

# A Taxonomy for Social Norms that Influence Family Planning in Ouagadougou Partnership Countries

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## Introduction

### Key Terminology

### A Taxonomy for Social Norms that Influence Family Planning in Ouagadougou Partnership Countries

### Ideas for Using the Taxonomy

# Origins and Development of the Family Planning Social Norms Taxonomy

A taxonomy can be defined as, “a classification system for organizing and labeling terms.”<sup>1</sup> Taxonomies can help us understand, discuss, research, and address broad, complex systems with many discrete parts.

In late 2019, Breakthrough ACTION reviewed evidence on interventions which address family planning social norms in the Ouagadougou Partnership (OP) region -Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo . As part of this work, the team developed a taxonomy to group similar norms identified through this process. Social and Behavior Change (SBC) practitioners expressed interest in the taxonomy, suggesting it may be useful for their work. To further develop the social norms taxonomy, the team used the process outlined below.

## Step 1: Stakeholder feedback (Dec. 2019–March 2020)

FP and SBC Stakeholders provided feedback at a number of fora:

- Ouagadougou Partnership dinner discussion on social norms (Dec. 2019)
- Presentation at internal Breakthrough Action Insights Meeting (Jan. 2020)
- Two-day Springboard online presentation & discussion (March 2020)

## Step 2: Additional evidence review (April–June 2020)

Breakthrough ACTION conducted additional review of evidence using:

- Online academic database searches, focused on specific gaps and questions that came out of the feedback sessions
- Review of products from existing efforts on social norms (specifically the Passages Project and the [Learning Collaborative](#) to Advance Normative Change).<sup>1</sup>

## Step 3: Development (July–Aug. 2020)

- Developed taxonomy into a tool for practitioners

1) The Learning Collaborative is developing a “Social Norms Atlas,” an online and PDF resource of behaviors, social norms and attitudes relevant to a variety of sectors (such as reproductive health, nutrition, education, and more). The Social Norms Atlas is primarily for program planners and implementers with the aim of increasing awareness and ability to address social norms, thereby enhancing efficacy of behavior change programs. While the Social Norms Atlas’ scope is very broad, the taxonomy focuses specifically on norms around family planning in the OP region. Where there is direct complement, the tools have been developed in parallel (for example the Social Norms Atlas Chapter on reproductive health).

# Framing the Family Planning Social Norms Taxonomy

*As part of the taxonomy development process, it was essential to set some boundaries on what could be organized and classified. Below are the criteria used to search for social norms and consider them for inclusion in the taxonomy.*



**Family planning focus.** This taxonomy focuses on social norms which have been identified as having a close influence on family planning behaviors. Broader norms which impact behavior around early marriage, education and sexual health may indirectly influence family planning, but are not comprehensively included in this taxonomy.



**OP Region Focus.** The taxonomy grew out of an effort focused on the Ouagadougou Partnership (OP) region in West Africa. We focused the literature review on OP countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo). In two countries – Mauritania and Guinea – it was challenging to find as much literature on social norms as we found for others. Where we felt it was very relevant, we include some literature from the broader West Africa region.



**Contemporary.** Norms are constantly changing and evolving. In the taxonomy, we included norms documented in academic articles and gray literature since 2000.

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# Defining Social Norms

## What are social norms?

*Social norms are “the often unspoken ‘rules’ that govern behavior.”<sup>1</sup> Norms are generally recognized in two ways – things people do because others do them, or things others expect them to do.*

*Social norms are context-specific, and manifest differently, across country and community contexts.*

The illustration shows five scenarios of social norms, each with a person or two and a speech bubble:

- Scenario 1:** A woman in a blue headscarf and a man in a blue polo shirt. The woman says: "I need to get pregnant before marriage, so his family knows that I'm fertile."
- Scenario 2:** A man in a blue suit. He says: "I'd prefer for my wife to have another baby right away, but others in my community space their children."
- Scenario 3:** A woman in a blue headscarf and a necklace. She says: "My friends are all finishing school before starting families; I plan to do the same thing."
- Scenario 4:** A woman in a blue headscarf and a man in a blue polo shirt. The woman says: "I'd like to use the injectable, but my boyfriend might think it's weird if I'm bleeding irregularly."
- Scenario 5:** A woman in a blue headscarf and a doctor in a blue coat and white cap with a cross. The woman says: "I don't think this doctor understands what I need, but he'll become angry if I ask a question about his recommendation."



