



TIPPING POINT SOCIAL NORMS INNOVATIONS SERIES

Brief 3: *Amra-o-Korchi* (We are also doing)
BANGLADESH



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Amader Kotha

Adolescents use street drama and dialogue to challenge existing social norms and show positive alternatives.

Football for Girls

Read about how girls participation in sports is changing social norms in some parts of Bangladesh.

Amrao Korchi

Girls and boys switch roles to challenge gendered social norms, where boys do household work usually done by girls (cooking, doing laundry, etc).

Tea Stall Conversations

Men gather to drink tea and discuss gender roles, girls rights, and child, early, and forced marriage with each other.

NEPAL

Cooking Competition

Boys compete in a cooking competition and girls judge their food.

Intergenerational Dialogue

Communication gap between adolescents and their parents is bridged in order to better understand adolescent's aspirations.

Raksha Bandhan

The traditional ritual of a sister tying a thread around a brother's wrist and asking him for protection is modified where brothers also tie a thread around their sisters' wrist and both vow to practice gender equality and pursue their dreams.

Street Drama

Girls and boys perform street dramas to challenge social norms around dowry and early marriage, and introduce the benefits of investing in girls.





BACKGROUND

Research and experience show that social change toward gender justice requires more than supportive attitudes and awareness among individuals.¹ People do not exist as islands; they make up a social system that is interdependent and built on tacit conventions of behavior. What people believe others do, what they think others expect from them, and what people believe the consequences of nonconformance to be—these are dimensions of social norms that play a tremendous part in determining people’s actions and choices, even when an individual has knowledge and attitudes that would suggest a different choice.

Change for gender justice requires more than sharing knowledge and promoting equitable attitudes of individuals. It also requires a society in which people’s support for gender justice becomes as normal and accepted as removing your shoes indoors or paying respect to your elders is in many parts of Asia. So then, how does one engage with social environments to shift what is considered ‘normal’?

The Tipping Point² initiative, which aims to promote positive alternatives to child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) for girls in Bangladesh and Nepal, has taken up this question as a core part of its work. From 2015 to 2017, the project built on findings from its **Community Participatory Analysis (CPA) Study** to identify ways to drive social norms change that transforms the root causes of CEFM. This brief is part of a series highlighting Tipping Point programming innovations based on key design principles for social norms work, which CARE developed based on the existing academic and gray literature.³ These innovations complement a broader suite of activities to facilitate the agency and options of adolescent girls, working with girls, boys, parents, key formal and informal influencers, and local decision makers.⁴

1 Heise, L. & Manji, K. (2016). Social Norms. GSDRC Professional Development Reading Pack no. 31. Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham

2 For more information on Tipping Point and partners, visit https://caretippingpoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/care_tipping-point_web.pdf

3 Bicchieri, C. (2006). *The Grammar of Society: The Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.; Bicchieri, C., Lindemans, J., & Jiang, T. (2014). *A structured approach to a diagnostic of collective practices*. *Front. Psychol.* 5:1418;. Mackie, G., Moneti, F., Shakya, H. & Denny, E. (2015). *What are social norms? How are they measured?* California, USA: UNICEF/Centre on Global Justice, University of San Diego

4 See the full Theory of Change for the programming of Tipping Point here: <https://caretippingpoint.org/innovation/theory-of-change-2/>

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR SOCIAL NORMS PROGRAMMING

To guide and inform its work, Tipping Point distilled 8 design principles for engaging with social norms change, drawing from academic and gray literature on the topic. These include:

- 1. Find early adopters:** Often, people are already living their lives in positive ways that support girls' choices and opportunities. Find them.
- 2. Build support groups of early adopters:** It can be hard to embody positive, rights-based change alone. Groups help individuals support, encourage and trouble-shoot.
- 3. Use future-oriented positive messages:** Help people imagine positive alternatives. Change is possible.
- 4. Open space for dialogue:** Get people talking to each other about new ideas. Challenge the implicit assumptions that everyone holds the same views, experiences and preferences.
- 5. Facilitate public debate:** Engage publicly with community members to debate on what is OK in this context.
- 6. Expect by-stander action:** Move from envisioning possibilities of justice to action. This involves building community and accountability, so that people show up for girls' rights in their words and actions.
- 7. Show examples of positive behavior in public:** Demonstrate that the positive shift we hope for already exists. And it is totally normal.
- 8. Map allies and ask for their support:** Identify the resources and networks we need to support positive change for individuals, families and communities.



