and make it resistant to change.

As this excerpt from our systems map of corruption in the criminal justice system in Northern Uganda (2016) illustrates, normalization of corruption within the police and justice systems in Uganda is both a driver and an effect of corrupt acts, in a self-sustaining vicious cycle. Many factors interact to cause corruption—from enabling factors such as lack of oversight and punishment for corruption and endorsement from the center, to drivers such as lack of knowledge of the formal rules, social and professional consequences for not engaging in corruption, and peer pressure. Depicting feedback effects among the factors, the map highlights one reason why institutional reforms have not been very effective: efforts to increase oversight and accountability or to build capacity triggered social and professional consequences and peer pressure that overrode the positive effects of the reforms.
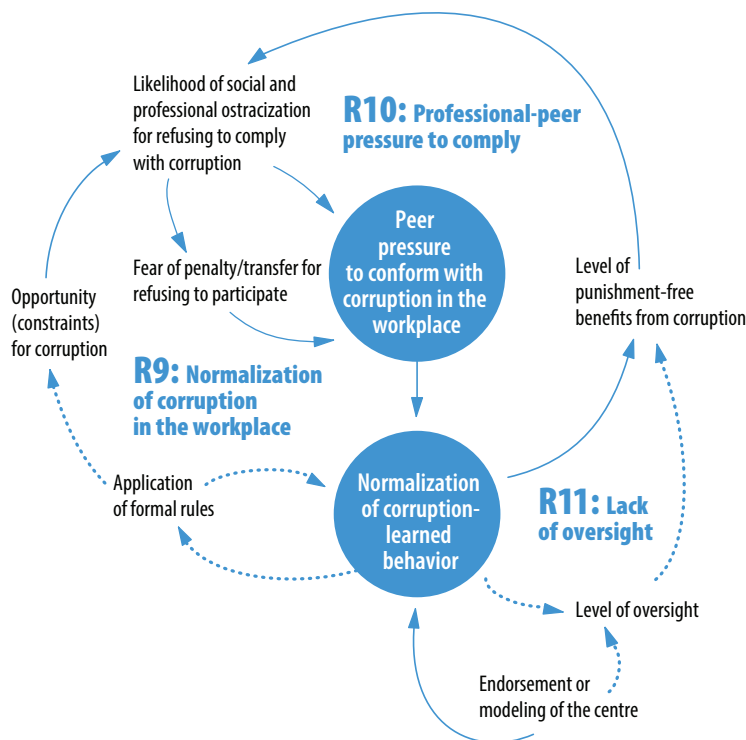
Figure 2: Excerpt: Uganda systems analysis

A3. What role do social norms play in systems of corruption?

Social norms are important drivers of corrupt patterns of behavior because they play a pivotal role in individuals' choices about how to behave. All acts of corruption—such as offering a bribe, demanding a sexual favor, or showing preference for an unqualified friend—are forms of behavior.

BEHAVIORS

As a systems analysis of corruption makes clear, people's behavioral choices are influenced by many interacting factors, both enablers and drivers. Insufficient policies and structures around accountability, transparency, citizen pressure, or oversight mechanisms provide opportunities for people to commit corrupt acts, but social norms provide a **reason or motivation** to engage in (or at least not refrain from) the behavior.

Social norms are **not the only** determinant of people's behavior, as we will discuss later, but they are especially powerful because they are grounded in people's desire to belong, and they are backed up by social pressure or punishment from people whose approval or disapproval matter to the individual making the choice of how to act. **This is why, in certain specific circumstances, social norms can be more influential than personal attitudes, knowledge, or morals in orienting people's choices.** These social expectations and the prospect of social reward or punishment often lead people to engage in practices they personally do not agree with (for more on sanctions see C2, page 51).

EX Consider again the example of Uganda we described earlier. The police officer, judge, or magistrate who demands bribes may do so in part because lack of enforcement of anti-corruption laws makes it easy for him to get away with it. But he is also experiencing significant pressure from family and friends to accumulate wealth and to provide for them once he has reached this important position. Thus, even if he wants to act with integrity, if he does not accumulate sufficient wealth, he will be criticized, ostracized, and potentially punished by his family in other ways. In the own words of justice actors:

> "... If one is known as a judge and a magistrate, he/she must measure to their status in appearance. For example, posh cars, good clothing, big houses, and make ups. How does one maintain the standard with little salary? Most of them get corrupted in order to maintain standard ..."

> "Social expectations are a driving factor. Once your status improves in society then society expects you to be different in terms of the way of life. For instance, if you are a low-level judicial officer we may not expect you to have a home of your own. The moment you become a big officer we expect you to have property and not only for yourself but for your dependents and those who think you owe them a living."[16]

WHAT IS A BEHAVIOR?

Behavior: what an individual actually does. Demanding a bribe, hiring an ill-suited family member, or eliciting sexual favors in return for a promotion are all behaviors.

This is the power of social norms. **It has been shown that social norms can be so strong in some environments that they are able to act as a brake on positive behavior change.** In these situations, the potential sustainability of anti-corruption results can fall victim to social norms that drive corrupt behaviors.

Once a social norm has taken root, it becomes a self-reinforcing phenomenon. With respect to corrupt acts, social norms and their respective behaviors spark a classic vicious cycle. The mutual expectations (i.e., social norms) promote behavior that is deemed to be appropriate and typical for group members. In turn the promoted behavior reinforces the sense that this is "the way" this group acts, thus solidifying mutual expectations. This generates more consistent collective behaviors—those common behaviors done by groups of individuals.

Unfortunately, it is not so easy as simply identifying a set of social norms that must be changed and factoring that into all programming. While it is possible that there are common norms behind collective patterns of corrupt behavior ranging from extortion to nepotism, it is unlikely. The context and group will dictate whether social norms are at play, what the specific norms are for each collective behavior, and how strong they are (i.e., how much influence they have on the group behavior).

A4. Are social norms the most important factors in sustaining (and preventing) corruption?

No. It's not that straightforward. **Social norms are rarely, if ever, the *only* drivers of corrupt behaviors.** Whether social norms are a driver, and the power of their impact on behaviors compared with other factors influencing corrupt behaviors, depends on the context, including the form of corruption under consideration. This is why a contextually-grounded analysis of why people are engaging in corrupt behaviors is needed if we are to develop effective responses.

Patterns of collective corrupt behavior are held in place by a variety of factors: individual attitudes, economic realities, political dynamics, and social norms, in addition to opportunities to engage in corrupt acts, among many more.[17] Social norms operate as part of this larger system in which multiple factors interact to produce and maintain corrupt patterns of behavior. This is especially true in contexts of systemic corruption, where corruption is not the exception but a feature of the system, as in many FCAS. Depending on the context, some factors will be more influential than others, but only in extremely rare cases is there one single cause behind a behavior.

We propose **five categories of factors that interact to drive collective behavior** (institutional, structural, material, social, and individual); depicted below as a modified Flower Framework.[18] Power is explicitly located in an inner ring as all

WHAT IS COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

Collective behavior: patterns of behavior by groups of individuals. When faced with the same scenario, members of a group all opt to take the same action, such as bringing "tokens of appreciation" to a meeting with a government official.

Collective corrupt behavior is a marker of systemic corruption.

factors refract through the lens of power in their influence on collective behavior. Locating power near the center also "demonstrates the important role [it] plays in compliance with social norms and reminds us of the need to identify who benefits from the status quo and retaining the prevailing norms."[19]

1. Institutional e.g., Law, Governance Structures, Formal Power

2. Structural e.g., Conflict, Violence, Ideology, Informal Power, Migration Demographics, Political Settlements, Inter-group Relations

5. Individual e.g., Self-efficacy, Aspirations, Beliefs/ Morals, Knowledge and Skills, Attitudes, Mental Models

POWER

COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

3. Material e.g., Poverty, Economic Options, Availability of Services

4. Social e.g., Social Norms, Networks and Allegiances, Role Models

Figure 3: Flower Framework

EX For example, in determining what kind of intervention will influence magistrates who are demanding bribes to decide cases brought before them, one would need to identify the factors driving their behavior. Do they include economic need, if say, they haven't been paid in six months? Do they need money to get paper, pens, or other necessary resources for their courtroom? Is it their attitude about the rights that come with the role of magistrate and the power associated with it? Have values in society shifted to greater materialism; i.e., is it greed? Or are their actions due to expectations that their family, as well as fellow judicial officials, have of what they should do? And what enabling factors facilitate choices to engage in corrupt behaviors—the presence of bureaucratic "red tape?" Impunity? Insufficient transparency or accountability?

There would almost never be just one factor behind this collective behavior, but a complex interaction of a number of these factors that culminate in corrupt patterns of behavior. A systems analysis would reflect this, identifying the dynamic interactions and feedback among these different factors. It would

ORIGINS OF FLOWER FRAMEWORK

The Flower Framework was originally developed by Ben Cislaghi and Lori Heise. It was adapted by the Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change convened by the Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University.

seek to understand how these factors work together in a particular context to drive corrupt patterns of behavior from which a relevant and effective theory of change could be developed. The actions required to shift attitudes, for instance, will be quite different from those needed to deal with greed or economic need. A thorough analysis identifies the factors, assesses their weight in relation to the particular behaviors of concern, and examines how the factors interact with other drivers and enablers of corruption.

EX

In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, social norms are likely to have greater influence in relation to other factors than in stable democracies. For example, governance institutions have far less reach and influence due to their lack of capacity and their role as a party to the conflict. This weakness makes it difficult for people to achieve basic needs (livelihoods, food, security, etc.), enables corrupt practices, and makes standard anti-corruption strategies such as enacting laws, enforcement, transparency, or accountability, difficult to implement. As a result, the impact of non-institutional factors, such as social connections, on behavior increases.

IN SUM . . .

Just changing social norms is not the answer to stopping all corrupt acts. There are many factors that drive and enable behavior and programming will need to understand which are in play and how they relate in order to develop an effective, multi-faceted strategy. Systems-based analysis aids in understanding the influence of the factors and their relationships.

A5. Why are social norms especially important in fragile states?

While a person's relationships and networks with like-minded people are important in many places, in FCAS they are key to his or her ability to survive and navigate life. This reality places a primacy on cultivating and maintaining relationships within one's group or social network. In FCAS, moreover, the weakness, or absence, of shared networks and norms for cooperation across group lines—which are often the same as conflict lines—impedes the development of a sense of a broad civic "public" good, enhancing the importance of one's own group(s) and their social norms.

Fragile and conflict-affected states are typically contexts where :

SOCIETY is fragmented or destabilized by violent conflict.

STATE STRUCTURES are unable/unwilling to provide security and basic services to all.

The **FORMAL "STATE"** coexists, overlaps and often competes with **TRADITIONAL STRUCTURES** for power, authority and legitimacy.

IDENTITY GROUPS are divided, hostile and distrustful.

POWER AND POLITICS are highly contested.
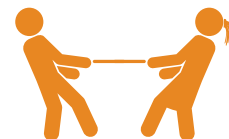
GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS are either a battleground for inter-group competition and conflict, or a source of exclusion and grievance.

Under these circumstances, people turn to other social entities—ethnic, religious, kin, lineage, tribe, community, etc.—for support and protection. They use their existing networks and strategically build relationships as a currency to navigate life.[20] As a result, **people's lives become far more interdependent, with social networks and relationships central to any individual's ability to function, and in extreme circumstances, survive.** It is who you know that determines whether and where you can send your child to school, obtain a job, access land, get credit, and access justice.

One's social network also provides security in conditions of violent conflict—protecting members, for example, when they are going to the market, fleeing violence, trying to farm, or gathering food. When the situation is particularly fraught or polarized, such as during and immediately after violence, it is highly unlikely that these networks will cross conflict lines, unless absolutely necessary, (e.g., to access food). As places slowly stabilize, some intermingling may become allowable, such as for business transactions. However, it is the **absence** of shared networks and norms for cooperation and the primacy of maintaining one's own network that distinguishes fragile and conflict-affected contexts from more stable, peaceful, and democratic societies.

With relationships and networks as the primary means of navigating life, the social obligations and rules that come with membership in these groups (i.e., social norms) will often take precedence over the law, other obligations an individual may have as a "citizen," and even what one might consider the "right" thing to do. **Any conduct, such as breaching a social norm, that could diminish one's ties to their group is much riskier than in stable democracies.**

These critical networks may be based on family or ethnic identity, but also form around professional or political groupings—among doctors in a hospital, for instance, who need to cooperate with other physicians to get ahead by demanding fees or border guards in a remote outpost who cooperate (even across conflict lines) to allow weapons to be smuggled into the country for personal gain. In conflict contexts, these professional settings will often, though not always, mirror conflict lines, as the institutions may be staffed by people from one conflict side only. For example, if only one tribe can access higher education, they end up dominating the medical profession, with the result that professional and ethnic or family networks overlap.

Three factors seem to make social norms in fragile and conflict-affected states more influential than in stable ones:

a. **The punishment for a breach is harsher.** Conflict enhances intra-group cohesion and solidifies an "us versus them" mentality that breeds distrust, fear, and, at the extreme, dehumanization of the "other." Not only are people likely to be more "loyal" to their group, but the social punishment for being "disloyal" (by breaching a social norm held by the group) is likely to be more severe. In our experience, people who breach social norms, especially those involving any interaction with the "other," are often branded as traitors, ostracized, threatened, and sometimes even attacked or killed. As a police officer in Central African Republic told us, "If someone asks for a service, you are required to do it, even if it goes against your own ethics. To refuse is to put in opposition, and this can be dangerous." Indeed, it can be life-threatening.

b. **The consequences of common social sanctions are more serious.** Ostracization, isolation, harm to reputation, diminished support— these are all common negative sanctions for breaching social norms. They have far more serious consequences in fragile and conflict-affected contexts than in stable ones because group membership in these contexts can be so critical for survival. When resources are scarce due to war or lack of investment, and the government does not or cannot provide security or services and can even be the perpetrator of violence threatening the group, being isolated or shunned by one's group can dramatically increase a person's vulnerability and insecurity. The vital nature of group membership is so entrenched in Central African Republic, for example, that a Sango proverb exists for those who are left out: "Pity the man who is alone."

c. Social networks provide some order and predictability. The groups to which a person is connected are commonly the sole providers of order, security, and basic services such as health, education, and livelihood. The social norms and traditional practices enforced within these groups supply rules and processes from which predictability and a semblance of security can arise for group members. People often have confidence in their group or community and its leaders, but not in the state. The group is more legitimate and more effective in protecting a person's basic human needs.

IN SUM . . .

In FCAS, a person's relationships and networks with like-minded people—ranging from family/kin connections to ethnic/religious networks to sports/social clubs—are key to their ability to survive and navigate life.

A6. What happens if social norms are not included in anti-corruption programming?