# Types of Social Norms Included in the Taxonomy

Other women my age are using the pill, I'll do the same thing.



## Descriptive Norms

What people in a group believe is typical...their perceptions of typical behavior or expectations about what people do<sup>1</sup>

The health worker knows I'm unmarried and will judge me if I ask for an IUD or implant instead of the pill.



## Injunctive Norms

What people in a group believe is appropriate, that is, their perceptions of what others consider appropriate, or expectations about what people should do<sup>1</sup>

Researchers and program implementers have different ways of defining, studying, observing and measuring norms.

The updated taxonomy is designed to include both descriptive and injunctive norms.

Individual attitudes or beliefs are not necessarily norms (though attitudes and beliefs may reflect norms) and thus are not included in the taxonomy.

<sup>1</sup> Cialdini et al. 2005.



# Definitions of Related Terms: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Norms

Researchers and scholars around the world have debated the definitions and relationships between attitudes, beliefs, religious beliefs, and gender. The below table summarizes how we understand and define these within the scope of this taxonomy.

	Definition	Example
Attitudes	Personal or individual beliefs about what is good and bad, how things should be. <sup>1</sup>	"I really like the contraceptive method I use."
Belief	"Acceptance or conviction" that an idea or statement is true." <sup>2</sup>	"I think that the injectable might cause infertility later in life."
Religious beliefs	Religion can be defined as: "A communal, transmittable body of teachings and prescribed practices about an ultimate, sacred reality". <sup>3</sup> Religious beliefs can be understood as the beliefs promoted by a religious text or community.	"I believe that if I get pregnant, it's God's will."
Social norm	Social norms are "the often unspoken 'rules' that govern behavior." <sup>4</sup> Norms are generally recognized in two ways – things people do because others do them, or things others expect them to do.	"I'd prefer for my wife to have another baby right away, but others in my community space their children."

1) Institute for Reproductive Health, 2019, Social Norms and AYSRH: Building a Bridge from Theory to Program Design, The Learning Collaborative. 2) Schwitzgebel E. (2010). "Belief," in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, summarized in Connors, "A cognitive account of belief: a tentative road map" 2014. 3) Taliaferro in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2019 4) Source: The Learning Collaborative Essential Resources, 2019.

# Definitions of Related Terms: Gender

	Definition	Example
Gender	Gender “is the socially defined set of roles, rights, responsibilities, entitlements and obligations associated with being women and men in societies. The social definitions of what it means to be feminine or masculine, and sanctions for not adhering to those expectations, vary among cultures, change over time, and often intersect with other factors such as age, class, caste, (dis)ability, ethnicity, race, religion and sexual orientation.” <sup>1</sup>	In a community, men are responsible for money and women are responsible for children; rights, personality traits, behaviors and values are ascribed to each role.
Gender norm	“The social norms that define and restrict behaviors and opportunities for individuals based on their biological sex.” <sup>2</sup>	“People who matter to me think that boys should be scientists, while girls should be teachers.” <sup>5</sup>

## *How do I know if a social norm is a gender norm?*

In summary, the definitions above suggest that “gender” is a broad system which dictates roles and access to resources. Norms, law, media, policies, systems design can all construct or challenge these norms. If the norm that you identified varies for men and women, or if it upholds unspoken rules on roles and access to resources, it can be considered a gender role. Most, if not all of the examples of social norms in this taxonomy could be considered gender norms.