THE INNOVATION: AMRA-O-KORCHI “WE ARE ALSO DOING” CAMPAIGN

In rural communities in the Sunamganj district of Bangladesh, household chores take up much of women and girls’ days – limiting their time and opportunities for self-growth and care, social networks and community engagement. For girls, time that could be spent studying is taken up with washing, cooking, caring for younger siblings, and cleaning, while boys have much greater freedom to pursue their studies and enjoy leisure time with friends. In some cases, girls leave their own education to help their families with domestic work, particularly when a mother falls ill. Once married, adolescent girls are expected to help their mothers-in-law with all their tasks, which makes staying in school near impossible, even in the rare instance when the in-laws might be nominally supportive of a young bride’s education. In contrast, a girl that is allowed to demonstrate growing capabilities in school and in society has a better chance of avoiding early marriage because her family may see that an alternative path is feasible. In addition to giving girls more opportunities for self-development, a more equitable sharing of domestic tasks across males and females should generate greater appreciation for the specialized skills required by cooking, washing, and childcare.

To begin engaging with norms around household work and gendered divisions of work, Tipping Point staff and community volunteers examined their own lives and practices. While in many homes, women and girls took on most of the household work, there were exceptions where certain boys and men also took up cleaning, cooking and other work. Finding ‘**early adopters**’ who are already creating more equitable homes was the first step in taking up a social norms approach and the basis of a new campaign (**Design Principle 1**).

The campaign – entitled *Amra-o-Korchi* (‘we are also doing’ in Bangla), supported men and boys to take up tasks that are not typical for their gender via public competitions. The campaign intentionally chose this name to **highlight positive practices already happening**, in which different male members of a family are contributing to household and caregiving tasks (**Design Principle 7**).

Through the campaign, men and boys engaged in public competitions around cooking, stitching and laundry. These small competitions culminated in a large public event – pairing men and boys’ cooking skills in competition – which was co-sponsored by a local spice company. Following the competition segment of the event, organizers facilitated a public discussion on gender roles in the kitchen. This was an opportunity to **dialogue openly about people’s perceptions of household work and men’s responsibilities** (**Design Principle 4**). It also **encouraged more equal involvement of family members** across all genders in taking up tasks to make homes function (**Design Principle 6**).

These events celebrated the skills and work of those who crossed gender boundaries in their work.

CARE SOCIAL NORMS ANALYSIS PLOT (SNAP) FRAMEWORK

SNAP was developed to measure the nature of specific social norms and their influence, and offers a useful framework to examine the initial reactions to a social norms focused activity. Specifically, it examines any preliminary effects on:

EMPIRICAL EXPECTATIONS

What I think others do.

NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS

What I think others expect me to do.

SANCTIONS

Anticipated reactions of others whose opinions matter to me.

SENSITIVITY TO SANCTIONS

How much sanctions matter for me.