If social norms are drivers of corrupt collective behavior but are not factored into anti-corruption programming, the likelihood of achieving sustainable results is diminished. Unfortunately, that is not the only consequence; the programming itself could exacerbate corruption and in FCAS make the conflict worse. In extreme cases, social norm–insensitive programs may put people's lives at risk. Each of these consequences warrant serious reflection by programmers and policy makers and have been elaborated on below:

a. Ignoring social norms can undermine the effectiveness of anti-corruption or integrity promotion efforts. Ignoring social norms can hobble the positive momentum generated by good work targeted at other factors driving or enabling corruption. Consider the example of corruption in the Ugandan police and judicial system we described in A2 (page 14). As our analysis of police corruption in Uganda showed, corruption has become a normalized behavior (see Figure 4, page 22).[21]

At the time of this research in Uganda (2016), significant anti-corruption efforts were underway—almost all focused on increasing oversight and capacity building in the criminal justice system. While these initiatives did help build capacity and put important oversight and accountability mechanisms in place, they were not effective in reducing the scale of corruption.[22] Our research showed that one of the factors undermining these efforts was social norms—a key driver of normalization of corruption. Police and judicial officials faced peer pressure

to conform with corruption in the workplace, with the accompanying social and professional effects—ranging from social isolation to professional consequences such as transfer to remote posts. Coupled with pressure these officials experienced from kin to show status and provide financial support, these norms overrode positive effects of greater accountability, oversight, resources, and capacities—reinforcing, rather than counteracting, normalization of corrupt behavior.
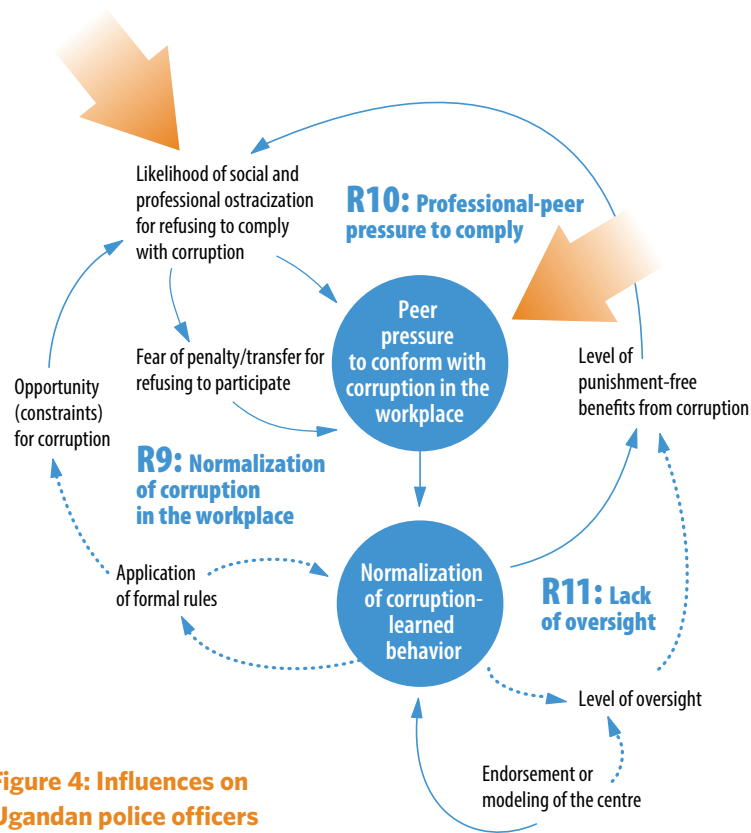
Figure 4: Influences on Ugandan police officers

b. **Ignoring or misunderstanding social norms can exacerbate corruption itself.** We have seen that ignoring or misunderstanding social norms can actually make corruption worse! "I paid a bribe" sites and awareness raising campaigns that highlight how bad corruption is are common—designed to mobilize public outrage and action against corruption. But calling attention to the behavior can actually exacerbate it by creating the impression that the behavior is ubiquitous and leading people either to increase corrupt acts (in case they previously had been "missing out") or to maintain them by confirming perceptions about corruption's entrenchment and immutability. A better understanding of research supporting social norm change could help interventions avoid this trap.

EX⋮⋮ Ignoring the social effects of programming can similarly make otherwise good interventions backfire. Consider the example of the Ghanaian government's program to reduce petty corruption among traffic police. (Note that Ghana is not a very fragile state.) In 2010, the government raised salaries of police officers, effectively doubling their income, with the expectation that they would have less incentive to solicit or accept bribes. The result: Data on corruption on highways showed that while the officers allowed more trucks to pass without paying a bribe, the number of stops and the effort invested and amount paid in bribes at each stop increased—such that the value of bribes increased by 23 percent![23] The study did not investigate the reasons why this happened; however, we posit that a contributing factor was the public nature of the policy change, which increased kin's demands on the police officers who felt required to conform due to the norm of looking after one's family.

EX⋮⋮ An even worse example provides a particular note of caution for international agencies supporting state building and good governance in FCAS. Police reform in CAR, especially the capacity support in the form of training, vehicles, equipment and the like, actually **enhanced** these actors' ability to abuse their power for personal gain—in this case, to extort people more effectively. The injection of significant international resources into capacity building and institutional reform, without consideration of other factors that affect police officers' decision making about how to behave—such as the social norm in CAR that *"people should get what you can now"*—led to unintended negative effects on corruption.[24]

c. **Ignoring or misunderstanding the power of social norms can endanger people's lives.** "They are going to burn my house down and come after me." This is how one judicial official in CAR explained the consequences of any attempt to resist corruption. **In FCAS it can be dangerous to deviate from a social norm.** For officials in positions of authority (like police), not helping a colleague or member of one's own identity group can lead not only to negative professional consequences and social isolation but also to violent reprisals.

For citizens, resisting corruption can be equally dangerous, particularly for people in these contexts whose survival may be at stake if they lose access to land, livelihoods, or their loved ones by not cooperating. Encouraging "positive deviants" or "trendsetters," without considering the pressure they experience from family and other groups they belong to as well as from peers within their own institution, can expose participants to danger.

CORRUPTION CONFLICT RELATIONSHIP

For more on the relationship between corruption and conflict in CAR, see *Pity the Man Who Is Alone: Corruption in the Criminal Justice System in Bangui, Central African Republic.*

d. Ignoring social norms might exacerbate conflict. There is little evidence in this area, but we believe that ignoring the role of social norms in corruption, as well as anti-corruption efforts, can exacerbate conflict. What if powerful people within a group have vested interests in maintaining a social norm? What steps will they take to reinforce the status quo? What if anti-corruption efforts are co-opted by groups seeking to buttress their power, or exclude another group? In these scenarios might it be possible that social norms or the programs that seek change could exacerbate conflict?

EX Our research in CAR showed how excluding Muslims from employment throughout the government, and particularly egregiously in the judicial sector, led them to fear and distrust it. This negative perception incentivized the paying of bribes to avoid any entanglement with the police. As higher bribes were demanded by officials and paid, the norm developed: *"Justice officials should demand more money from Muslims."* A judge would be ridiculed or suspected of having a hidden agenda if she did not. This practice increased the sense of grievance among Muslims and exacerbated the already gross inequalities between the two groups (in turn further aggravating Muslim grievances), contributing to escalation of tensions and inter-group violence.

IN SUM . . .

Ignoring social norms can undermine the results of an anti-corruption program, make corruption worse, put people in danger, and possibly exacerbate conflict.

B

Understanding Social Norms and Corruption

Social norms are both intuitive—we have all experienced them in our lives—and complex. They are often confused with other concepts, resulting in decisions that create programs that miss the mark; they claim to address social norms, but in fact affect attitudes, behaviors, or knowledge. A nuanced understanding of what social norms are, and the elements that comprise them, aids practitioners in avoiding common pitfalls and improving the potential effectiveness of efforts to change social norms that are driving patterns of corrupt behavior.

This section is divided into two parts. **Part 1** explores the meaning of social norms and contrasts them to related concepts. Mutual expectations of "right" behaviors exist within a group. **Part 2** expands on what is known about the group. This is a critical concept when it comes to targeting an intervention.

B1. What are social norms and how do they differ from other influences on corrupt behavior?

What are social norms? How does one distinguish a social norm from other factors, like attitudes and morals, that affect people's decisions? Is corruption a social norm? This section provides specific interpretations of key social norms concepts tailored to patterns of corrupt behavior in fragile settings.

B1.1. What are social norms?

There are many definitions of social norms. We find the most useful conceptual framing for those working in states grappling with systemic corruption is: **Social norms are mutual expectations about the right way to behave.** These mutual expectations are held within a group of people and represent what is accepted as **appropriate and typical** behavior for that group in a particular context. The mutual nature of the expectations is critical to the degree of influence norms have on behavior.

Mutual expectations are made up of beliefs about what is going to happen or what should happen.[25] The beliefs are often implicit and are developed based on

1. what we see or believe **others do** *and*

2. what we think others **expect us** to do.

Is This the Only Way to Define Social Norms?

No, the social norms field has not coalesced around one understanding of what constitutes a social norm. While most agree that beliefs about what others do or expect us to do are involved, whether they both have to be at play is subject to debate. The framing we put forward in this paper—that both beliefs should be involved—has been formulated to be useful specifically for contexts of endemic corruption.

SOCIAL NORMS:

mutual expectations

BELIEFS
about what
others
DO

BELIEFS
about what
others
THINK
we should do.
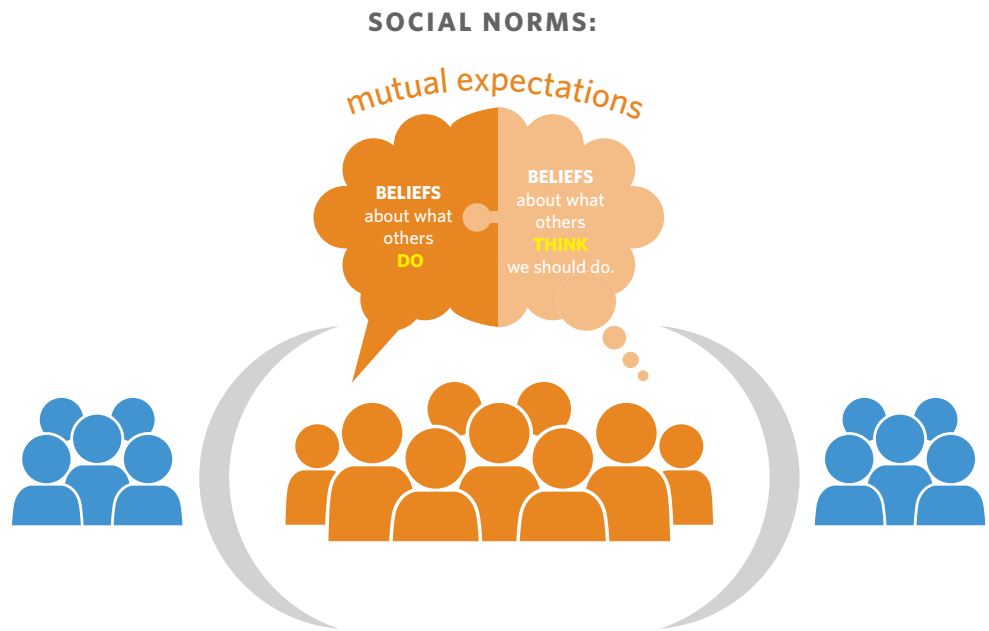
Members of the group must not only believe that the behavior is what others typically do, but also that the people who matter to them (i.e., their group) desire them to engage in this behavior. **To be mutual, the expectations must flow both ways within a particular group—between individuals who matter to each other.**

It is important to note that if we were considering other behaviors or different types of contexts, we may have opted to use a looser interpretation of social norms, one that only requires one belief to influence behavior. This broader framing asserts that behaviors can be influenced by either belief on its own—what we see or believe others do (what is called a descriptive norm) or what we believe others expect us to do (what is called an injunctive norm). That some behaviors can be influenced by just one belief becomes important because affecting one could catalyze behavior change. However, as explored in the next question (B1.2, page 28), we feel in FCAS it would be rare to find corrupt patterns of behavior being driven solely by one set of these beliefs. In those rare instances, our sense is that these would be quite weak norms and hence our emphasis on both sets of beliefs (i.e., mutual expectations) being present.

Social norms as mutual expectations are "enforced" through social punishment (such as a frown or ostracization) and social reward (such as a smile and friendship). Research shows that even the anticipation of these punishments or rewards can influence behavioral choices, even if the punishment and reward never come to pass. (More on sanctions in C2, page 51.)

EX   The following example may help illustrate the various aspects of a social norm. Consider a typical pattern of behavior that is seen in fragile (as well as not so fragile) contexts: Civil servants demand bribes for services that should be free to the public.

- **Typical:** Civil servants are possibly observing that everyone else in their ministry is demanding a fee and conclude that requiring money for service is typical or normal practice (i.e., a belief about what others do).

- **Appropriate/Expected:** They may also perceive, and receive, subtle (and not-so-subtle) messages from others in their department that they are expected to reap financial benefits from their position. This may be reinforced by a similar expectation from their family (i.e., a belief about what others expect me to do).

- **Sanction:** The civil servants fear they will suffer consequences from their peers if they stop requesting bribes, and from their family if they don't send money home. And they get positive reinforcement from a sense of fitting in well with their colleagues when they do demand "fees."

In this case, the social norm *"civil servants should demand money for services"* may be one driver of civil servants' behavior, along with other factors.

Social norms operate within a particular group (see B2, page 39, for more on the role of the group). People compare themselves or look to others within groups they identify with and care about for guidance on how to behave. The group's norms may prescribe behavior that is expected at all times (e.g., treat others fairly, always tell the truth, etc.), but sometimes the social norm will be applicable only to behavior with others within a person's own group.[26] For instance, a social norm within a community may be *"people in this community should never steal from or deceive another person,"* but this norm may not apply in interactions with other communities or the state; members of the same group would not be expected to behave honestly when interacting with people outside their group.

IN SUM . . .

Social norms manifest in collective patterns of behaviors that are:

- thought to be typical or commonly performed among those in the group,

- deemed appropriate (and therefore perceived to be expected) by the group, and

- maintained by social influence (positive and negative sanction) within the group.

B1.2. Is copying what others do following a social norm?

Some in the social norm field would argue that yes, doing something because it is what others that matter to you are doing constitutes following a social norm. While we do not disagree in theory, our research shows norms that are backed by both beliefs are more prevalent in contexts of endemic corruption. In other words, when it comes to collective patterns of corrupt behavior, people are considering (implicitly or explicitly) what others expect them to do and the consequences of not following along. In FCAS the influence of beliefs about what others do, without reinforcing social expectations that the behavior is appropriate or required, is weak and the prevailing strategies to change behavior unlikely to be effective.

COPYING COMMON BEHAVIORS

People often copy others when they perceive (accurately or not) that a behavior is commonly done. When people see other people in their group engaging consistently in a corrupt behavior without untoward consequences, they will naturally assume it is a typical and presumably acceptable behavior within the group. This in turn influences the observer's behavior. Beliefs about what others in a given group typically do are called **descriptive norms**, one of the types of beliefs necessary to make up a social norm.

Indeed, the difficulty of breaking away from what is perceived to be normal behavior is at the center of "collective action" problems. In contexts where corrupt practices are typical, people have no incentive to behave with integrity if everyone else is not. There is no question that people's perceptions of what other people do, and the costs and benefits of behaving differently, are important inputs into their behavioral choices. However, collective corrupt behavior generally is not simply a matter of copying what other people do.

There are strategies focused specifically on changing people's perceptions about what others are doing. These have been developed and tested in a number of fields outside of anti-corruption, predominately in North America and Europe, and are used when people have inaccurate beliefs about what others are doing (a situation known as pluralistic ignorance).[27] Typically these strategies involve giving credible information about what people actually do (the real prevalence of a behavior) using trusted sources. In some circumstances these have been effective.[28] Behaviors change as individuals seek to align themselves with what they now know is typically done.

When it comes to endemic corruption in FCAS it is not clear that beliefs about the prevalence of corruption are inaccurate and overblown. If there were this kind of pluralistic ignorance, it would mean that people perceived that civil servants, for example, demand bribes far more frequently or for more money than they actually do. Or that more civil servants are greedy, or support

PLURALISTIC IGNORANCE

Pluralistic Ignorance: when people's beliefs about what most others do or about most others' support for a particular behavior are inaccurate.

For example, people believe judges demand bribes in 80% of the cases they preside over, when in reality bribes exchange hands only 20% of the time. Or people believe that most others support hiring family members when in fact many privately reject the practice.

demanding bribes. If beliefs were inaccurate, the possibility would open up to educate civil servants and the public about what is actually happening and the real prevalence of a particular behavior.

However, our research suggests that this inaccuracy of beliefs does not exist around corruption in FCAS and, even if it did, it would be hard to correct. People know pretty well what others in their group are doing, so there's no possibility of correcting people's misperceptions about reality, because there is none.