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Key terminology

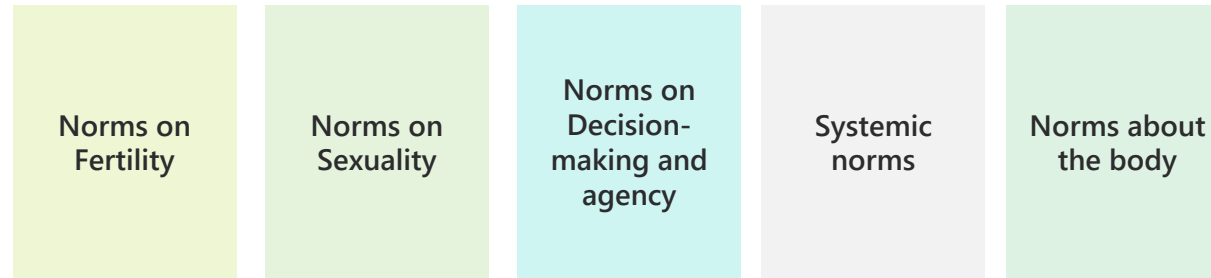
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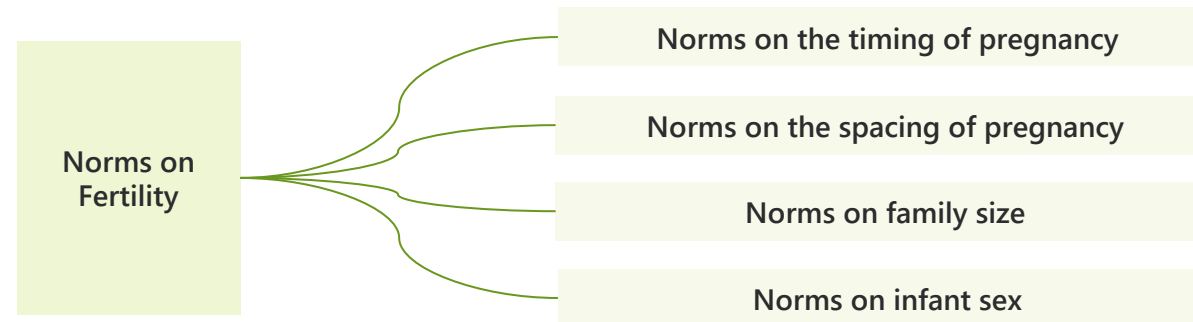
# How to Read the Social Norms Taxonomy

The updated taxonomy has three levels:

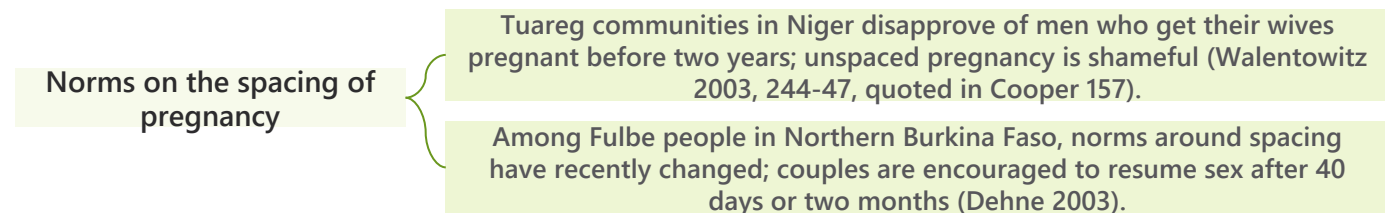
**1** Categories: The taxonomy has five categories, which were developed through iterative rounds of reviewing literature, obtaining feedback from stakeholders, and sorting identified norms. (Definitions are found on slide 12).



**2** Sub-categories: Each category is now broken down into norm specific sub-categories, also developed through multiple rounds of literature review analysis and feedback from stakeholders.



**3** Norms all fall under a specific sub-category.



# How to Read Norms Tables

3

Norms all fall under a specific sub-category, within a category. Each category, and sub-categories, are organized on a table.