EXCEPTIONS

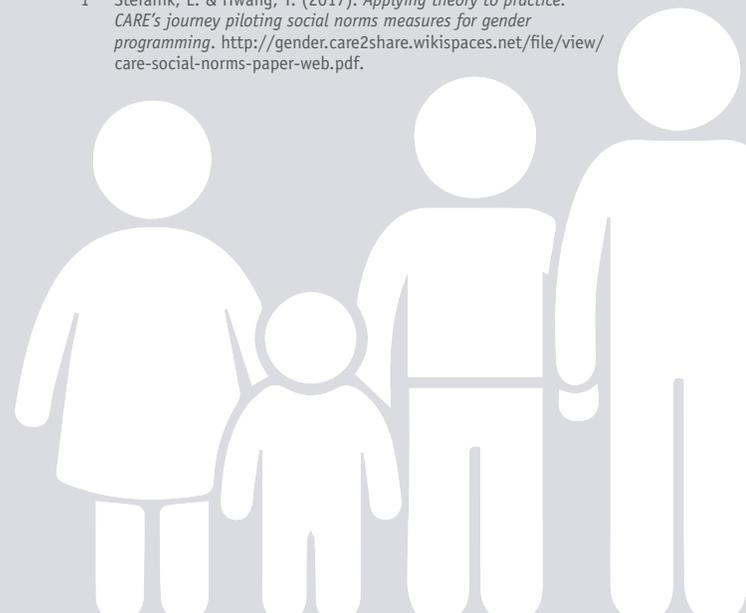
Under what situations is it acceptable to break the norms.

What are the initial reactions of community members?

The *Amra-o-Korchi* events were lively spectacles, with high visibility, energy and community engagement. Tipping Point staff developed inquiry questions based on **CARE's Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) framework**¹ for interviews with six community members from project programming areas, aiming to gather impressions of the event and of men taking on household work.

Five women and one man responded to the questions. Three identified as Muslim and three as Hindu. Their ages ranged from 25-60. All had heard of or attended the cooking competition, and all were familiar with the slogan "*Amra-o-Korchi*" via community volunteers who had done outreach in the local markets, through banners, and the event. All respondents had a relative involved in the Tipping Point project – either in the adolescent programming or the community-based anti-violence forum (EVAW forum).

1 Stefanik, L. & Hwang, T. (2017). *Applying theory to practice: CARE's journey piloting social norms measures for gender programming*. <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/care-social-norms-paper-web.pdf>.



INITIAL REACTIONS TO SEEING MEN COOK IN PUBLIC...

Three of the people Tipping Point staff spoke with had never seen men cooking and were surprised that they performed fairly well in the competition. They admitted that the cooking competition challenged their assumptions of what men can do:

I really liked when I saw the men cooking. I also tasted an item, which was good.

35-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

I liked the program. It helped to eliminate my misconceptions.

60-YEAR-OLD MAN

All respondents came away feeling that the event helped men recognize how difficult cooking is. Because men often scold women if food is late or not seasoned to their satisfaction, respondents said that the event would build men's empathy toward women. Two women felt hopeful that events and dialogues like this would help men try taking on new roles at home and have greater appreciation for the work women typically perform.

When I heard first that males will cook food, I thought they might not be able to cook like women. But later I saw they did it well, and the taste of the food was good.

25-YEAR-OLD WOMAN



...BUT BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

However, probing the realities of respondents' lives, the practice of men helping with cooking and chores at home is nothing new. Four individuals reported that their own families practice more shared responsibilities among men and women. One woman mentioned her grandfather and uncle have always shared household duties with the women in their homes.

My husband lives in Dhaka and works there. When he comes home, he helps the children take showers, cleans the house, folds clothes and supports me by cutting vegetables for cooking. I never feel bad when he does household work; rather, I feel happy, thinking that he cares me. Moreover, since my marriage, I see that my brother-in-law also in the house cooking.

25-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

Since coming to my in-laws' house, I see that my brother-in-law cooks there. If all men could do that, the workload of women would be lower. When I first noticed that other men are doing it, but not my husband, I felt bad about it. [...] Now my husband works here, too. I like it when he manages his own clothes and cuts vegetables for cooking.

35-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

I like to cook, but when the male family members help me, I like that, too. My uncle does household tasks; even my grandfather did that. It is quite a good practice.