Perhaps more fundamentally, in FCAS, corrupt patterns of behavior are not simply the result of following what one perceives others do. Our research suggests that in FCAS the average person is not engaging in abuse of entrusted power for personal gain simply because others are doing so. The resilience of corruption, and the fact that it constantly adapts and reinvents itself in response to new laws, accountability procedures, and even popular pressure, suggest that there are stronger drivers at play.

Corruption reflects a far more deeply ingrained pattern of behavior that is maintained by social pressure. In other words, the element of social pressure and sanction are also important, and effective initiatives therefore also need to understand the **mutual expectations,** and social pressures and consequences, related to corrupt patterns of behavior.

IN SUM . . .

In FCAS, when social norms influence corrupt patterns of behavior there typically are beliefs about what others do and what others think one should do (both descriptive and injunctive norms). This is why we encompass both beliefs and define social norms as the mutual expectations about the right way to behave.

B1.3. If the collective behavior is normal, it must be caused by a social norm. Right?

Unfortunately, it is not that simple. One of the biggest mistakes people new to social norms make is confusing behaviors they see as normal or common with behaviors that are driven by social norms. For instance, artisanal miners that do not wear helmets when working. Not using safety equipment might be common—the "norm" even—but that doesn't mean the behavior is driven by a social norm. In this case it could just as easily be a matter of convenience or finances—safety equipment is expensive.

Here it is useful to stress an earlier distinction that we made regarding what beliefs have to be in place to influence behavior. It is possible that people engage in a behavior because they see others doing it and wish to fit in. A new artisanal miner opts to go into the mines without a helmet because he notes that no one else is wearing one and thinks this will make him fit in. If this observation of what others are doing has driven his behavior then his choice is influenced by the descriptive norm. However, this is the weakest form of influence and would be very rare to be a driver behind collective corrupt behavior in FCAS.

For corrupt patterns of behavior in FCAS, equating what is typical or normal practice with a social norm–driven behavior without considering whether there are expectations or pressure to participate and/or consequences for not participating will lead to mistaken conclusions and ineffective strategy choices. A corruption analysis seeking to understand whether and how social norms are a factor (as explained in A2, page 13) needs to go beyond identifying what is typical to look at social expectations, pressure, and potential consequences. We provide a framework in Section D (on page 65) to help practitioners think through whether social norms are a factor behind the corrupt pattern of behavior they are interested in affecting.

EX. Sextortion, the extortion of sexual favors, offers a useful corruption-focused example. In the DRC police force it is understood that for a female recruit to receive a decent placement after finishing the academy she will be required to perform sexual acts with the officer in charge of placements. This is understood to be quite common and even normal practice, but is it a social norm–driven collective behavior? From the perspective of the female officers, it is known to be commonly done (i.e., typical), but not seen as appropriate behavior. In fact, resisting sextortion is praised within this group, not negatively sanctioned. For new female recruits who elect to comply with this demand it is something they feel they have to do, not something driven by the mutual expectations of women police officers.

Shifting the group to the male superiors, someone new to these ranks may follow this behavior because they see the other men doing so and want to fit in—here it is a descriptive norm influence. However, if the other men signal that this is expected of the new member and ostracize him if he does not take sexual advantage in his role, then it is likely a social norm–driven behavior among the male superiors.

B1.4. Are social norms the same thing as the behavior?

No. Social norms are about the expectations and pressure to behave in a particular way within a group, not the behavior itself. Some social norms dictate a **specific behavior.** For example, *"doctors should demand a fee for service."* The expectation and the action are aligned. Other types of social norms— indirect—do not require a specific act; the unwritten rule about what is typical and appropriate can manifest in a variety of actions. For example, the indirect

social norm *"members of this militia should be loyal to each other"* could result in numerous behaviors, such as being honest or providing physical protection.

Direct Social Norm

Indirect Social Norm

specific behavior

many different behaviors
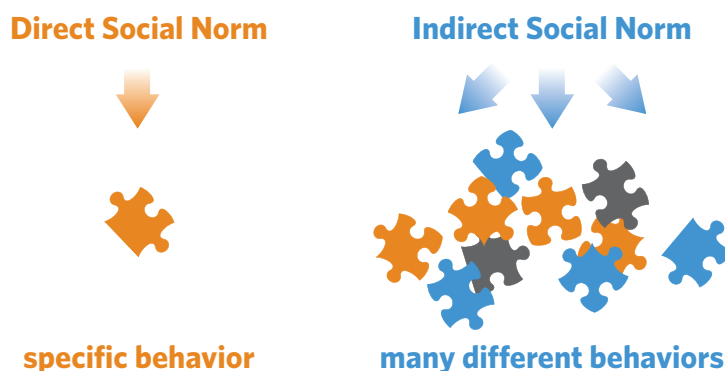
As described in Table 1, **we distinguish between *direct social norms* (the norm prescribes a specific behavior) and *indirect social norms* (the norm manifests in many behaviors).** This distinction is still relatively new in the social norms conversation, but it is included here because we believe it is important for understanding systems of corruption and in developing effective anti-corruption strategies.

	Direct Social Norm	**Indirect Social Norm**
Norm–Behavior Relationship	The mutual expectation contains a specific behavior, i.e., a specific behavior is seen to be typical and appropriate.	The mutual expectation can manifest in a variety of behaviors. The social norm does not dictate the specific behavior.
Examples	In Bangui, CAR, court clerks regularly require a financial inducement (known as "airtime" or "water") from citizens in order to move a file to the next stage of the judicial process. Clerks believe other clerks systematically **do** the same and also think they are **expected** by other members of the court to demand "airtime" to do it. If they do not, they fear they will be ridiculed or penalized professionally. In this example, the direct social norm is *"court clerks should demand a bribe"* and the behavior is the demanding of a bribe: The norm dictates the behavior.	In southeastern DRC, individuals involved in the criminal justice system explained that the unwritten understanding is that *"people should fend for themselves"*—i.e., take any opportunity available to make money. This is what people **do** and what is **expected** of them; people who do not engage in this behavior are mocked as losers or fools ("njuma"). This mutual expectation can manifest in a variety of behaviors ranging from extortion to favoritism. This indirect norm has led many civil servants to view their jobs as a way to make money through the opportunities accessed from their jobs. It is important to note that it also can support behaviors that are socially positive (e.g., entrepreneurial activity that helps people make ends meet in an uncertain environment). In this example, the indirect social norm influences the choice of behavior, but does not dictate a specific action.

Table 1: Direct and Indirect Norms

Direct and indirect social norms act synergistically. Many direct social norms are buttressed by strong indirect norms, making behavior change much more difficult. An indirect norm, for instance, could be *"people in this community should know that only a fool plays by the rules."* This could buttress the direct social norm *"nurses in this hospital should sell expired medications"* rather than follow the hospital's rules and dispose of them safely.

Indirect norms that support direct norms are not always as obviously related to each other as the prior example suggests. Consider the example of public schools in Freetown, Sierra Leone, where sextortion in schools (e.g., male teachers requiring sex for grades) is rampant. There are many factors behind this behavior, but zeroing in on the social norms piece reveals a relationship between a direct and indirect norm that influences this behavior. Among staff in school is an indirect norm that *"teachers should take what they can from their position."* As an indirect norm this can manifest in many ways—taking school supplies home, absenteeism, and/or sextortion. At the same time, members of the broader community adhere to a direct norm of *"civilized people should not talk about sex."* The result is few parents learn of the sexual demands made of their daughters and those who do are highly reluctant to confront the school staff. The shame associated with breaching the direct norm stops people from acting. This creates an enabling environment for teachers to act with impunity.

This example illustrates how direct and indirect social norms can relate to each other in complex and unexpected ways. A narrow focus on behavior only will miss a wide swath of supporting factors in the form of indirect norms.

Recent work on social norms and corruption by the U4 Anti-corruption Resource Centre includes reference to indirect social norms.[29] Two of the ideas discussed in this work are:

1. **Reciprocity:** *"I have to return a favor."* This indirect norm sets the expectation that when one receives a benefit from someone in a position of authority, the socially accepted thing to do is to offer something in return. It is deemed as the right thing to do (i.e., injunctive norm), and in many contexts it is what people believe all others are doing in their group (i.e., descriptive norm). In some scenarios this indirect norm will drive a corrupt decision—for example, a citizen giving a large gift to the daughter of a local politician at her wedding in order to pave the way for future favors.

2. **Kinship pressures:** *"Family first."* This indirect norm demands one to look out for one's family interpreted in the broadest sense—potentially including extended family, clan, tribe, or ethnic group. As an indirect norm does not dictate a specific behavior, this norm can underlie many collectively positive actions, such as taking in a troubled distant cousin, as well as less positive ones, such as nepotism. Moreover, positive

DIFFERENT LABELS

Work on the distinction between direct and indirect norms has been pioneered by Ben Cislaghi and Lori Heise. They use the following terms when describing their framework:

Proximal: those norms directly related to the behavior

Distal: those norms indirectly related to the practice

manifestations of this norm can reinforce the systemic nature of corruption in these contexts; the act of supporting a troubled cousin, for example, can increase the household costs beyond what poorly paid civil servants may earn, thus making them feel compelled to undertake fraud or extortion to secure sufficient funds. Because it is fulfilling a positive social obligation, the corrupt practice is not considered inappropriate.

While these indirect norms were also common in the three countries where we did research, one should not assume that they are present everywhere, or, even if they are, that they are more important than other norms that may be in play or have sufficient strength to influence behavior. It is critical to remember that context matters more than theory; identification of social norms should come from the context up, not the theory down.

IN SUM . . .

Direct social norms prescribe a specific behavior, but are not one and the same with the behavior. The norm is the catalyst dictating the action. Indirect social norms are mutual expectations about the right thing to do in a particular situation, but act more like principles rather than specific directives. Sometimes indirect norms will support direct norms, making change efforts that much more difficult.

B1.5. Why are indirect norms important for corruption?

In contexts of fragility, indirect norms appear to play a significant role in the creation and maintenance of corrupt collective patterns of behavior for two main reasons. First, many indirect norms, such as returning a favor, providing for kin, or respecting elders, play a big role both in motivating people to engage in corrupt acts and in reinforcing direct norms related to corrupt practices.

Second, in our research, **indirect norms contributed to the resilience and adaptiveness of corruption in the face of anti-corruption measures.** An EX example best illustrates how indirect norms can undermine an otherwise effective anti-corruption effort. An anti-corruption program hangs posters in courtrooms to educate citizens on what they can expect for free and installs video cameras in clerks' offices for increased surveillance. The program achieves success in stopping the practice of court clerks requiring an "inducement" (i.e., a bribe) to set a court date for a case.

But at the same time loss of evidence in the court goes up, as do police bribes to gather and file evidence; court clerks have found another avenue to use their position to gain financially. They have arranged with the police officer who brings physical evidence to the courthouse to share bribes the officer

has received from guilty parties if they lose key evidence. Because there is an indirect social norm in the region that *"people in a family with good jobs should pay school fees for the children of the extended family,"* court clerks still need to obtain extra funds to fulfill this familial obligation. And the family is still pressuring clerks to comply. Consequently, the clerks find alternative corrupt actions to generate funds. Without tackling the indirect norm that drives the behavior, one win for anti-corruption can catalyze a different and, sometimes worse, loss for anti-corruption.

B1.6. How are social norms different from attitudes, behaviors, and morals?

Social norms exist within a relationship with others, while the rest are personally derived. Confusing them can be easy, in part because they often align; people may personally agree with what the social norm prescribes, for example. But this is not always the case. As illustrated in Table 2 (on page 36), they are distinct phenomena, and understanding the distinctions helps design effective programs, because what is effective in changing one (e.g., attitudes) may not be effective for others (e.g., social norms).

ATTITUDE: **a personally held belief or judgment (e.g., favor or disfavor) about something or someone**

Attitudes may be influenced by, but are not contingent on, expectations about what others do or think. Attitudes are a personal disposition. This distinguishes them from social norms. In a simple world, attitudes would have a direct influence on our behavior; if I felt that requesting a position for my unqualified nephew was a bad thing to do, I would not do it. But **research shows that attitudes can be overridden by social norms.**[30] When faced with a sufficiently strong social norm, people will do things they do not agree with. Thus, even if I felt that requesting this position was a bad thing to do, but I experienced the pressure of social expectations and potential social approbation and isolation, I might hire my nephew anyway.

BEHAVIOR: **what an individual actually does**

The acts of paying a bribe, giving preferential treatment to family, and demanding sexual favors in return for a promotion are all behaviors. They result from a combination of factors such as social norms, attitudes, abilities, circumstance, and morals as they play out in a particular context. Social norms can incentivize behaviors, but are not the same thing as a behavior.

CUSTOM: common patterns of behavior people engage in

Groups have many practices that are common but are not performed because group members are following others, or because they are influenced by social pressure or expectations. People conform to the behavior because it meets their needs or because it is convenient. Many adults wear sunglasses when they are driving, for instance, because it meets the need of shielding their eyes from the sun in a situation that requires clear eyesight. It is not because of social expectations, nor solely because they see others doing it.

CULTURE: the characteristics of a given group or community that inform the way of life
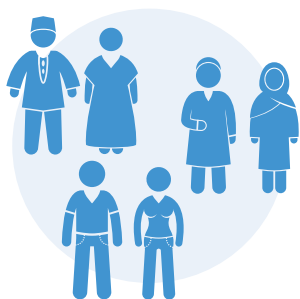
Culture is all around us, influencing individuals and being influenced by individuals. It is socially transmitted and encompasses much more than social norms. It includes the social institutions, language, history, geography, religion, arts, attitudes, common behaviors, and cuisine of a people that collectively inform their way of life. Social norms are a dimension of culture, but not equivalent to it.

MORALS: an individual's inner convictions about what is right and wrong

Like attitudes, morals may be influenced by but are not dependent on what others do or think a person should do. They are individually held standards regarding right versus wrong, applicable to all situations at all times. The mutual expectations of the "right way" to behave that are critical to social norms should not be confused with the "morally right" thing to do. For social norms, "right" means the expected and accepted thing to do, not a conviction about what morality demands.

EX In our research, people who resisted corruption, or were known for their integrity, often cited religious beliefs or their morals as the reason for their behavior. Taking an example from CAR, it is widely understood that verdicts can be purchased. Judges themselves confirmed this to us, with one exception. A number of judges told us that they do not accept payments for acquittals in pedophilia cases because as individuals they believe pedophilia to be fundamentally wrong and therefore resist the pressure exerted by the norm that *judges should accept money for verdicts.*

Unfortunately, morals are not always stronger than the pressure experienced through social norms. As a legal scholar and member of the Kuleta Haki (Bring Justice) anti-corruption network in Lubumbashi, DRC, poignantly has said:

"Those who refuse to see day-to-day corruption as inevitable have to resist in every sense of the word: Resist the ease of taking money offered by the litigant or the lawyer who wishes to advance his dossier; resist disapproving looks from professional colleagues; resist social pressure that weighs on the head of family to provide for his wife and children, but also sometimes for nephews, cousins, relatives."[31]

	What is it?	How is it different from a social norm?
Attitudes	A person's beliefs or judgments (e.g., favor/disfavor) about something or someone	Attitudes are personal judgments or evaluations; they may be influenced by, but do not depend on, expectations about others. Attitudes may or may not align with social expectations.
Morals	Deeply held inner convictions that help people decide what is right or wrong	Morals exist and are potentially relevant in all situations at all times, while social norms depend on the context or who else is present.
Behaviors	What people actually do	Behaviors are actions, not beliefs, and are influenced by a variety of factors, including social norms, but also attitudes, circumstances, values, abilities, etc.
Customs	Common patterns of behavior people engage in; normal behavior	People conform to a behavior because it meets their needs, or because it is convenient. It is **not** because of social expectations, nor solely because they see others doing it.
Culture	Behavior patterns, social institutions, attitudes, norms, values, language, etc., that are characteristic of a given group or community and are socially transmitted	Culture encompasses much more than social norms. Social norms are a dimension of culture, but not equivalent to it.