*Academic citations are furthest to the left, grey literature from NGOs or other sources are on the right.<sup>1</sup>*

*Norms closer to the top were more commonly identified in the literature.<sup>1</sup>*

NORM CATEGORY Norm category description				
Norm subcategory #1- Norms sub-category description				
Example A	Example B	Example C	Example D	
Norm subcategory #2- Norms sub-category description				
Example A	Example B	Example C		
Norm subcategory #3- Norms sub-category description				
Example A	Example B			
Norm subcategory #4- Norms sub-category description				
Example A				

Norms provided are examples from the literature and do not necessarily apply to every community across the country. Norms are illustrative – based on what we could identify in the literature – and are not exhaustive of what is in the region.

1) Note that this process was not an exhaustive literature review. The literature identified and included in this taxonomy came from multiple rounds of feedback from stakeholders and targeted literature searches.

# Family Planning Norms Taxonomy: Categories and Sub-categories

<b>NORMS ON FERTILITY</b> <i>How many children to have and when to have them</i>	<b>NORMS ON SEX</b> <i>When to have sex and with whom</i>	<b>NORMS ON DECISION-MAKING/AGENCY</b> <i>Negotiating choices and power in day-to-day life</i>	<b>SYSTEMIC NORMS</b> <i>How people engage and access larger institutions/communities</i>	<b>NORMS ABOUT THE BODY</b> <i>How the body should look and function</i>
<p>Timing of first pregnancy Norms that dictate the age or stage when people should achieve parenthood</p>	<p>Sex before marriage Norms that dictate the extent to which it is ok to have sex before marriage</p>	<p>Couple dynamics and decision-making Norms about each partner's role and decision-making power in a (married or unmarried) relationship</p>	<p>Engagement with health systems Norms that dictate how health systems, health workers, and clients should act or work</p>	<p>Menstruation Norms that dictate if menstruation, and/or irregular bleeding is healthy or unclear</p>
<p>Spacing of pregnancies Norms that dictate the amount of time one should wait between pregnancies</p>	<p>Speaking about sex Norms that dictate with whom, and where one can discuss sex</p>	<p>Household roles and decision-making Norms that dictate who in the household should make decisions and play what role</p>	<p>Education and work Norms that dictate how one can or should pursue opportunities inside or outside the home</p>	<p>Weight Norms that dictate how people should appear physically</p>
<p>Family size Norms that dictate how large or small a family should be</p>	<p>Perception of sex Norms that dictate if sexuality is healthy, normal, positive or not</p>	<p>Individual agency Norms that dictate if individuals can and should make decisions on their own</p>	<p>Culture Norms that dictate the extent to which it is important to express cultural identity through FP use</p>	<p>Breastfeeding Norms that dictate how a woman should breastfeed an infant, or behave while breastfeeding</p>
<p>Infant sex/gender Norms that dictate that infants of one sex/gender are more important or necessary</p>	<p>Multiple partners, inside or outside of marriage Norms that dictate the extent to which it is acceptable to have multiple partners, inside or outside of marriage</p>		<p>Religion Norms on expressing reverence to a religious leader or to a higher power</p>	<p>Skin Norms associated with acne, clear skin or other conditions which can be side effects of contraception</p>

# Examples: Norms on Fertility

NORMS ON FERTILITY <i>How many children to have and when to have them</i>			
Timing of first pregnancy - Norms that dictate the age or stage when people should achieve parenthood			
In Niger, having a child before marriage is considered shameful (Cooper 2019, p. 244)	In Southern Togo, service providers may discourage young people from delaying or spacing pregnancy (Mugore 2016).	In Côte d'Ivoire, there is little social stigma around having a child before marriage (Camber Collective 2016).	In Burkina Faso, young women may experience social pressure to bear children when they reach reproductive age (Beyond Bias 2019).
Spacing of pregnancies - Norms that dictate the amount of time one should wait between pregnancies			
Tuareg communities in Niger disapprove of men who get their wives pregnant before two years; unspaced pregnancy is shameful (Walentowitz 2003, 244-47, quoted in Cooper 157).	Among Fulbe people in Northern Burkina Faso, norms around spacing have recently changed; couples are encouraged to resume sex after 40 days or two months (Dehne 2003).	In two communities in Mali, a norm dictates that a woman can space after she reaches a certain family size (Castle 2011).	In Northern Togo, women who do not space their children may be chastised by health workers (Arnold et al. 2016).
Norms on family size - Norms that dictate how large or small a family should be			
In Niger, having a large family is important for social standing and status (Moussa 2012).	Among older generations in certain parts of Côte d'Ivoire, having eight or more children is considered "not normal" and something that "ages someone" prematurely (Camber Collective 2016).		
Norms on infant sex/gender - Norms that dictate that infants of one sex/gender are more important or necessary			
In Niger, boy babies may be valued more than girls; a woman who gives birth to only girls may be judged by her community (Moussa 2012).	In Peul communities in Burkina Faso, boy babies may be desired more than girls because they are expected to work and generate income later (Désalliers 2009).		