30-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

I feel good when I can support my family. ...In each family, the men sometimes shower their children, clean house, and fold clothes. I feel very happy when I see it.

60-YEAR-OLD MAN



However, the interviews did not explore the locus of responsibility for household duties. The language respondents used—such as ‘he helps,’ and ‘his support,’ suggests that men have not adopted accountability for what have historically been female duties, and none of the women mentioned if they would feel comfortable asking for a man’s assistance so that she or a daughter could join a community activity or study.

WHAT WE DO AT HOME AND WHAT WE THINK OTHERS DO

Empirical expectations are what we think others in our communities are doing or thinking. In social norms theory, empirical expectations influence our behaviors and are primarily formed by what we see or hear around us. Hence, a key principle of social norms programming (Design Principle 7) is to publicly demonstrate alternatives to gender-inequitable patterns, so they can be normalized, real, and visible.

While four of the six people interviewed said their families shared household responsibilities across men and women, none were sure how common this is beyond the walls of their homesteads. Most respondents said they do not see the details of other peoples' home lives, so it is hard to know what is normal behavior for the village.



Yet given the negative sanctions against men who assist with household labor (see below), it is likely that people assume it is rare, aberrant behavior for families with healthy women and girls who are able to work. This mismatch between what people think others do (empirical expectations) and what they actually do is a key opportunity in social norms work.

WHAT SOCIETY EXPECTS, AND WHAT WE THINK SOCIETY EXPECTS

Normative expectations are what we think others expect us to do. This is informed by the types of behaviors and individuals we see being sanctioned positively (celebrated or rewarded) versus those that are sanctioned negatively (publicly denounced, ostracized, or punished).

All respondents agreed that in extraordinary circumstances – such as a woman’s illness or absence – or when men are away from home for work or fishing – it is perfectly normal for men to engage in household work. However, when men begin to share household work regularly, it may draw negative attention. Respondents’ views of how the community would respond to men who regularly share household duties ranged from insults of those men, including calling them ‘female’ as a pejorative, to social exclusion:

People say he is “crazy for his wife”.
He helps his wife complete her work.
This guy will spoil other men as well. ...
Nobody likes him. People make rumors
about him and say that the man of this
house does women’s work.

60-YEAR-OLD MAN

Sometimes rumors spread and villagers exclude them socially... When male members do it regularly, it becomes a negative issue. Most of the neighborhood bullies those men.

38-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

When a man cooks regularly, people bully him by saying he’s all about his wife.

35-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

Before, people did not accept that, and those who helped in the household were bullied, like ‘he loves his wife so much, so he doesn’t want her to work’.

30-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

Those who attended the cooking competition, they felt good. But other males made negative comments about those who participated in the event. They said that those men are dominated by women, or that males became female.

35-YEAR-OLD WOMAN



The wives of men who regularly do household chores are also subject to criticism:

If the woman of the household does not work much, people criticize them too. For example, they say his wife has become a madam and that is why she cannot do household chores.

30-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

If a man cooks food, people say that his wife does not work well, is not organized, and cannot manage easy work.

35-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

While people's perceptions of community reactions to sharing household work leaned negative, all but one of the respondents felt this stigma has been decreasing:

People from older generations could not accept men cooking while women are at home. Even I was not used to this new practice. But now, the situation has changed so much. Previously, women were criticized if they attended meetings of NGOs, but things have changed due to progress in education. There are many educated members in almost every family. Besides, through BRAC and Amra-o-Korchi competitions, people are getting more progressive about it. Moreover, people now realize that working together makes a household happy and peaceful.

35-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

People took this type of thing badly and made negative comments like, "The world is ruined, now women order men to work". But now, we do not hear that type of comment from people.

25-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

Cooking by men was not accepted before. But now, this perception has changed much.

35-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

Once it was taken badly, but the situation is changing day by day.

60-YEAR-OLD MAN

People credited this change to higher education, more women in the workforce, men's migrant labor, media, and encouragement from NGOs, including the *Amra-o-Korchi* campaign.