Table 2: What's the Difference? Social Norms versus Other Phenomena Driving Behavior

IN SUM . . .

Social norms are based on social interaction, while attitudes, morals, and conventions/customs are personally derived. Behaviors are actions, while social norms are beliefs. When it comes to influence, social norms are able to override an individual's attitude and moral compass.

B1.7. Isn't it just academic to worry about the right label?

No, this is not an academic exercise. Understanding the differences between the phenomena that can drive behavior is critical to selecting and targeting an effective anti-corruption strategy. When these concepts are confused with one another, the result is that programming or monitoring and evaluation may unintentionally target the wrong thing. This is why getting the label right is not purely an academic exercise, but a critical step in the corruption analysis.

EX For instance, if an initiative undertakes to educate members of a group about what the bad consequences of corruption are, the program might be very effective in increasing knowledge about the negative impacts of corruption and changing people's perceptions about common corrupt practices. But if the program does not also target the mutual expectations within the group about asking for bribes, behavior may not change. Similarly, an anti-corruption campaign that focuses on the moral depravity of corruption (e.g., by displaying posters that read "corruption is evil" throughout state institutions) may reinforce people's moral conviction that corruption is wrong, but it may do nothing to alleviate social pressure to engage in it.

B1.8. Can "corruption" be a social norm?

It's complicated! As explained in B1.3 (page 29), people often confuse social norms with something that is normal or widespread and conclude that corruption is a social norm. Although corruption may be totally normal, and therefore "the norm" in a particular place, this does not mean that social pressures drive the behavior. In such a scenario, **corruption, while normal, is not necessarily driven by a social norm.**

In our experience, even in fragile and conflict affected states corruption generally is not a direct social norm. The term "corruption" encompasses a wide assortment of behaviors—from hiring unqualified family members to sexual exploitation to demanding a fee for a free public service. At most, abuse of entrusted power for personal gain can become an indirect social norm within a group. Research suggests, however, that it is not corruption that is the indirect norm; rather, other social norms—such as reciprocity, support of family, loyalty, accumulation of resources to become marriageable—**support** corrupt behavior, but they also lead to other socially positive behaviors.[32]

In some circumstances, a direct norm may develop in a group dictating a particular type of corruption, such as extortion. In this case a practice that may have begun for other reasons (e.g., resources to wage conflict, need, etc.) has now become associated with expectations of the group. The ongoing practice is now supported by social pressure within the group; *"X people should extort money from Y people"* now may be the social norm.

REMEMBER

The mutual expectations that make up a direct social norm dictate the specific behavior.

A final note—and this is in part what makes the question of corruption as a social norm complicated: It is argued that in some post-colonial societies, people do not view government institutions as legitimate. They do not identify themselves fully as citizens with loyalty to the state and therefore believe that government agencies ought to be looted.[33] Where governments are supported by international assistance, including from former colonial powers, it is not considered "wrong" to appropriate those funds. In this argument, civil servants become the group that adopts the indirect norm of *"use of power for personal gain"* (note it is *use* not *abuse* as in our corruption definition because they don't see it as abuse) when it comes to their role in institutions. There is reasonable evidence to suggest that this does become a driver behind behavior as it applies to fiscal transactions or aiding one's network. However, the question remains as to whether this applies to the full spectrum of corruption-related actions, especially sexual exploitation and abuse.

B2. Understanding the "group" in social norms and corruption

Social norms exist within groups; in other words, people look to others within relevant social networks to determine what is appropriate and expected. Understanding the group—who is in and who is out—therefore matters for programming. What do we know about identifying the "group"? How do we determine which is the relevant "group" when people are members of multiple groups? Social norms literature provides surprisingly little concrete guidance on what constitutes a group or how to identify who is in the group. Yet understanding the boundaries of a group and what makes the group relevant to particular behaviors is important for targeting an intervention.

B2.1. Who is the "group"—the "others" that people look to?

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 what is appropriate behavior are generated and maintained.** It is the approval or disapproval from these people, as enacted through social rewards and punishments, that helps ensure compliance with the norms. Knowing what group influences the choices of people engaged in corrupt behavior is important for targeting a social norm change program effectively.

EX A market woman might offer a police officer who is inspecting her stall a small "gift," for instance, believing that all the other market women do it and expect her to do it as well because they want to avoid harassment of all market sellers by the officer. The direct norm is *"market women should pay police officers to avoid harassment."* The woman understands that if she doesn't pay, the other market women may react negatively by shunning or badmouthing her or even trying to drive her out of the market; if she does pay, she knows she can count on the others for support if something bad happens. The "group" in this situation is the informal collective of women working in the market who matter to the individual stall owner.

DIFFERENT LABELS

Much of the literature uses the term *reference group* when describing those who hold a particular social norm.

The Group and Descriptive Norms

In those rare instances in FCAS when people engage in corrupt behavior *because* others do (i.e., following a descriptive norm—see B1.2, page 28), the mutual nature of relationships would not matter as much. If a person chooses to act in a particular way because they see others do it and they want to be seen as fitting in, this is more of a one-way relationship. The "group", then, would be the group whose approval or disapproval would matter to the individual (even if the group members do not care about the individual).

Our research has shown that social punishment (i.e., negative social sanction) plays a powerful role in compliance with corrupt practices. This requires a two-way relationship—not necessarily one that is personal, but a mutual recognition of identity to the group that all members are vested in.

The key characteristic of a "group" is that the people in the group matter to each other. Given that social norms are mutual expectations, there must be reciprocity in the relationship—a **sense of belonging**, both by the individual toward the group and the group toward the individual. "Mattering to each other" does not necessarily mean the individuals know each other or have personal relationships. What this means is that the group needs to matter to the individual in that he or she needs to care about the opinion or perspective of the people in the group—regardless of whether there is a direct personal relationship; this is why the potential positive or negative sanction may have an impact on their behavior. And the others in the group need to care enough about how the individual behaves to take on the cost (e.g., time, effort) and possible risk (e.g., retaliation or other harm) to sanction the individual if the norm is transgressed.

In determining the boundaries of a "group," **factors that do not matter** include the following:

Formality: Groups do not have to have formal structures. Groups exist on a spectrum from the very formal (e.g., members of the national soccer team) to the totally informal—any loose set of people with a common affiliation. Some common examples of formal and informal "groups" in FCAS are listed below.

Illustrative Formal Groups

- Staff of a non-profit organization or government agency
- School committee
- Military personnel
- Members of a professional association
- Sports team
- Social club
- Religious group
- Professional association
- Militia group
- Youth gang

Illustrative Informal Groups

- Community or village
- Professional network
- Social network, friends
- Family, clan
- Ethnic group
- Ex-combatants
- Internally displaced people
- Mothers of drug users

Geography: Groups are not necessarily based on physical proximity. Groups may overlap with geographic boundaries, like the residents of a village, yet it is also possible that the group is physically spread out, like people in a diaspora.

Size: Groups do not have to be small. Social norms can exist among a handful of people who self-identify as important to each other. They can also be held by the majority of citizens in a country.

Our research found nationally held social norms related to corruption were often signaled through proverbs. In Uganda the saying *"man must eateth where he worketh"* rationalizes the persistent practice of abusing power for personal gain at work. A scan of other regions of the world found similar practices. In Colombia the expression *"papaya servida, papaya partida"* doesn't translate literally but captures the expectation that one must seize opportunities when they are presented, regardless of the legality or ethics; it commonly refers to politicians' self-serving behavior.[34] And in the Czech Republic there is a similar proverb: *"Who does not steal from the state, steals from his own family."* These proverbs act as a means of communicating expectations and justifying actions.

IN SUM . . .

Mutual expectations are held by individuals who matter to one another within groups (large or small) that have some common affiliation (informal or formal) regardless of geographic location.

B2.2. Can people belong to more than one group?

The vast majority of people belong to multiple groups or social networks at the same time. From professional bodies to religious organizations, sports clubs, family, and work colleagues, most people have a variety of social identities that matter to them simultaneously. These affiliations are not static; group membership and the importance of the different groups typically evolve over time as an individual's situation changes (e.g., new job, children leaving home, new government). This impacts the importance the individual places on his or her affiliation with any particular group and, as a result, the degree to which the group may influence his or her behavior.

EX

Consider our colleague, who is a judge in Kampala on maternity leave. During that time she may be part of many groups, all with different and overlapping social norms. She could see herself as part of:

	Formal Nature	Geography	Size	Permanence of Influence
• a group of mothers with babies in her neighborhood		📍	👥	
• a fundraising committee for a nonprofit that provides menstrual products to schools	⚪	📍	👤	👥
• parents at the community school that her older child attends		📍	👥	
• her university alumni association from her master's in law degree in the United States	⚪		👥	👥
• her profession (judges)	⚪		👥	👥
• the subset of female judges			👥	👥
• her family or clan			👤	👥

Table 3: Illustration of Membership in Different Groups

B2.3. What if different groups follow different, even opposing, social norms?

There is no definitive or simple answer to this question. It depends. Some of the groups that people belong to will have similar social norms, while in others the norms will differ. The question is: When a person belongs to many groups, which group's social norms impact a person's behavior in a particular situation? And when a person is faced with conflicting social norms from different groups she values, which ones prevail? The answer is whichever group is most salient to the situation the individual is facing will be the most significant determinant on behavior choices.

What does that mean? **A group may be salient because it is relevant to the situation.** For example, an expatriate working overseas who is offered a generous gift from a consultant who will be bidding on future contracts within her division may not refer to the rules of the game of her former colleagues in the home office (a group that matters to many people). This previously key group may not be seen by the individual as relevant to this context. Instead, she may follow the expectations of her new colleagues as they are more directly relevant to the decision at hand. The social norms of work colleagues at home, then, will likely play a diminished role in guiding behavior.

Group salience can also be triggered by the role the individual is playing in a specific situation—in other words, the group identity that is most relevant to the person's role at a particular time. If a person feels she is representing a distinct role—such as police officer, church member, environmentalist, etc.—it can make the group associated with that identity more salient to and there-fore influential on her behavior in the situation. A policewoman who plays an active role in her church, for example, may feel her "police officer" identity (and therefore the social norms within the police) is more relevant when she decides to accept a bribe from a taxi driver instead of issuing a traffic violation. In a different situation, such as accompanying a community member to court, her identity as a member of her church may matter more, with different social norms applicable. In this case, she may feel that the demand to pay a bribe to the judge for an acquittal is unacceptable due to her church community's norms of fairness. It is possible for the resulting behaviors in the different contexts to be in direct contradiction to each other.

Salience is the minimum threshold determining which group influences a person's behavior. If more than one group is salient to a situation, then **norm strength may become important** for determining which group's norms will prevail. If, for example, members of one group are physically present, the strength of their norm and thus its influence on an individual's behavior may increase, as the behavior is more detectable to the group. Similarly, a person may heed a stronger norm followed by a group that is less salient to the situation than a weak norm from a different group that is more relevant to the

situation. We break norm strength into six elements which are described in detail in C4 (page 53).

EX

There is no formula for determining which group's social norm will have the most effect on an individual's behavior. It will depend on the situation and how the factors involved interrelate in that context. For example, an economics professor who has been a member of the same small university department for 20 years lives in a place where bribery is common, particularly in the police and courts. She is considering offering a bribe to have her son released from police detention on what seems to be a fair charge. She is a founding member of the Women in Science Association in her country (based out of the capital several hours away), a senior member of her academic department, and a member of her large extended family.

If this professor's academic department has a strong social justice lens and a reputation for advocating for fairness in the rule of law as a key contribution to economic prosperity, she might be influenced away from offering a bribe, as the bribing behavior would be contrary to the mutual expectations of the right behavior in this group. As a family member, if family expectations are strong to look after one's own at any cost, she would feel pressure to get her son out of detention, regardless of the means. And the Women in Science board of directors—where she still sits— are all seasoned professionals who understand how things work in the country and care deeply about ensuring the positive reputation of their organization. They expect her to do what needs to get done (i.e., pay a bribe to get her son out of detention) and be sure that there is no negative press.

Which group will prevail? It may be that the rule-of-law-related activism within her economics department coupled with their proximity makes her university group salient, and this may override the norms of the Women in Science board of directors. But if her family ties are strong and they are present in her daily life, these might override the social norms of her department.

[
IN SUM . . .

There is no simple ranking of groups or norms—no one group's norms will be the "most" influential all the time. Influence on behavior will depend on which group's norms are most important in the situation the person is facing.
]

B2.4. From whom do people take their "cue" about what is appropriate and expected in a group?

People observe and talk to others in their group to determine what is typical and appropriate/expected behavior for them. Yet not everyone in the group has the same influence in the development and maintenance of social norms. It is important to understand whose behavior or opinions count more in determining what is appropriate if one is to target a program effectively to address social norms. Particular people can matter more in affecting people's perception:

- of what is typical (what everyone does),

- of what is expected (what one should do),

- or both.

FORMAL POWER

The most obvious source of influence is the power vested in positions of authority where some members of a group may have official positions, such as an elected politician or senior civil servant. The power vested in the official role cannot be ignored. These individuals have the opportunity to lead by example, signaling what is deemed to be expected behavior, and implicitly what might be negatively sanctioned. They also have a far wider array of potential rewards and punishments at their disposal than informal leaders or peers as they can apply not just social consequences but official ones as well. In Uganda and DRC, for instance, police officers told us that if they did not demand bribes from citizens, their fellow officers would get suspicious of them. If this "unacceptable" behavior continued, a supervisor would feel compelled to take action by transferring the "offending" officer to an undesirable location, described in the DRC as "the closet" or "the garage."

EX

Officials are *not* the only ones who exert influence. Many other people are looked to as implicit guides for what is typical and appropriate behavior and thus influence the creation and maintenance of social norms. These may be:

- informal leaders, such as respected elders or religious leaders;

- opinion leaders within the group, such as a prominent businessman;

- people with status, such as a prominent family; or

- people who are popular or admired.

INFORMAL POWER

They have influence because their approval or disapproval counts more. This is because their informal power within the network enhances the value of a reward (e.g., being personally acknowledged) or gravity of a punishment (e.g., a frown or a cold shoulder) over that from any other member of the group. In other words, the impact of a sanction from a more influential person is likely greater than from a regular member of the group. And like officials, they have

an opportunity to lead by example and signal what is typical or appropriate behavior for the group. The amount of informal power these people may hold within a network may also increase their latitude to engage in behavior contrary to the norm or their ability to weather punishment when they do.

EX Consider, for example, the following situation: At a legal conference a mid-career judge voices her disagreement with a very high-ranking senior judge in one of the sessions, clearly breaching the norm *"judges should defer to higher ranks."* This judge is experienced, well-known within her profession as fair and competent, and has been a mentor to many newly appointed judges—thus giving her a wider range of relationships throughout the profession then other judges of the same standing.

The senior judge signals his displeasure by frowning at her in the meeting and refusing to acknowledge her when she wants to speak again—clearly negatively sanctioning her behavior in a public way. The impact of these sanctions may be less severe because of her informal power within the judicial profession in this area. As a result, this judge may have more latitude to defy social norms, and possibly act as a changemaker if she was so inclined.

Finally, some people can influence what is perceived to be common or typical behavior; in other words, they are helping inform what is perceived to be the descriptive norm. While we do not think this is the cause of the vast majority of corrupt patterns of behavior, these people could contribute to a social norms intervention that also addresses perceptions of what one ought to do (i.e., the injunctive norm). It is therefore important to understand who they are and the role they play.

These people have influence because their behaviors are typically noticed more than others and are weighted more heavily by those who are trying to determine what is normal behavior. They do not, however, have the ability to reward or punish (i.e., sanction), and they do not influence what is seen as approved or disapproved behavior (i.e., the injunctive norm). For instance,
EX a politician may be known to award contracts to family businesses. This behavior could influence others to follow his cue and also funnel work to family. While the politician can't sanction whether this is approved behavior, people will still copy the act. In this regard, even fictional characters in a television or radio show can influence people's ideas about what is typical (i.e., the descriptive norm), especially when they resemble people from the actual group, because mainstream media is often understood to be airing what is acceptable and desired by the public.