*Note: Academic citations are furthest to the left, grey literature from NGOs or other sources are on the right. Norms closer to the top were more commonly identified in the literature.*

# Examples: Norms on Sex

NORMS ON SEX <i>When to have sex and with whom</i>		
Sex before marriage: Norms that dictate the extent to which it is ok to have sex before marriage		
In Senegal, “widely held Muslim mores require young women to preserve their virginity for marriage, but people appear more tolerant of premarital sex, or at least turn a blind eye” (Honwana 2013)	In parts of rural Mali, “social sanctions still persist that discourage premarital fertility, thus delaying age at first birth” (Adams, Simon and Madhavan 2004).	In Burkina Faso. “parents repeatedly tell young women to abstain from sex while making no comment on the matter to young men” (Rossier et al. 2013).
Speaking about sex, sexuality and/or family planning: Norms that dictate with whom, and where one can discuss sex and/or family planning		
In Mali, teenagers can talk about sex with one another, but not with adults (Jaffe and Suh 2016).	Also in a community in Mali, communicating about FP is considered, “something only done by educated couples” (Castle 2011).	In many contexts throughout West Africa, it’s taboo to speak about issues pertaining to sexuality in public (Cissé 2013).
Perception of sex: Norms that dictate if sex is healthy, normal, positive or not		
In certain West African contexts, sex for pleasure (instead of reproduction) is generally considered shameful, and a sign that one is not in control of oneself (Jaffré and Suh 2016)	In urban and peri-urban communities in Togo, some express a norm that sex should only be associated with reproduction, and thus family planning should not be used (Koffi et al. 2018).	
Multiple partners, inside or outside of marriage: Norms that dictate the extent to which it’s acceptable to have multiple partners, inside or outside of marriage		
In urban Côte d'Ivoire, some communities perceive that it’s normal for men to have an extra-marital girlfriend (Camber Collective 2016).	For young women in Benin, using FP can be perceived as a sign one has multiple partners, which is socially stigmatized (Equilibres & Populations 2017).	

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# Examples: Norms on Decision-Making & Agency

NORMS ON DECISION-MAKING/AGENCY <i>Negotiating choices and power in day-to-day life</i>				
<p><b>Couple dynamics and decision-making-</b> Norms about each partner's role and decision-making power in a (married or unmarried) relationship</p>				
<p>In Dogondoutchi, Niger, unmarried women may feel pressure to reciprocate gifts from a suitor with sex (Masquelier 2011).</p>	<p>In urban/per-urban Togo, it's socially important for a man to have control of his wife, and acceptable to leave her or take another partner if she uses FP (Koffi et al. 2018).</p>	<p>In a community in Côte d'Ivoire, men make the decision about when to resume sex after pregnancy (Desgrées-du-Loû and Brou 2005)</p>	<p>In Guinea, "if a woman decides to use a modern method with her husband's approval, the husband will face the ridicule of friends and family" (Escandón et al. 2006).</p>	<p>In Burkina Faso, norms about masculinity (centering the preferences of men) may make it difficult to negotiate condom use (Bajos et al. 2013)</p>
<p><b>Household roles and decision-making-</b> Norms that dictate who in the household should make decisions and play what role</p>				
<p>In Mali, it's common for mothers-in-law to play a role in a couple's fertility decisions (Coulibaly 2014).</p>	<p>In parts of Côte d'Ivoire, having a respectful wife is important for social status and public image (Camber Collective 2016).</p>	<p>In Niger, social pressure from others in the household can impact how women make decisions (Nouhou 2016).</p>	<p>In Togo, social norms dictate that adolescents cannot make decisions about FP on their own, but need their parent's consent (Mugore et al. 2019).</p>	
<p><b>Individual agency-</b> Norms that dictate if individuals can and should make decisions on their own</p>				
<p>In parts of Mali, it's increasingly common for women to see their reproductive health as their own personal domain of control (Coulibaly 2014).</p>				