DO WE CARE WHAT SOCIETY EXPECTS?

Only one respondent said that she prefers to stick with established norms:

If you are male, why would you do household work? I do not know what others think.

35-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

One woman accepted men taking on more work, but with limits to guard gendered norms of propriety, though it is unclear whether this is driven by her own discomfort or sensitivity to what others might think:

My brother-in-law cooks food, showers their children, and washes his wife's clothes and even his daughter-in-law's clothes. I like all these things, but I don't accept that he is washing his daughter-in-law's clothes.

25-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

All others expressed willingness for men in their lives to take on more shared household responsibilities and appreciation for shifting norms toward more gender equitable workloads.

If any male does household work regularly, people do not take it badly. They think that husbands can do the wife's work, and there is nothing inauspicious in it. If husband and wife work together, their family life will be happier.

25-YEAR-OLD WOMAN



Potential of the *Amra-o-Korchi* campaign as a tactic for social norms change

Amra-o-Korchi directly aimed to support a wave of change toward equitable workloads in the home. The primary tactic was to generate opportunities to make positive practices more visible and create public spaces for people to share what is happening in their homes. Initial conversations with community members suggest that public competitions via *Amra-o-Korchi* have contributed toward greater visibility of and dialogue about shifting norms.

However, by and large, people that project staff spoke with remained unsure what is normal in terms of work-sharing at home, as intra-household dynamics remain hidden and people do not talk about it. This disconnect is an opportunity for Tipping Point to consider ways to further surface hidden contradictions to established norms. For example:

Action research and storytelling projects, perhaps led through adolescent groups, can **make hidden work-sharing visible** beyond the walls of the home (**Design Principle 7**).

Networking positive role models to offer support for one another and to share their stories and practices more proactively with other families near them (**Design Principle 2**).

Highlighting successful women from the program areas and **how fathers and brothers supported them at home** and otherwise while they were growing up to inspire men and boys (**Design Principle 3**).

Expanding the relationship with the spice company to build a national level media campaign featuring men cooking, with competitions and facilitated discussions, perhaps on television (**Design Principle 8**).

Implementation Guide: The *Amra-o-Korchi* campaign

BANGLADESH

The *Amra-o-Korchi* campaign developed in three stages

1. Participatory gender analysis
 2. The campaign
 3. Follow-up activities
-

Participatory gender analysis

Participatory gender analysis began with Tipping Point project staff, who then facilitated it with adolescents and parents.

Tipping Point project staff participated in Gender Equity and Diversity (GED) trainings and subsequent monthly reflection meetings in which they reflected on the stereotypical gender roles they played in their own lives. They challenged each other about these behaviors and gradually tried to shift unequal gender norms in their own families. About 200 staff across the project team have engaged in these reflections. They share their feelings on initiating change within themselves, how their family members reacted, what their neighbors said, and how they responded to positive and negative comments. These experiences helped them pioneer the *Amra-o-Korchi* campaign in the community.

During early meetings of the project's adolescent groups, boys and girls conducted daily routine mapping and compared who does what in the household. Discussion on household chores provoked a lot of debate on why girls engage in household chores right from childhood and why boys have many privileges in not doing chores and having the freedom of mobility outside the home that women and girls crave. The adolescents posed these questions to themselves, to their parents, and to the local groups known as Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) forums. Girls and boys started challenging themselves by taking small steps outside the norm. At home, boys started doing their own laundry and cleaning their utensils after eating, and girls started going out to buy things from the shops within the village.

THE OBJECTIVES OF *AMRA-O-KORCHI*

1. To create a platform for challenging social norms that ridicule men and boys for doing household chores and spread the understanding that boys and men are equally responsible for household chores.
2. To use gender role-shifting games to initiate discussion about the division of labor in the home.
3. To promote and celebrate positive deviance amongst men and boys who have engaged themselves in household chores.