REMEMBER

Descriptive Norms: beliefs about what others in a given group do

Injunctive Norms: beliefs about what others in a given group approve and disapprove of

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SOCIAL REFERENT

Social referents refers to those who have particular influence over people's perceptions of a norm within a group because they are noticed or observed more than others.

Research[35] suggests that the individuals looked to as guides for behavior have the following characteristics:

- They are widely known and well-connected across the group or they have close personal connections to the assessor of the norm, such as a family member or "clique" leader.

- They are seen as prototypical, or reflective of the group's identity and similar to many group members, not outliers.

- If they are leaders, they are seen as legitimate, fair, and prototypical of the group.

IN SUM . . .

Understanding not only the boundaries of who is affiliated with a "group" but also who inside the group is influential is critical in effective program targeting. If all members of a group do not matter equally when it comes to social pressure, smart programming seeks to figure out who does matter and to engage them.

B2.5. Why identify individuals with enhanced social influence in a group? Isn't it enough to know who the group is?

Identifying those with more social influence in the group—and the reasons for their influence—is important for targeting and designing programs effectively. First, it helps to identify those who could effectively **resist** change. In fragile and conflict-affected states, people with institutional, economic, or political power may be invested in maintaining the status quo, which may be buttressed by social norms. As they would have much to lose from a change in social norms, they may resist change by demanding compliance with the social norms that maintain the patterns of behavior, and power relations, in their favor. These potential "spoilers" are important to identify and to take into account in program design; if not, a good program could be undermined and, worse yet, expose participants to harm.

Second, **knowing who is influential can help target social norm change interventions effectively** by helping to identify those who would be well placed to be "first movers" or "trendsetters." These people, because of their

EX

influence or status, have some latitude to challenge social norms, or are able to withstand the social and other consequences of doing so, and their actions might have a ripple effect with others. For example, if a person has the power to penalize a departure from a social norm and does not do it, it may send a message that some deviance is allowed. If this person is looked to for guidance on what social norms are, she might be useful in helping to diffuse or disseminate messages about social norms.

C

How Social Norms Influence Corrupt Behaviors

Knowing what a social norm is and how it differs from other factors that influence behavior is critical to determining whether social norms drive corrupt practices. The next piece of the puzzle involves understanding when, how, and why social norms influence behavior. With this basis, policy-makers and practitioners are set up to develop effective theories of change that include norms.

C1. Why do social norms exist?

Social norms serve many important functions for individuals and groups. Following social norms:

satisfies people's basic desire to **"fit in"**

validates people's **identity as part of a group** that is important to them

helps ensure **predictability, stability, and survival**

provides a means of promoting **social cohesion** and regulating cooperation and competition within the group

facilitates coordination among people to **achieve a collective goal or need** when individuals' incentives may not align (i.e., solve "collective action" problems)

Specific social norms that support particular corrupt behaviors also serve a purpose, though the purpose may not be immediately clear. **Corruption, and social norms that drive it, provide solutions to problems people face,** even when the result is socially negative.

EX For instance, the indirect social norm we identified in Lubumbashi, DRC, that *"individuals should fend for themselves at all times"* has given license to people to

UTILITY OF CORRUPTION

Increasingly, scholars and practitioners have critiqued both the "principal-agent" and "collective action" approaches to understanding corruption. They challenge the framing of corruption as a problem, which ignores that it provides solutions to real problems people face.

To learn more about the useful functions corruption may serve, see Scharbatke-Church and Chigas' 2016 work *Taking the Blinders Off: Questioning How Development Assistance Is Used to Combat Corruption,* and Heather Marquette and Caryn Peiffer's 2018 work *Grappling with the "Real Politics" of Systemic Corruption* examining the real-world functions of systemic corruption.

engage in acts of corruption with impunity. This norm evolved in the context of a predatory state, extreme violence, and lack of services. While this norm may be dysfunctional for society as a whole, and may even undermine the capacity of government to provide services and security to people in the longer run, the norm serves an important purpose for people in the current context—helping them to reduce their immediate vulnerability. Moreover, for people in FCAS, the notion of a national or civic "public good" is abstract. The group they rely on and trust to meet key needs (such as order, stability, security from violence, justice, livelihoods, health, survival) often does not extend to the entire community or country. For that reason, many people in that context see this behavior as legitimate. (For more discussion about the importance of social norms in fragile states see question A5, page 18.)

The functionality of social norms that drive collective patterns of corrupt behavior can be equally valid for "victims" of corruption as for those abusing power. Consider how the same indirect social norm *"people should do whatever it takes to protect their family"* is functional for both in these common scenarios:

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- **A widow in DRC** proactively bribes a police officer to have her adult son, the only earner in the extended family, released from jail. The son provides protection to his aging mother in a context where the state offers no safety net, criminals are a daily threat, and an ongoing war with militias is being fought. The indirect norm she follows, *"people should do whatever it takes to protect their family,"* ensures her survival and group cohesion. While bribing the police is harmful to society—it undermines the rule of law—it has served an important positive purpose for the widow (i.e., getting the family's sole earner and protector out of deplorable conditions).

- **In a fragile context** in which inter-ethnic tension exists among the 16 main tribes, a politician uses her position to make money by extorting bribes from companies investing. In the run-up to an election, she offers money, jobs, and unnecessary infrastructure projects to her home region, where the population is predominately from her tribe. From the outside, this may appear to be bad behavior, greedy, immoral, or power-hungry. Although this may in part be true, in this "winner take all" political context, where access to the state's resources, and to power, is the guarantee of survival for one's group, and where people believe that only those within one's tribe can be trusted, the politician may feel threatened in a competition for power if she does not meet their expectations. She may fear that if she and her party lose the election, the consequences will be severe—from retaliation to loss of all access to resources and opportunities. In these circumstances, the politician, her family, and extended network will expect her to follow the indirect social norm *"people should do whatever it takes to protect their family/clan."*

[

IN SUM . . .

Social norms serve a purpose. For individuals, they help meet an innate need to fit in, strengthen a sense of identity, and offer some predictability of behavior. For groups, social norms can facilitate coordination and promote social cohesion. While norm-driven activities may not serve the public good, for those adhering to the norms in a FCAS, they always have a purpose.

]

C2. How do social norms influence an individual's behavior?

Individuals comply with social norms because behaving in the expected manner either generates positive reinforcement (i.e., social recognition), which builds a sense of esteem and belonging, or negative sanction that they want to avoid (such as disapproval, rejection, or embarrassment). **People around the world have an innate desire to fit in; this allows the group to exert pressure through social rewards and punishments.**

The influence of these positive and negative sanctions may be strong or weak or only exist in the minds of individuals. Nonetheless, they still influence behavior. The specific form of reward for following social norms will depend on the group's members and background. In FCAS, positive reinforcement **for compliance** with the norm can include, among many:

- being smiled at,
- being praised,
- being accepted more closely into the group,
- gaining increased status in the group or community,
- gaining protection and support, or
- being seen as trustworthy.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT FOR COMPLIANCE

Punishment or consequences for **not behaving** in the expected manner could include:

- being the subject of gossip,
- being frowned at,
- diminished perception of marriageability,
- perceived loss of status and credibility,
- being stigmatized, or
- being left out of important opportunities for social connection (weddings, dinners, etc.).

CONSEQUENCES FOR NOT BEHAVING

Typically, the **sanctions associated with social norms are social; they affect reputation, relationships, or one's sense of dignity and respect.** In a stable, peaceful context, negative gossip, for example, can lead to embarrassment, loss of reputation, and loss of relationships. While these are challenging social consequences, in fragile and conflict-affected states, the consequences can be more severe. The distrust and loss of reputation and relationships in a highly uncertain and volatile state can deprive a person of the support of their critical network, potentially resulting in the loss of access to livelihood opportunities, justice, security, land, and health.

Our research showed that, in FCAS, compliance with and breach of social norms can also result in direct professional consequences and even physical violence, especially when individuals imposing sanctions have power or authority (e.g., supervisors, elders, civil servants, armed groups, etc.). Selecting someone for an international community-sponsored training or study tour, or putting them up for a promotion, for example, is a common form of professional reward for compliance with group norms, while transfer to an undesirable post is often used as punishment. Direct harm can also be used to enforce social norms. In 2017 in CAR, for instance, judges feared their clan's reaction would be dire—including destruction of their home and physical violence—if they refused a request for leniency in deciding the case of a family member.

EX

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Understanding the nature, role, and impacts of sanctions is important when developing strategies to change behavior. It not only helps to assess whether and how difficult it may be to change a social norm, but also to determine what approach will be most effective in relieving social pressure to comply with a socially negative norm (and what inducements will encourage adhering to more socially positive norms). In addition, it helps practitioners understand the degree and nature of risk an anti-corruption initiative may be exposing participants to—and to take steps to mitigate the potential harm.

C3. Are negative sanctions always required to maintain social norms?

No. There are two common scenarios where negative sanctions are no longer necessary to induce compliance with a social norm. For some people, the fear or anticipation of possible punishment is sufficient to make them comply with a social norm. This can be true even if they have never experienced the sanction before and would prefer to take a different course of action. The possibility of being sanctioned negatively, and the perceptions of the consequences, make it seem too risky to act differently.

In the other scenario, the social norm becomes so routine or internalized that it acts like a script for some people.[36] For these people, there is no longer any deliberation about how to respond to a situation; it has become automatic. In other words, the social norm and the behavior it prescribes is now associated with the situation. This internalization makes the norm self-enforcing—such that actual sanctioning is no longer needed.

C4. Do all social norms have the same amount of influence?

No. Social norms do not all exert the same amount of influence on an individual's behavioral choices. Simple observation shows us that some behaviors are more consistently followed than others because **norms vary in strength.** The stronger the norm, the more likely it is that group members will comply because they feel obliged to, and the harder it will likely be to change behavior. Conversely, weaker norms are less important drivers of behavior and may be less significant as obstacles to behavior change. Understanding the strength of a norm will help in deciding whether an intervention must integrate social norm change into the program and if so, the right way to go about it.

Figure 5, based on a framework developed by Cislaghi and Heise, describes a spectrum of influence of social norms from strongest to weakest.[37]

STRONGEST / **WEAKEST**

Behavior is perceived to be *obligatory.*

"I must . . ."

"I cannot deviate from the way things are done."

"I have no choice but to do . . ."

"If I don't do this, there will be big consequences."

"I should conform if I want to be part of this group."

"I know I better do this or else . . . [receive X punishment]"

"If I behave this way, I will be valued more with this group."

"Doing this will make me look good."

"Not doing this will make me look stupid/like I don't get it/disrespectful."

Behavior is perceived to be accepted and common but *optional.*

"I probably should . . ."

"I know I shouldn't [breach the norm], but . . ."

"This would be a good thing to do if I want to keep everyone happy."

"It would be good for me to do what everybody else is doing."

Figure 5: Spectrum of Norm Strength

EX ⠿ An example helps illustrate the impact of different norm strength on a person's decision making about how to behave. Consider the following situation: A woman asks her older brother, who is a senior civil servant, to find a job for her son in the government. Figure 6 shows how the strength of the direct social norm *"family members who have jobs should hire other family members"* will impact how the civil servant thinks about the request.

STRONGEST			WEAKEST
"I have to give this job to my nephew or my family will abuse and maybe even disown me."	"I should get a job for my nephew to maintain my status and keep everyone happy in the family."	"I know I should give preferential treatment to my nephew if I want to keep harmony in the family."	"Everyone does this, so if it isn't too difficult and something opens up, I will try to secure it for him."

Figure 6: Responses to Norm Strength

The strength of the norm's influence will also depend on how sensitive individuals are to the influence of the norm. When an individual's moral compass differs from what the norm prescribes, she may be less sensitive to the consequences of defying a norm—that is, if her commitment to her morals is deep enough. In our research in the DRC and Uganda, many officials who resisted abusing their entrusted power for personal gain (e.g., by taking bribes, hiring family) cite their religious and family values as reasons they are willing to suffer the consequences of that resistance.[38]

Similarly, people who are more risk-tolerant may be less influenced by even a strong social norm, or they may have more latitude (as mentioned in B2.4, page 45) to ignore social norms because of their status, their networks, role stereotypes, or their personalities. This may be why, in our research in Uganda and DRC, the majority of justice actors cited by people as having integrity were women. Typically, we found, they experience weaker demands from their families for financial support as compared to men. This can be compounded by gender stereotypes (i.e., views of women as guardians of family values), which may give them greater latitude to deviate from the norm of demanding bribes for deciding legal cases.[39]

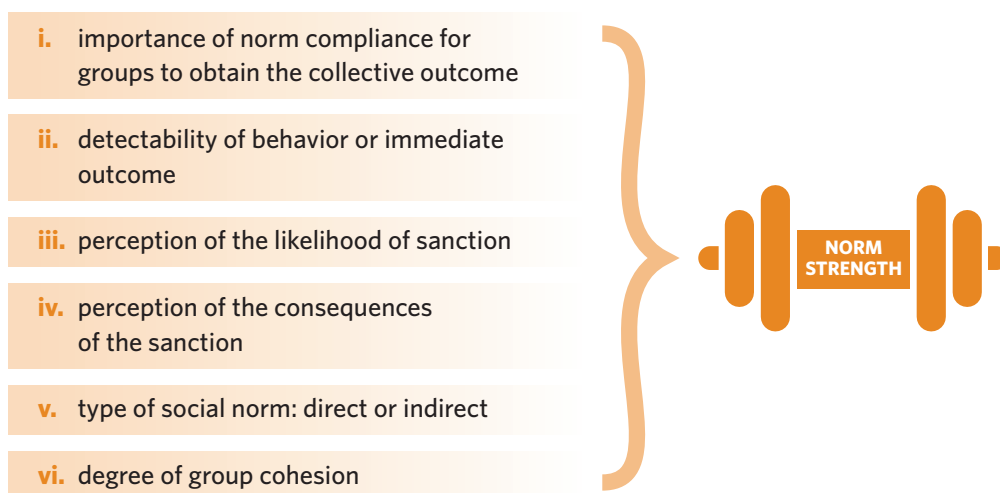One final and important point: Empirical evidence suggests when beliefs about "what others typically do" and "what others approve or disapprove of" dictate different behaviors, then the beliefs about "what others do" will determine behaviour.[40] If individuals consistently observe those they care about engaged in bribery ("what others typically do"), while at the same time their group regularly laments the amount of bribery and harshly criticizes those who participate ("what others approve or disapprove of"), individuals will be more influenced by the consistent acts of bribery than the disapproval of the group.

C5. What determines the strength of a social norm?

There has been little explicit discussion in the social norms field on how to assess the strength of a norm. Yet understanding the strength of the norm helps anti-corruption or integrity programming in two ways. First, it aids in deciding whether social norm change is needed and should be integrated into the future program. This is not as simple a decision as it may appear on first pass. For behaviors backed by strong social norms, promoting sustainable behavior change will be difficult without changing or addressing those norms in some way. Yet a strong norm will be hard to change. For behaviors backed by weak norms, anti-corruption initiatives may still be effective without norm engagement; thus, the norm may be easier to modify, but is it necessary in order to change the practice? Second, the types of strategy that might be effective in changing norms will be informed by the sources of norm strength.

We propose six key elements that collectively determine the strength of a social norm. The elements are drawn from the public health and gender-based violence work of Professors Cislaghi and Heise[41] and have been modified based on our research and understanding of fragile contexts:

i. importance of norm compliance for groups to obtain the collective outcome

ii. detectability of behavior or immediate outcome

iii. perception of the likelihood of sanction

iv. perception of the consequences of the sanction

v. type of social norm: direct or indirect

vi. degree of group cohesion

NORM STRENGTH

i. Importance of norm compliance for group outcomes

How important is compliance with the norm to the group? The more that compliance with the norm is needed for the group to achieve a collectively desired outcome, the stronger the norm is and the more likely the group is to enforce compliance. Scenarios that require everyone to follow the norm are called interdependent.