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# Examples: Systemic Norms

## SYSTEMIC NORMS *How people engage and access larger institutions/communities*

### Health systems – Norms that dictate how health systems, health workers, and clients should act

Throughout francophone West Africa, bureaucratic norms dictate that the average patient is inferior to health care workers (Olivier de Sardan 2003).

In Burkina Faso, it is not normal for a man to come to FP consultations with his wife (Daniele 2014).

In Niger, young women may hesitate to visit health systems, for fear that others will think that they are sick (Cissé 2013).

In Burkina Faso, policy dictates that youth should have access to FP at health centers, but social norms also influence provider behavior (Beyond Bias 2019).

### Education and work - Norms that dictate how one can or should pursue opportunities inside or outside the home

In Sindh, Senegal, the expectations that women prepare food at a certain time can impact how and when they visit FP services (Mbow et al. 2017).

Throughout several countries in Francophone West Africa, gendered social norms make school less accessible to girls, which can lead them to experience vulnerabilities around reproductive health (Cissé 2013).

### Culture Norms that dictate the extent to which it's important to express cultural identity through FP use

In a study in Guinea, respondents noted that ending one's fertility was against Malinke culture (Escandón et al. 2006)

In rural Burkina Faso, learning about or using FP can be a way for certain young women to show to others that they are "modern" (Désalliers 2008).

### Religion Norms on expressing reverence to a religious leader or to a higher power

In parts of Togo, avoiding use of family planning is a way to show religiosity; a "good woman" must have all children God gives her (Tchitou and Vignikin 2015).

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# Examples: Norms about the Body

## NORMS ABOUT THE BODY

*How the body should look and function*

### Menstruation- Norms that dictate if menstruation, and/or irregular bleeding is healthy or unclean

In the village of Tanlargin in Burkina Faso, irregular bleeding can have social consequences; preventing women from participating in important religious rituals such as Ramadan (Konditamde 2017).

In Mali, menstrual irregularities can have social consequences; men may refrain from intimacy if a woman is bleeding (Castle 2003).

### Weight- Norms that dictate how people should appear physically

In Mali, gaining weight due to contraceptive use may attract questions and attention from others. Others may perceive that weight loss from contraception makes them more attractive to others (Coulibaly 2014).

In St. Louis, Senegal, women may see weight gain as positive, because it allows them to conform to injunctive norms around body size (Ledger 2015).

### Breastfeeding- Norms that dictate how a woman should breastfeed an infant, or behave while breastfeeding

In Niger, breastfeeding while being pregnant can be considered shameful, a norm which has implications for reproductive and child health (Cooper 2019).

In Côte d'Ivoire, it can be taboo for a couple to have intercourse while the woman is breastfeeding (Desgrées-du-Loû and Brou 2005).

### Skin - Norms that dictate that skin must look in a certain way, and that any irregularities reflect on the person

In Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, it's important for women to have clear skin and women may avoid using contraception if they fear it will give them acne (Burgess et al., forthcoming.)