In the communities, facilitators held different sessions with adolescent group members, mothers' groups, EVAW forums, and tea stall patrons about the chores that women do and men do. The gender norms sessions provoked greater sensitivity about how men and women can practice daily equality.

Facilitators used the following questions during sessions with boys, girls, and parents:

- What would happen if boys and men cook? Who stops them from cooking? Are there boys and men in the community who cook? What do others in the community say about them? Why do they say those things? Do you believe what others say about men and boys who cook?
- How many of you know how to roll chapattis [bread]? When do you do it? How do you feel doing it? What are the benefits and harms of men cooking, doing household chores, or taking care of children? How do you feel thinking a male is doing these sorts of activities?
- Do boys who cook face any appreciation or ridicule from friends? What do they say? How do they respond to their peers' comments?

- What are the benefits to boys and men if they cook? What are the benefits to the girls or women when boys and men cook? How do the older people in the family react to men and boys cooking? Any examples to share? Those of you men and boys who have cooked food at home, how did you respond to people's comments about it?
- What is the environment at home when men and boys cook? Can anybody share the experience of how they or their family members felt when the boys started cooking at home?

The campaign

Eventually the adolescents wanted to bring the positive changes they had been making in the household into the public. They named the campaign *Amra-o-Korchi*, which means "We are also doing," and began organizing community events.

Recruitment: Adolescents recruited volunteers for the competitions that made up the campaign by going around the community and inspiring participation from ERAW forum members and parents. Initially, the project held small public competitions between men and women on peeling vegetables, kneading dough, folding clothes, and stitching two pieces of cloth together. Judges were chosen from among ERAW forum members, social leaders, Union Parishad members (local government), and school teachers. Three days before an event, men who wished to participate had to be registered. The early competitions were small, but the activity still achieved the goal of highlighting non-normative behaviors in public and sparked discussion about men's and women's roles in the household.

Event planning: To bring these efforts into the open and get a larger audience to observe, reflect, and share their opinions, the teams explored external organizations to support the campaign. A spice company, the Square Group, offered to sponsor an event about cooking. All 30 villages would receive supplies from the Square Group, not only for the winners but for all the participants. The activity gained momentum with the involvement of the spice company, and attracted more men participants. Adolescents and project staff worked to identify a public space that would accommodate a larger number of people.

The main cooking event was a great success. The men who participated were enthusiastic about cooking but did not

realize the complexities of making a fire using firewood, kneading dough, cutting vegetables, mixing spices in the right proportions, and managing the fire so that neither the meat nor their fingers burned. It was all part of the fun.

Discussion and public dialogue: At the event, the participants discussed why it was tough for men to cook. If everyone needs food, why is it that only women excel in the art of making food? Why can't men cook like women do? How can men and women in the community start a new norm where both boys and girls have similar chores? Other questions that were explored in a facilitated discussion with the audience of the cooking event include:

- Did you like the event? If yes, why, if no, why not? Do you think men will cook more in the households now? What would make it a common behavior?
- For male ERAW forum members and other government stakeholders who attended the event: Do you cook at home? Would you now? Do you think there would be resistance from family members? How would you convince them?

Follow-up activities

After the main cooking competition, the project team reinforced the event's messages in subsequent group meetings. During ERAW forum and mothers' group meetings, facilitators asked: Has the event changed responsibilities at the household level? Has it changed anything else at the household level? What has changed? How would you describe the change? How do you feel about it?

Project teams have also developed ways to address other activities that are typically only done by men or women. One project activity done with spouses had women giving their husbands instructions. It was a fun game in which women kept giving directions to their spouses, such as: fold the clothes, rock the baby to sleep, or get me water, and at times giving instructions in such quick succession that the men had to hurry to follow two or more instructions at the same time. A discussion after the activity helped couples reflect on how it feels to take orders and give orders, making it a good beginning to talk about intra-household power and how power sharing can strengthen spousal relationships.



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