Highly interdependent outcomes require others in the group to coordinate or cooperate, or the group's goals will be compromised; in other words, noncompliance with the norm will not only harm the individual in question, but also the group. This is a quintessential "collective action" problem; social norms that facilitate solutions to collective action problems are likely to be strong. Here again, solutions may not always be socially positive, but may meet the needs of the group. Working together by coordinating or cooperating can be explicitly agreed upon, but is more commonly implicit through beliefs about what others do and expect you to do.

EX An example will help illustrate this point: A social norm among politicians in a fragile state is that *"elected officials should provide jobs for their ethnic group."* It is reinforced by an indirect norm that *"people should help their clan."* A newly elected member of parliament is considering what to do with the 100 people sitting in the waiting area outside his office expecting to lodge their requests for a job. Elections and political power are based on patronage; if the winning party does not provide jobs to its group, they will lose support and lose power. The other members of the party have an interest in ensuring that the new parliamentarian follows the practice; their continuation in power depends on it. The new parliamentarian will likely experience serious pressure to abide by the practice. This scenario represents high interdependence as the group outcome—staying in power—cannot be achieved without all members aligning to expectations.

In FCAS many situations require people to rely on others to achieve a common purpose due to the weakness of the state. One cannot rely on government institutions to deliver services or security, so it is necessary to embed oneself in groups that can deliver these results—whether it be physical safety, jobs, financial support, status and advancement, or access to opportunities.

EX Contrast the above example with the following one on independent behavior. If an individual engages in behavior because it is convenient, or brings personal benefit, it might not be norm-driven at all, even if the behavior is typical or common. A financial controller who embezzles money to her offshore account may believe that this is common practice, but she elects to engage in the behavior because it meets her needs—not because everyone else is doing it. In other words, if people in her government were not diverting money, she might

still embezzle anyway. This is independent action and not norm-driven, even though it is a collective pattern. Other approaches to behavior change may be more effective here.

> ## IN SUM . . .
>
> The degree to which individual compliance matters both to the group and to the individual affects the strength of a norm. The more interdependent a behavior is—the more the individual's conformity to a norm matters to the group's goals or well-being—the stronger it will be. Conversely, even if an individual is following a common or typical behavior, it may not be norm-driven at all. A person may be engaging in the behavior because it meets their needs or interests—regardless of whether others do the same—making it independent.

ii. Detectability of behavior or immediate outcome

How detectable is the behavior? Human beings tend to feel pressure to act in a socially acceptable way when they believe others will find out about their actions. The more likely it is that one's group members will observe or learn of the behavior, the more likely it is that the social norm will be followed. If the behavior is secret, private, or hard to observe, people may be influenced less by the social norm, as the likelihood of being punished for not following the expected behavior diminishes. Research has shown this to be powerful in many arenas: For example, people tend to wash their hands more consistently when they are observed. Similarly, illegal fishing in protected areas decreases when fishermen have developed ways to make noncompliers with fishing norms aware that their illegal behavior has been detected.[42]

EX

The most obvious way for a behavior to be detectable is if it can be observed directly by members of the group who hold the social norm relevant to the behavior. **Observable actions experience the strongest norm influence.** But direct observation is not the only way that an act can become detectable. A behavior that members of the group are **likely to learn of** can also be considered "detectable." This is important because corrupt acts are generally not observable; by definition, they are private and intentionally hidden. Passing an envelope full of money or forging a signature for a friend are generally done in a discreet and private manner.

OBSERVABLE ACTS

A behavior can become "detectable" if the immediate outcomes of the act are noticeable, such as when group members can observe sudden profligate spending, distributions of funds to family, or promotions for which a person is not qualified. For example, in a police station in northern Uganda, where all active officers have the direct social norm that *"citizens should pay for service,"* a citizen enters to report a crime. Several officers are present and witness the citizen enter and leave, although the report itself takes place in a private space with one policewoman. Soon thereafter, the policewoman goes outside to purchase more phone credit. The other officers may observe this sequence of events as evidence that the policewoman received "facilitation" money to file the report, in accordance with a known social norm of the staff at that police station.

EX ⠿

For practices such as these that are illegal or illegitimate (yet supported by social norms), the immediate outcomes may act as proxies for the behavior itself, making the behavior more detectable and, therefore, also making it easier to enforce the norm. By contrast, the social norm *"male public servants should demand sexual favors from female subordinates for access to opportunities,"* may be harder to enforce because it is far less observable. If a male public servant requires a "carpet interview" for female subordinates to be recommended for additional training, the behavior is unlikely to occur in a public manner, making it far less detectable. The potential embarrassment the woman may experience if it were to be known that this act occurred is likely to diminish any immediate detectable outcome of this privately conducted action. The covert nature of this act, coupled with the absence of immediate and directly observable outcomes, may reduce the level of compliance with the norm, or at least provide some latitude for public servants to follow their personal ethics or preferences.

EX ⠿

Lack of detectability does not mean the norm has no influence. Norms related to behaviors that are not readily detectable can still influence behavior as norm strength is made up of more elements than detectability. But detectability, either of the behavior or the outcome, makes sanctioning more possible and may enhance the influence of a social norm.

iii. Perception of the likelihood of sanction

How likely is it that one will be negatively sanctioned for non-compliance with the norm? The higher the chances that someone will be negatively sanctioned for breaching a social norm, the stronger the social norm and the more likely people are to comply with it.

Yet the likelihood that people will be sanctioned for not following a social norm varies; punishment for noncompliance is not automatic. Detectability, discussed above, matters; one has to know of the behavior to take action against a breach of compliance with the norm. Additional factors affect whether group

members choose to act against a member who has defied a social norm; imposing social sanctions may

- be costly,

- take a lot of effort,

- be risky (in terms of uncertainty about a person's reaction or group cohesion); or

- may simply be difficult or not worth it.

A norm that is not consistently sanctioned is weaker than one that is consistently "enforced." (For an explanation of what sanctions are see C2, page 51.)

iv. Perception of the consequences of the sanction

How bad is the punishment? How good is the reward? The more costly or harsh the consequences to the individual for noncompliance with a social norm (or the more important the positive consequences/benefits), the stronger the social norm. Negative consequences can be economic, reputational, emotional, or related to property damage or even physical health, and do not have to occur immediately. Similarly, positive consequences can relate to social status, the status and honor of one's family, ability to withstand or resist coercion or abuse (e.g., false land claims, false arrests, or legal claims perpetrated to intimidate a person). How severe the sanctions or important the rewards will depend on the context and needs to be viewed from the perspective of the person experiencing them.

A cold shoulder, disapproval, anger from family members, or other consequences might appear easy to weather in other circumstances, but in a fragile and conflict-affected state may be quite serious to an individual, particularly in the longer term. For instance, refusing to aid a family member who is not qualified in securing a position in your organization may elicit angry condemnation and ostracism from family members in a context in which *"support your family no matter what"* is an important indirect norm. The prospect that in the future family members might not help you when you are in need may have more serious consequences than in a more stable context—whether it be on physical security, health, income, food, land, or survival—and may make compliance with the social norm more important.

A person's own risk perception and sensitivity to the norm can also be a factor in how much negative sanctions influence behavior. Even if sanctions are strong, the influence of the social norm will also depend on the person's perception of the severity of the consequences. People may be more or less risk averse and may have more or less capacity to withstand the consequences of negative sanctions. They also might under- or over-estimate the likelihood or severity consequences of sanctions, and this will affect their decisions about whether to follow a social norm.

v. Type of social norm

Is the norm in question direct or indirect? Direct social norms have a stronger influence on specific behaviors than indirect social norms.[43] This is because people are more aware of them as they engage in a particular behavior—in other words, the direct norm is more immediately salient to the behavior in question. Indirect social norms, on the other hand, do not dictate a particular behavior. Indirect norms may be strong and people may believe in them, but because the specific behaviors demanded by indirect norms are a matter of interpretation, they are **less immediately or concretely** salient in any particular situation. They are also more likely to compete with other norms and factors in a person's decision on how to behave in a particular situation. This weakens the influence of indirect norms on a particular behavior. (For a refresher on direct and indirect social norms, see section B1.3, page 29.)

From a change perspective, behavior that is dictated by a direct social norm may be more difficult to change because there is only one behavior that meets the group's expectation. By contrast, the mutual expectations reflected in an indirect norm can be met by a variety of different behaviors. When an act is motivated by indirect norms, behavior change may be more possible because the specific behavior itself is not so entrenched, even if the norm itself may be more integral to the group's identity and culture.

vi. Degree of group cohesion

How connected is the group? There is little specific research on this issue, but in our experience in fragile and conflict-affected states, the strength and influence of social norms are influenced by the degree of connectedness of members of the group. Based on existing research[44] and our experience, we believe that norms will hold greater weight in tight-knit groups—in which members communicate and interact frequently, have personal connections, have a strong sense of group identity, and value membership highly. Maintaining one's connectedness to the group will make it more important to align to what is expected.

NORMS WILL HOLD GREATER WEIGHT IN TIGHT-KNIT GROUPS

- in which members communicate and interact frequently
- have personal connections
- have a strong sense of group identity
- value membership highly

META-NORMS

Nationally held norms are also sometimes referenced as *meta-norms*.

A more loosely connected network—perhaps bigger, with less dense personal connections, a weaker group identity, or multiple subgroups—will have less weight on an individual's choices. The subgroups, however, could be tight-knit and develop their own influential social norms. In this situation identifying the subgroups would be key to targeting an intervention.

Social norms exist at the level of an entire nation, yet the influence of a national social norm on an individual will probably be quite weak unless there are "enforcement" mechanisms within an individual's smaller social networks. This is because national "groupings" are typically quite loose—even if national sentiment or a sense of belonging to a national group is strong. The entire nation is rarely the most salient grouping when it comes to making behavioral choices; it is too big and the relationships among members too loose. Individuals' decisions are more influenced by social norms followed within smaller and more meaningful networks that are immediately related to their lives.

EX A driver who cuts off another driver on the road, for example—averting his eyes as he knows that this is contrary to social expectations—will be more influenced by the disapproving gesture of the other driver in his own village than in the city. In relation to national-level social norms, we believe they gain influence because they reflect and/or reinforce the same or similar norms held by the smaller groups that are more immediately relevant to most individuals. What are the implications for programming? A national-level campaign in these places may be part, and perhaps a necessary part, of a strategy, but if it is to affect behavior, it should also be reinforced by efforts within tighter social networks.

IN SUM . . .

When determining the strength of a norm, consider six elements:

1. importance of norm compliance in a group to obtain a collective outcome
2. detectability of behavior or immediate outcome
3. perception of the likelihood of sanction
4. perception of the consequences of the sanction
5. type of norm: direct or indirect
6. degree of group cohesion

C6. How do the elements contribute to norm strength?

There is no equation or algorithm for calculating norm strength. The six elements work together in unique ways in each context. **Evaluating the six elements can help reveal what makes the norm strong (or not) and why,** which is also useful for programming decisions about the appropriate focus and approach for addressing the norm, so that the strategy can target appropriately.

1 Importance of compliance to outcome	2 Detectability	3 Likelihood of sanction
4 Consequences of sanction	5 Type of norm	6 Degree of group cohesion
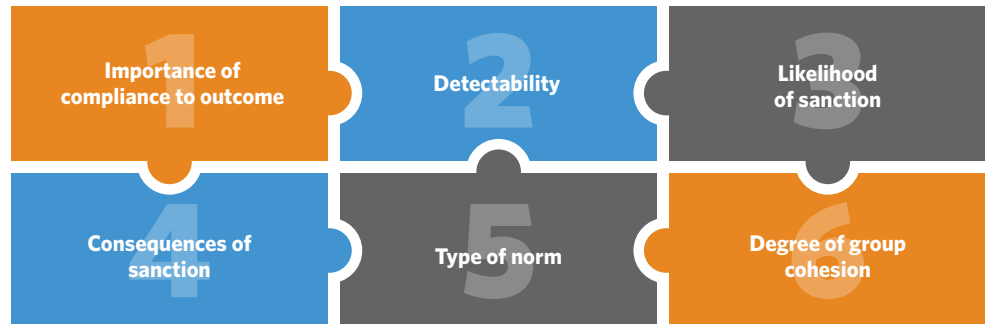
EX If, for example, the network is very tight and detectability is high, but the likelihood of sanction is low, the strategy may focus on introducing new, influential people to the group in order to provide fresh ideas and perspectives or working with role models to demonstrate that the punishment is inconsequential. If the severity of sanction is quite strong, however, part of the program would also have to include a strategy to protect early adopters and trendsetters, to the extent possible, from the consequences of the sanction. This could involve developing a new reference group that individuals could join so that the consequence of the social sanction—such as isolation from the original group—is less impactful. Given the number of ways the norm's strength can vary along all of the six elements, it is difficult to give hard and fast rules to follow for developing an effective theory of change. Instead, both an assessment of the overall strength, and the factors contributing to strength or weakness of the norm, are needed to guide tactical choices within the program design.

Understanding the strength of a norm requires one to assess each of the six elements. Figure 7 (page 63) illustrates how an element manifests on the spectrum from strong to weak.

For the strongest norms—ones that might be considered obligatory—all of the elements typically will fall on the "strong" end of the spectrum. As the example in Box 1 (page 64) suggests, this alignment generates the force for compliance. Similarly, for very weak norms, all of the elements will likely be at the "weak" end of the spectrum. In most cases, norm influence will be somewhere along the strong-weak spectrum; with each element lying between weak and strong and not necessarily having the same strength. There is no formula for determining norm strength in these circumstances; while the elements are additive (the more elements that are strong, the greater the strength of the norm), the relative influence of the different elements on the behavior will depend on the context, and would need to be investigated further as part of a diagnostic process in the field.

	STRONGEST ⟵	WEAKEST ⟶
ELEMENTS	**Behavior is perceived to be obligatory.**	**Behavior is perceived to be accepted and common but optional.**
Importance of Norm Compliance	Practically everyone in the group needs to behave in the same way to achieve its goals.	Little or no coordination needed to achieve outcome; i.e., deviating from the norm will not undermine group cohesion or goals.
Detectability	Behavior may be observable, or reasonable inferences from outcomes can be made.	Behavior is not directly observable, and linking outcomes to behavior is difficult.
Likelihood of sanction	Noncompliance is consistently (though not necessarily always) sanctioned; some deviations from the norm may occur.	Low or no incidence of sanction.
Consequences of sanction	Sanction may be harsh; consequences are serious (e.g., harm to professional advancement, harm to reputation, relationships, status, respect or dignity, etc.). The sanction may seem mild, but it is still consequential to the individual.	Sanctions have little impact on those who do not follow the norm.
Direct/indirect norm	Direct norm regulates/dictates behavior. A direct norm supported by an indirect norm would be even stronger.	Indirect norms sustain behavior, with other factors (material, attitudinal, institutional, etc.) competing with the specific behavior.
Degree of group cohesion	Relationships are tight to very tight. Individuals value membership in the group and have a strong group identity. Individuals are connected to multiple people in the group.	Loose or new affiliation of people or group may be big, with less dense personal connections, weak sense of group identity and loyalty.