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Ideas for Using the Taxonomy

# How to Use the Taxonomy

## How the taxonomy can be used....

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- 1 In formative research, to develop questions or probes around social norms which may exist in a community and influence family planning.
  - From the literature scan, it appears that researchers could probe more into norms about the body and how they affect FP attitudes and behaviors.
- 2 For gender analysis and segmentation, to analyze how norms are different for men and for women, various ages/life stages, or for particular segments.
- 3 In reflective discussion with FP and SBC practitioners, particularly on which norms impact key FP service provision behaviors.

## The taxonomy is not....

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- X A comprehensive list of all norms. Many have not been documented in academic literature, and norms are constantly changing or nuanced according to context.
- X A stand-alone research or program development tool; the taxonomy is designed to compliment and build on existing tools.
- X A list of everything that must be addressed in order to influence FP behavior; different norms will be important in different contexts.

# Using the Taxonomy to Develop Questions about Norms

*In research and reflection, sub-categories can be used to develop probes on specific community norms. Probes may need to be adapted to the specifics of each community. Questions can be started with, "in your community..."*

<b>NORMS ON FERTILITY</b> <i>How many children to have and when to have them</i>	<b>NORMS ON SEX</b> <i>When to have sex and with whom</i>	<b>NORMS ON DECISION-MAKING &amp; AGENCY</b> <i>Negotiating choices and power in day-to-day life</i>	<b>SYSTEMIC NORMS</b> <i>How people engage with larger institutions/communities</i>	<b>NORMS ABOUT THE BODY &amp; APPEARANCE</b> <i>How the body should look and function</i>
Timing of first pregnancy ...is there an ideal time to have a first child?	Sex before marriage ....is it ok for people to have sex before marriage?	Couple dynamics and decision making ...what are men and women supposed to bring to a relationship? What decisions can they make in a relationship about sex and family planning?	Engagement with health systems ....how are clients expected to treat health workers, and how are health workers expected to treat clients?	Menstruation ....how are women perceived if they are menstruating, or menstruating irregularly?
Spacing of pregnancies ....is there an ideal amount of time a woman must wait between pregnancies?	Speaking about sex, sexuality and FP .... Where and with whom can one discuss sex?	Household roles and decision-making ....to what extent and how does the extended family play important roles in decision-making?	Education and work ....to what extent is it acceptable for someone to pursue education or work outside the home?	Weight ....are there ideals and expectations around desired weight for men and women?
Norms on family size ....is there an ideal number of children for a woman or family?	Perception of sex ....is it acceptable to have sex for reasons other than reproduction?	Individual agency ....to what extent are individuals expected to drive their own destinies?	Culture ....to what extent is it important to use certain types of FP products to show belonging with a community?	Breastfeeding ...how is a woman expected to act while breastfeeding?
Norms on infant sex ...to what extent is it more valued to have a girl or boy baby?	Multiple partners ....to what extent is it ok for people to have multiple partners/ sexual relationships inside or outside of marriage?		Religion ....to what extent is it important for someone to show others that they are religious?	Skin ....to what extent is it socially acceptable to have blemishes?

# Using Probes to Understand How Norms Differ for Different Groups

To identify how norms are gendered, or different across the life course, researchers can develop probes for each sub-category. Examples are called out below.

NORMS ON SEX <i>Questions to identify norms on when it is ok to have sex and with whom</i>
Sex before marriage In your community, is it ok for people to have sex before marriage?
Speaking about sex, sexuality and FP In your community, to what extent is it acceptable to speak about sex with others?
Perception of sexuality In your community, to what extent is it acceptable to have sex for reasons other than reproduction?
Multiple partners In your community, to what extent is it acceptable for people to have multiple spouses, partners or sexual relationships?

What are the rules for boys? For girls?

What are the rules for young people? For elders?

What are the rules for men? For women?

SYSTEMIC NORMS <i>How people engage with larger institutions/communities</i>
Norms on engagement with health workers ...how are people expected to treat health workers, and how are health workers expected to treat patients and clients?
Education and vocation ...to what extent is it acceptable for someone to pursue success through education or a vocation?
Culture...to what extent is it important to use certain types of FP products to honor the community?
Religion...to what extent is it important for someone to show others that they are religious?

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