Figure 7: Strength of Elements

EX

Box 1: When Norms Become Obligatory

Clerks in the Ministry of Internal Affairs typically demand bribes from citizens to process the paperwork to issue birth certificates. Even those who would prefer to act with integrity are pressured to demand bribes or to pass applicants over to clerks who do charge a "fee for service." Through an initial assessment, an anti-corruption organization has already determined that the social norm *"clerks should demand a fee for service"* is playing a role in this behavior. To understand how strong the norm is and the basis of its strength, the organization would consider all six elements:

i. If some clerks do not comply, word will spread, and applicants will have an alternative to paying illegitimate fees. The behavior is **somewhat interdependent;** clerks all must work together to maximize their financial gains through "fee for service" collection, but, at the same time, they can find other ways to make money through their positions. Also, even if some clerks do not comply, the others will be able to extort citizens who are in a rush or are not aware of the difference between approaches.

ii. Applications for birth certificates are processed in an open room on the ministry's main floor, in full view of those waiting and fellow clerks. There are few to no opportunities for a private exchange, so the passing of envelopes or gifts is easily **detected.**

iii & iv. Clerks who have refused to demand bribes have consistently been subjected to stern looks, rebuke, and social isolation, as well as removal from their position if they persist. Sanctions are therefore fairly **strong,** and for many clerks who need to support their families in a context where finding employment is difficult, the **consequences** of being sanctioned for deviating from the norm can be severe.

v. The direct norm *"clerks should demand a fee for service"* is buttressed by an indirect norm within the families that *"those with employment must support those without."* There are both **direct** and **indirect** norms supporting this behavior.

vi. The number of clerks in the ministry is small and their workspace puts them in close proximity to each other. They all fought for their position in the ministry, and their resulting status as clerks is important to them. There is a fairly high degree of **group cohesion** and interpersonal interaction.

D

From Theory to Practice: Identifying Social Norms Driving Corruption

This section is designed to help anti-corruption practitioners translate theory to practice. It offers a framework for an **initial** analytic discussion to determine whether it will be necessary to investigate further how social norms may be a driver of patterns of corrupt behavior in order to develop effective anti-corruption programming. It is meant for use in contexts of systemic corruption—where corruption is the rule, not the exception.

The questions-based process helps:

1. identify whether and how social norms may be important contributing factors to systemic corruption; and

2. determine an initial sense of which social norms are at play.

This quick analysis can be conducted by anyone developing anti-corruption programming. It can be done by a program team with strong local knowledge of the people, practices, and culture in the context or with a focus group in the community, sector, or institution being considered for the work.
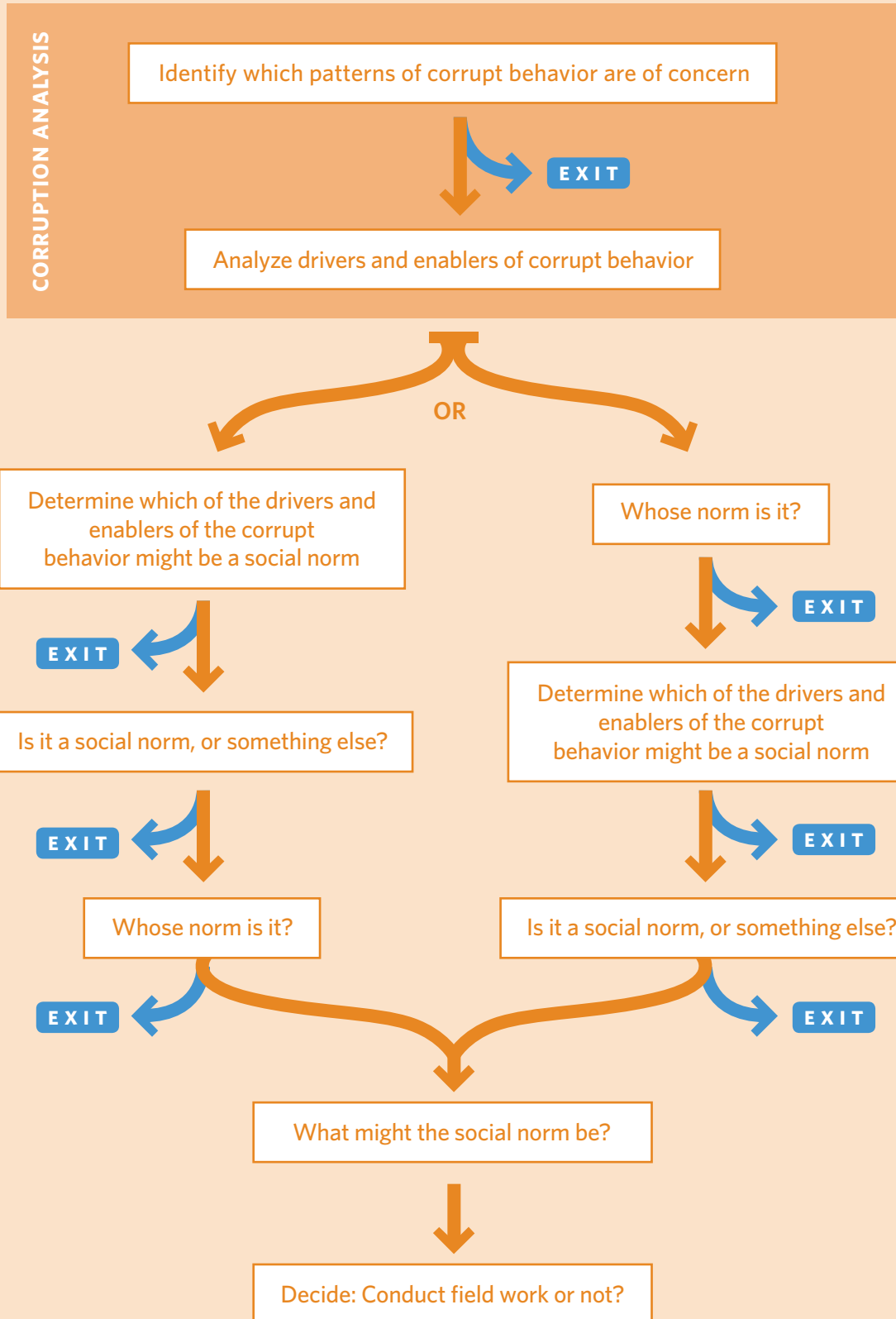
EXIT

The framework is depicted as a decision flowchart and then expanded into a worksheet. The flowchart walks users through the steps and highlights "exits"—points where a team may conclude that no social norm is sufficiently at play to continue the inquiry. Corruption analysis is embodied in steps one (D1, page 67) and two (D2, page 68) as a basis for the subsequent quick analysis of social norms. While we recommend using causal loop mapping because it enables one to accurately depict the systemic nature of this type of corruption, at the end the day what matters is that a robust analysis has taken place to identify a broad range of factors affecting the corrupt practices of concern. Assuming this exists, the initial discussion of social norms takes between 1.5 and 2 hours.

See *Understanding Corruption in Criminal Justice as a Robust and Resilient System* for practical how-to description of a systems-based corruption analysis methodology.

Once completed, if a decision is made to address social norms in programming, a more focused analysis, including data collection in the field, will be necessary to further diagnose and measure the strength of the norms. To craft effective social norm change strategies, program designers need nuanced, specific information; if the norms are not analyzed with sufficient depth and in context, the potential to do harm, including making corruption worse, significantly increases. While this framework can inform this deeper analysis, it does not cover specific data collection needs and methodologies suited to social norms. This will be the topic of a future publication.

Framework for an initial analysis

CORRUPTION ANALYSIS

Identify which patterns of corrupt behavior are of concern

EXIT

Analyze drivers and enablers of corrupt behavior

OR

Determine which of the drivers and enablers of the corrupt behavior might be a social norm

EXIT

Is it a social norm, or something else?

EXIT

Whose norm is it?

EXIT

Whose norm is it?

EXIT

Determine which of the drivers and enablers of the corrupt behavior might be a social norm

EXIT

Is it a social norm, or something else?

EXIT

What might the social norm be?

Decide: Conduct field work or not?

The Worksheet

This worksheet boils down a vast amount of information into practical, straightforward questions to guide an initial discussion and analysis. To keep it brief, definitions and explanations have not been repeated; instead references to the relevant content in the body of the reference guide are provided.

Your responses to the first two steps—identifying patterns of corrupt behavior (D1, page 67) and their causes and existing responses (D2, page 68)—can be pulled from an existing corruption analysis. The intention is not to recreate the wheel by doing another analysis from scratch; rather **it is to embed the social norms discussion within the system of corruption.**

D1. Identify which patterns of corrupt behavior are of concern.

The difference between *behavior* and *collective behavior* is explained in question A3 (page 15).

a. **What systematic corrupt behaviors are we concerned about?** Be specific. It is not sufficient to indicate "corruption" or "abuse of power for personal gain" as a behavior. Identify what situations/types of corruption (e.g., bribery for release from pre-trial detention, sextortion in the schools, falsified documents in court cases, illegal sales of hospital medications) are collective and where (e.g., sector, institution, community) the acts take place.

EXIT *If the corrupt behaviors are exceptions or not the typical way of behaving, then they are unlikely to be driven by social norms. The analysis can stop now.*

b. Who is involved with or conducting the behavior? Is it family members, judges, police officers, doctors, or teachers?

c. Are there exceptions, people who choose to act with integrity? Are there places (e.g., communities, institutions, regions) where the behavior is not prevalent? Where are they, and who is involved with them? Who are the resistors and how do they resist? How common is it to behave differently?

To help think expansively, see question A4 (page 16), which describes the many factors beyond social norms that cause and sustain corruption, or, conversely prevent or hinder it.

D2. Analyze drivers and enablers of corrupt behavior.

a. Why does the corrupt behavior happen? Identify the various factors (e.g., social norms, inadequate legislation, impunity) that might enable or drive behavioral choices concerning corruption. Be specific, but do not narrow your thinking. Consider attitudes, systems, structures, mental models, knowledge, skills, regulations, etc. Ask yourself: What are the interests, needs, or motivations of those engaging in corrupt behavior?

b. Identify which of the factors are enablers and which are drivers.

Enablers	Drivers
factors that **make it possible** for people to engage in practices that abuse power for personal gain	factors that **cause** people to participate in corrupt acts

Guidance Note: What happens next in the process will depend on your team, with some teams finding it easiest to identify social norms influencing corrupt behavior (D3 and D4), and then discussing what group holds the norm (D5). Others may find the flow more intuitive to first discuss who forms "the group" that exhibits this behavior (D5) and then identify the norm itself (D3 and D4). In practice, the discussion will likely iterate between the different elements because they are so closely related.

D3. Determine which of the drivers or enablers of the corrupt behavior might be a social norm.

Guidance Note: We offer two ways to do the initial identification of social norms—D3.a and D3.a(i). For those who were able to complete the prior steps in the process the first option (D3.a) builds from that work. If it was not possible to complete the "Enabler-Driver" table, we recommend an alternative process (outlined in D3.a(i)) to do the initial filter of the reasons behind corrupt patterns of behavior. Program teams unsure of their analysis of their Enabler-Driver table can also use the alternative process as a cross-check, if time allows. Regardless of which option the team has used, it moves to D3b.

a. Working with the completed Enabler-Driver table, circle all factors that you feel could be a social norm or have a social norm embedded in it. Pay particular attention to factors that represent motivations or incentives, mental models, collective attitudes, or behaviors. To help in your deliberations, think about the following:

- What behaviors are typical/common and deemed appropriate within the group relevant to this corrupt pattern of behavior?

For more on social sanctions, go to questions C2 (page 51) and C3 (page 52).

See question B1.2 (page 28) for an explanation of the difference between direct and indirect norms, and why indirect norms are especially important in corruption.

Examples of proverbs that embody support for corrupt patterns of behavior are at the end of Section B2.1 (page 39).

• Is compliance or deviation from the behavior rewarded or punished socially by the group? What is the social sanction?

Consider both **direct** and **indirect** social norms. Look at the unwritten rules that prescribe a specific behavior, as well as indirect norms (e.g., reciprocity) that could be influencing this particular corrupt act as well as other behaviors not related to corruption.

Alternative D3.a(i). Are there "signals" that social norms may be playing a role? Common markers indicating that social expectations are influencing individuals' behaviors include:

• Frequent or significant references to how one "should" behave or what one "should" do. These may be explicitly stated or are embodied in common proverbs that implicitly promote corruption.

• Patterns of corrupt behavior are different across different groups (e.g., geographies, ethnic groups).

• When personal attitudes (e.g., "nepotism is bad") are different than patterns of behavior (e.g., regularly hiring family members). One signal that suggests a difference exists between attitudes and behavior is when people make references that there is "no shame" for corrupt acts and lament the fact that it happens.

• People are mocked for following the rules or even considered not trustworthy if they try to act with integrity. These are classic social punishments and suggests a social norm may be at play.

EXIT *None of the factors that drive or enable the specific corrupt pattern of behavior resemble or suggest social norms. The analysis can stop now.*

b. How important are the issues identified to maintaining the corrupt pattern of behavior? Consider the circled factors in the Enabler-Driver table (D3.a) or the tentative social norms identified D3.a(i). Challenge the team with the following questions:

- How closely or directly related to the corrupt pattern of behavior is this factor? If quite disconnected or remote to the behavior it is likely not a significant contributor to the behavior.

- Consider your future potential anti-corruption program: If that program addressed other elements that drive or enable corruption, how likely would the circled factors undermine or be a constraint on success? If so, the factor is more likely an important issue.

EXIT *None of the possible social norms are deemed important to the behavior in question. The analysis can stop now.*

D4. Is it a social norm, or is it something else?

Social norms are commonly conflated with other related factors, such as attitudes, behaviors or morals. As different strategies are needed to catalyze change in those other factors, it is worth the effort to quickly cross-check whether the norm identified is actually a social norm, or something else.

The cross-check involves three simple questions. The reflection can start with any one of them. **If the answer to all three questions is "yes," then it is likely a social norm.**

Components of a Social Norm	Yes	No
Is the behavior **typical** or common in the group? Are people engaging in the behavior because others in the group do as well?		
Is the behavior perceived to be **appropriate** or approved by others? Do people engage in the behavior because others do and/or because they believe they are expected to even if their personal attitudes differ (i.e., they don't like the behavior or they think it is wrong)?		
Is there a social punishment or reward associated with following the norm? Do people perceive there will be a negative social sanction for transgression of the norm, or a positive social reward for compliance? What is the **sanction**?		

For a refresher on the nature and role of social sanctions in maintaining social norms see questions C2 (page 51) and C3 (page 52).

For a more complete explanation of the differences between attitudes, behaviors, customs, and social norms, see Table 2: What's the Difference in section B1.6 (page 34).

Question B2.1 (page 39) provides a more detailed explanation of the characteristics of a "group" that is important for social norms.

What if we can't say yes to all three questions?

Two Yeses: If the answers to 1 and 2 are yes, then it is likely a social norm—though perhaps a weak one. In other words, if the behavior is typical/common and people believe it is expected of them, but there is little chance of a punishment for breaching the norm—it is probably a social norm, but a **weak** one.

One Yes: What if we can only answer "yes" to Question 1 (common/typical behavior)? To be a social norm, it is not enough that the behavior is frequent or common. If people engage in the behavior to meet a need, like using an umbrella when it rains, then it is likely a custom and not a social norm. If people are engaging in the behavior because they see others behave that way (e.g., because they want to fit in), it may be a "descriptive norm" and thus a very weak social norm. More likely it is not a social norm, but rather a custom.

EXIT *If it is actually a custom, then there are no social norms at play. The analysis can stop now.*

D5. Whose norm is it? Who is the "group" that holds and enforces the social norm?

Mutual expectations exist between people, so a social norm must always be framed by the group that holds it. Ask your team:

a. Who matters to the people engaged in the specific corrupt behaviors of concern? This is not a general "who matters" question, but rather asks about whose opinion would someone care about regarding this particular act, i.e., whose behaviors, approval, or disapproval matter to these people in relation to their decision to engage in a corrupt act in that situation? Another way of looking at it is: Who imposes social punishments for deviating or rewards for complying with the norm?

b. If the initial responses refer to national-level norms, drill down to see if there are subgroups that would also have adopted these social norms.

EXIT *If there is no group that holds this mutual expectation of each other, there is no social norm. The analysis can stop now.*

If more examples would be helpful, look for the sentences in italics in the main guide; they are illustrative social norms.

D6. Pulling together all of the pieces: What might the social norm be?

By this point the team can hopefully complete the following sentence in relation to the corrupt behavior:

X people are expected to do Y behavior; if they do not, Q negative sanction, or if they do, R positive social response will occur.

Broken out, the key components of a social norm include:

- [X people] (e.g., police officers, teachers, doctors, civil servants) . . .

   When completing this be as specific as possible about the group. If the behavior occurs among rank and file police officers, it is better to specify that rather than police generally; if it is among rank and file officers who have graduated in the past three years, then specifying that is even better.

- are expected to/should/must/are obliged to/often/may/better do [Y behavior].

   The precise word used can represent the degree of strength the team feels the norm possesses. If it is a very strong norm, then "are obliged to" may be the right choice, whereas for a norm that is assumed to be weaker, "may" could be a better selection.

- If they do not, [Q negative social sanctions] will happen, or if they do comply, they will get [R positive social responses].

   It is possible that there are multiple types of sanction, so this can be thought of in the plural.

Remember this is the result of an initial analysis only. It may be that the team has to default to generalities where they are not sure of the specifics. In that case these issues can be further investigated in the next step.

D7. Decide: Conduct targeted field data collection or not?

At this point, the team has identified likely social norms that are important to the ongoing corrupt patterns of behavior. In order to effectively integrate social norm change into a program design, additional information—typically gathered through field work—will be necessary. The next step explores the strength of the norm, determining who is influential, possible risks and harms, amongst other issues. The team needs to decide whether they will gather this data or if there are alternative ways to tackle the collective behavior that will not be undermined by social norms.

Conclusion: What's Next?

This Reference Guide has tried to distill and adapt extensive literature on social norms change into practical guidance on the nature of social norms and their influence on corruption.

Social norms—**the mutual expectations held by members of a group about the right way to behave in a particular situation**—are often ignored in corruption analysis and anti-corruption or integrity promotion program design. Yet they can be a significant source of social pressure on people to engage in corrupt acts, and often undermine anti-corruption reforms. In fragile and conflict-affected states, social norms are particularly important to consider. This is because of the enhanced importance of people's networks and relationships for survival and for navigating life in the absence of robust and legitimate institutions, and the security threats, in these contexts.

Understanding what social norms are and how they might influence systemic corruption is the first step in beginning to identify and address social expectations and pressures influencing corrupt behavior. An initial assessment does not take long; it can be done as part of a larger corruption analysis or be conducted on the basis of existing information or a brainstorming within a program team. But this analysis will not be enough to inform strategic program design. If a social norm is identified as a likely driver or enabler of corrupt patterns of behavior, then the team should proceed to gather relevant data in the field on the norm, to enable a more detailed analysis.

Why? Social norms interventions are not simple and are not easy to get right. They require a nuanced and targeted design based on sophisticated field analysis, without which the program is unlikely to effect the desired changes. There are a number of approaches and tools for addressing social norms—many of which are similar to tools used for other kinds of behavior and attitude change. Which approach and tools (or combination) are most appropriate will depend on the specific characteristics of the social norm in question, how widespread compliance is, how much people's personal attitudes and values align with the norm, how cohesive the group is, what the patterns of influence within the group are and who are potential trendsetters in the group, and how strong the sanctions are for transgressing the norm are, among other things.

Interventions that proceed without deep enough analysis risk targeting attitudes or behavior, rather than unwritten rules behind the behavior, or may target the wrong people. Worse yet, there is the potential for doing real harm. A well-intentioned media campaign, for example, can easily reinforce

the corrupt behavior, even when the message is positive. A program based on insufficient analysis could also put people at risk if it provokes a backlash or challenges powerful interests.

A social norm diagnostic—the next step in this process—will determine the strength of the norm, confirm the group and analyze patterns of influence within it, assess salience of different groups, identify positive deviants, and assess the impact of gender on the norm, among other things. Understanding these dimensions will facilitate effective strategy and tactical choices. There are many ways to design the data collection, including large household surveys, targeted focus groups using vignettes, or combinations thereof, among many.

This Reference Guide is the **first in a series** that will also include guides on how to collect data in the field on social norms, how to change social norms, and how to conduct monitoring and evaluation for social norms change. The creation of the next products will mirror this one, building on what is known and translating it to our context and field. Future work will also be tested with ongoing partners, who seek to test new ways of integrating social norm change into their integrity or anti-corruption programming.

To stay in touch please subscribe to the **Corruption in Fragile States blog,** **(bit.ly/corruption-in-fragile-states)** where we will post about the work as it unfolds.

Appendix 1:

What other fields are saying about social norms

Gender-based violence and public health have been notable in their proactive engagement with social norms as a key to supporting sustainable behavior change. This selection offers some useful overviews for the interested reader.

Paluck, Elizabeth Levy, and Laurie Ball, "Social Norms Marketing Aimed at Gender Based Violence: A Literature Review and Critical Assessment." New York: International Rescue Committee (2010).

- This literature review introduces social norms theory, its relationship to marketing, and how practitioners can use these concepts in programs to reduce gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict-affected regions. It includes various strategies for changing social norms around GBV, including case studies of three different programs in South Africa, Nicaragua, and Brazil, respectively. The report offers conclusions and recommendations for practitioners related to understanding community social norms, devising programming to target social norms, and monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation.

Alexander-Scott, Michaeljon, Emma Bell, and Jenny Holden, "DFID Guidance Note: Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)," Department for International Development, Violence Against Women and Girls Helpdesk (2016).

- This guidance note provides evidence, examples, and instruction on how practitioners can address harmful social norms in their programs to prevent violence against women and girls. The report includes information on the relationship between social norms and VAWG, how to identify and measure social norms, and outlines principles of program design. It includes case studies of how social norms can be applied in VAWG programming in Brazil, India, Uganda, South Sudan, Cambodia, and more.

The Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change convened by the Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University.

- The Learning Collaborative disseminates information about the influence of social norms in shaping adolescents' lives to apply normative science in designing projects and programs to improve adolescent sexual and reproductive health. The Collaborative has

several research products useful for practitioners, such as a guiding Conceptual Framework to Social Norm Change, Top 20 Resources on Social Norms, and Community-Based Norm-Shifting Interventions.

Bingenheimer, Jeffrey B., "Advancing Social Norms Practice for Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health: The Why and the How," Supplement to the *Journal of Adolescent Health* 64, no. 4 (2019).

- This supplement contains several articles of recent research on social norms around adolescent sexual and reproductive health (AYSRH). These articles examine what social norms exist; how they arise, are maintained, and change; how they relate to other aspects of social organization and to purely individual-level attitudes and beliefs; what types of interventions, under what conditions, may be effective in changing social norms and improving AYSRH; and how those interventions can be scaled up.

Appendix 2:
Glossary

Attitude: A personally held belief or judgment (e.g., favor or disfavor) about something or someone.

Behavior: What a person actually does. Behaviors result from a combination of factors such as social norms, attitudes, abilities, circumstance, and morals as they play out in a particular context.

Causal loop mapping: An analytical tool and a visual representation of how the factors in a system interact and maintain the system.

Collective action theory: A competing explanation of how corruption happens, asserting that although non-corrupt behavior is collectively in the group's interest, it is in no one's individual best interest to unilaterally act in a non-corrupt way.

Corruption: The abuse of entrusted power for personal gain.

Culture: The characteristics of a given group or community that inform the way of life.

Customs: Common patterns of behavior people engage in.

Dependent behavior: One needs to know what others are doing to get a result, but the group does not care how one behaves (i.e., they have no incentive to monitor or regulate the individual's behavior).

Descriptive norm: Beliefs about what others in a given group do.

Direct social norm: Mutual expectations held by a group about the right way to behave, which prescribe a specific behavior.

Drivers: The factors that cause or motivate patterns of corrupt behavior in certain contexts.

Empirical expectation: What we see or believe that others do.

Enablers: The conditions in the environment that allow corruption to happen.

Fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS): Typically, contexts where society is fragmented, the social contract is fraught, state institutions are weak, power is contested, and/or the country is destabilized by violent conflict.

Independent behavior: The behavior is self-contained (i.e., an individual does not need to coordinate with others to decide what to do).

Indirect social norm: Mutual expectations held by a group about the right way to behave that can be met by many different behaviors.

Injunctive norm: Beliefs about what others in a given group approve and disapprove of.

Interdependent behavior: All members of a group must act in a certain manner for the common goal to be achieved. In other words, collective action is needed to achieve a group goal.

Moral: An individual's inner convictions about what is right and wrong, applicable to all situations at all times.

Normative expectation: What we think others expect us to do.

Peacebuilding: Refers to measures designed to consolidate peaceful relations and strengthen viable political, socio-economic, and cultural institutions capable of handling conflict, and to strengthen other mechanisms that will either create or support the necessary conditions for sustained peace.

Pluralistic ignorance: When people's beliefs about what most others do or about most others' support for a particular behavior are inaccurate.

Principal-agent: The relationship between a principal, who delegates tasks and ensures compliance with regulations, and an agent, who is empowered to make decisions on the principal's behalf.

Reference group: A group of people who identify with each other or are important to each other in some way, among whom mutual expectations about what is appropriate behavior (i.e., social norms) are generated, maintained, and applied.

Social norms: Mutual expectations about the right way to behave held by a group.

Social referent: Those who have particular influence over people's perceptions of a norm within a group because they are noticed or observed more than others.

Social sanction: The prospect of approval or positive consequences from a reference group if individuals follow the norm (positive sanction), or of personal cost or disadvantage if they do not (negative sanction).

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Endnotes

1 See Johnson, Taxell, and Zaum, *Mapping Evidence Gaps;* Hanna et al., *Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Policy;* Lambsdorff, *Preventing Corruption by Promoting Trust"*

2 See Chayes, *When Corruption Is the Operating System;* Rotberg, *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order;* or Chabal and Daloz, Africa Works.

3 CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, Designing Strategic Initiatives to Impact Conflict Systems: Systems Approaches to Peacebuilding. A Resource Manual.

4 Cislaghi and Heise, *Measuring Gender-Related Social Norms.*

5 Quotes taken from project interviews in Uganda 2016 (*Facilitation in the Criminal Justice System*) and CAR 2017 (*Pity the man who is alone*). Reports available online.

6 See Cislaghi and Heise, "Four Avenues of Normative Influence"; Cislaghi and Heise, *Measuring Gender-Related Social Norms;* and Alexander-Scott, Bell, and Holden, *DFID Guidance Note.*

7 See Cialdini, "Crafting Normative Messages"; and Cialdini et al., "Managing Social Norms."

8 See Johnson, Taxell, and Zaum, *Mapping Evidence Gaps;* Hanna et al., *Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Policy.*

9 Lambsdorff, *Preventing Corruption by Promoting Trust.*

10 See Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning;* or Copestake and Williams, "Political-Economy Analysis."

11 Klitgaard, *Controlling Corruption.*

12 See Marquette and Peiffer, *Corruption and Collective Action;* Persson, Rothstein, and Teorell, "Why Anticorruption Reforms Fail"; and Mungiu-Pippidi, "Corruption: Diagnosis and Treatment."

13 See for instance the OECD Best Practices in Combating Corruption or the UNODC Best Practices in the Fight Against Corruption website at https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/best-practices-in-the-fight-against-corruption.html, which includes submissions from member states on the efforts they have made to combat corruption.

14 See Marquette and Peiffer, "Grappling with the 'real politics' of systemic corruption: theoretical debates versus 'real-world' functions; Khan, Andreoni, and Roy, "Anti-Corruption in Adverse Contexts: A Strategic Approach."

15 This tool was first developed by Peter Senge in his seminal book, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization.* New York: Doubleday, 1990, based on systems dynamics approach developed by Jay Forrester of MIT in the 1950s.

16 Scharbatke-Church and Chigas, *Facilitation in the Criminal Justice System,* 27.

17 Adapted from Heise, "Initial Thoughts."

18 See Cislaghi and Heise, "Using Social Norms Theory"; and Kohli and Lenzi, "How Do Social Systems Drive Behavior?"

19 Kohli and Lenzi, "How Do Social Systems Drive Behavior?"

20 Baez-Camargo et al., "Social Norms and Attitudes Towards Corruption."

21 Scharbatke-Church and Chigas, *Facilitation in the Criminal Justice System.*

22 None of the various assessments processes registered any change in corruption in the police and justice sector or overall in this time period. See the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, Afrobarometer's work on perceived corruption among judges and magistrates, available at http://afrobarometer.org/publications/ad253-ugandans-endorse-rule-law-distrust-and-perceived-corruption-mar-views-courts; and The Hague Institute for the Innovation of Law, Justice Needs in Uganda.

23 Foltz and Opoku-Agyemang, *Do Higher Salaries Lower Petty Corruption?*

24 De Coster et al., *Pity the Man Who Is Alone.*

25 Bicchieri, Norms in the Wild,11. [THE 11 WAS FROM OTHER DRAFT]

26 Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics," as cited in Ijewereme, "Anatomy of Corruption."

27 See Prentice, "Intervening to Change Social Norms"; Prentice and Miller, "Pluralistic Ignorance and the Perpetuation of Social Norms by Unwitting Actors." The strategies used to correct pluralistic ignorance apply to both descriptive and injunctive norms, i.e., perceptions of how much people in the group support the behavior.

28 Tankard and Paluck, "Norm Perception as a Vehicle."

29 Jackson and Köbis, *Anti-Corruption Through a Social Norms Lens.*

30 See Mackie et al., "What are Social Norms?"; and Paluck and Shepherd, "The Salience of Social Referents."

31 Original quote: « Ceux qui refusent de voir dans la corruption quotidienne une fatalité doivent résister dans tous les sens du terme: résister à la facilité de prendre l'argent tendu par le justiciable ou l'avocat qui souhaite faire avancer un dossier, résister au regard réprobateur de l'entourage professionnel, résister à la pression sociale qui pèse sur le chef de famille qui doit nourrir femme et enfants, mais parfois aussi neveux, cousins, parents, ...les principes d'intégrité résistent difficilement à l'épreuve de la réalité congolaise. » From Kabuya and Liégeois, "Corruption: résister à tous prix?"

32 Jackson and Köbis, *Anti-Corruption Through a Social Norms Lens.*

33 See Ifidon, "Citizenship, Statehood and the Problem of Democratization in Nigeria"; Osaghae, *Structural Adjustment and Ethnicity in Nigeria;* and Ijewereme, "Anatomy of Corruption in the Nigerian Public Sector."

34 Jurksaitis, *Improving Anticorruption in Colombia.*

35 Tankard and Paluck, "Norm Perception as a Vehicle."

36 See Lamberts and Shanks, *Knowledge Concepts and Categories;* and Bicchieri, *Norms in the Wild.*

37 Cislaghi and Heise, "Four Avenues of Normative Influence."

38 Hatanga, "When Cows Facilitate Court."

39 Barnard-Webster, "The Value of a Stereotype."

40 Bicchieri and Xiao, "Do the Right Thing."

41 Cislaghi and Heise suggest four factors that are key to the strength of normative influence: (a) whether the practice is independent or interdependent; (b) whether the practice is detectable or not; (c) whether compliance with the norm is subject to weak or strong sanctions and how likely they are; and (d) whether the practice is influenced by indirect or direct norms. (See Cislaghi and Heise, "Four Avenues of Normative Influence.") We break out the sanctions into two factors addressing likelihood of sanction on the one hand and the harshness and severity of consequences of the sanctions on the other, as our experience suggests that the influence of sanctions depends on the interplay of these two dimensions.

42 Ostrom, "Collective Action."

43 Cislaghi and Heise, "Four Avenues of Normative Influence."

44 See for instance, Tankard and Paluck, "Norm Perception as a Vehicle"; or Gelfand, *Rule Makers, Rule Breakers.*