



# Third LINEA Biennial Meeting Report

Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Young People Using Social Norms: Consolidating Practice and Knowledge, Looking Towards the Future

12TH-14TH OCTOBER 2020, VIRTUAL MEETING

## INTRODUCTION TO LINEA

The Learning Initiative on Norms, Exploitation and Abuse (LINEA) is situated within the Gender Violence and Health Centre at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). LINEA is an international and multi-pronged project that explores how social norms theory can be used to prevent the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (SECA). LINEA's key areas of work are:

- · Conducting research on local perspectives of sexual exploitation and the social norms that drive it.
- Developing a multi-component intervention to prevent age-disparate transactional sex in Tanzania.
- Coordinating the LINEA Network, bringing together partners in research, programming, policy, advocacy and funding
  who are using a social norms approach to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse of young people. The LINEA Meeting is a
  central part of the LINEA Network.

Sexual exploitation and abuse has negative long- and short-term impacts on the health and well-being of millions of young people worldwide. Sexual exploitation is different from other forms of sexual abuse, due to the element of sexual exchange. It occurs when an adult coerces, manipulates or deceives a person under age 19 into sexual activity for material or non-material benefit.

Age-disparate transactional sex relationships are a form of SECA due to inherent inequalities between adolescent girls and adult men based on age, gender and access to resources,<sup>4</sup> and these relationships often have negative health consequences for adolescent girls.<sup>5</sup> LINEA research, however, corresponds with the wider literature that states that girls' lived experiences of transactional sex span exploitation, agency and love.<sup>4, 5, 6</sup> LINEA aims to prevent exploitative transactional sex between girls in early adolescence and adult men.

Social norms are important drivers of child and adolescent sexual exploitation and abuse, and age-disparate transactional sex in particular.<sup>7</sup> This is because social norms play a key role in how groups of people understand childhood, and interact with children and adolescents.<sup>8</sup> Social norms are mutually held informal rules that define appropriate behaviours in a group, and can be categorised as either descriptive or injunctive norms.<sup>9, 10</sup> See this LINEA brief for more information.

## MEETING OVERVIEW

This report details the third and final LINEA Meeting: 'Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Young People Using Social Norms: Consolidating Practice and Knowledge, Looking Towards the Future'. This follows two previous LINEA meetings in 2015 and 2017. The aim of the meeting was to take stock of the remarkable progress since LINEA began in the field of social norms research and preventing SECA, as well as to profile cutting edge research on the topic, and build consensus around priorities for the future.

# **MEETING OBJECTIVES**

- 1 To reflect on how social norms theory has contributed to conceptualisations of SECA.
- 2 To learn from efforts to operationalise social norms theory to measure social norms change, and to develop social norms interventions.
- 3 To consolidate knowledge on possibilities for ethical and robust remote data collection during the COVID-19 era.

#### MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Over 60 participants joined the three-day meeting from North America, Latin America, Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. They came primarily from Universities, NGOs and government bodies, and brought a diverse set of perspectives and experiences.

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The presentations in the panels were fantastic - great line-up of interesting, innovative work, insightful remarks, and all well-organized and presented.

BETSY COSTENBADER, FHI 360

The presentations I attended were fantastic and provided great learnings for me personally and for the field...
The discussions were extremely rich, for example on ethics guidance and interviewing both men and women about IPV in the same household.

Ø

Such a wealth of knowledge from the participants. This was my first time attending the LINEA conference and it was wonderful to connect with others immersed in the norms world!

ILANA SEFF, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

ELIZABETH DARTNELL, SVRI

# **DAY ONE**

The Third LINEA Biennial Meeting commenced with an address from <u>Dr Ana Maria Buller</u>, the Principal Investigator for LINEA and Director of the Gender Violence and Health Centre at LSHTM. Ana Maria set the scene for the meeting, and contextualised it in the current global context. She discussed the impact of COVID-19 on SECA, emphasising how it has increased vulnerabilities for young people already at risk.



The pandemic has had a big impact on violence against women and children. The fear and uncertainty associated with financial instability, social isolation and reduced access to health services have compounded the experience of violence for these groups.

ANA MARIA BULLER, LSHTM

## PANEL 1: CONSOLIDATING PRACTICE AND KNOWLEDGE, LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The opening panel began with presentations from two experts in measuring and conceptualising social norms change. <u>Dr Caroline Harper</u> (Overseas Development Institute) discussed key definitions and different interpretations of social norms, as well as how gendered expectations underpin sexual exploitation. Caroline described how although gender norms have progressed over the last 100 years, progress towards more gender equitable norms is slow due to two key factors: patriarchal breaks and systemic barriers. <u>Dr Stefanie Mollborn</u> (University of Colorado Boulder) also discussed social norms change, highlighting how promoting certain norms can have unintended consequences due to meta-norms which drive how sanctions are enforced.

Ms Katherine Stewart (The Economist Intelligence Unit) brought expertise on another key area of LINEA's work: SECA. She outlined findings from the Out of the Shadows Index, a benchmarking tool that assesses how 60 countries are responding to child sexual abuse and exploitation. The 2020 index found that there is a strong relationship between social norms and responses to sexual violence. For example, stigmas around sex, sexuality and gender can foster a secretive environment in which sexual exploitation is not openly addressed.

The panel was concluded by Ms Emily Esplen (UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) who brought a policy and funding perspective, and summarised the UK Department for International Development's (DFID's) What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls programme. This programme aims to support primary prevention efforts across Africa, Asia and the Middle East to address the underlying causes of violence against women and girls (VAWG). Emily shared the landmark findings from the social norms element of the programme, which show that social norms interventions can achieve significant reductions in intimate partner violence (IPV). For example, in an intervention implemented in Ghana, women's experiences of violence fell by up to 55%.

## PANEL 1 KEY LEARNINGS AND TAKEAWAYS

- Patriarchy is still the norm in many contexts. To prevent gender-based violence, norm change initiatives need to be implemented at the individual and community levels.
- When aiming to change social norms, it is important to remember that multiple social norms might influence a behaviour. Promoting isolated norms to regulate "healthy" behaviours can have unintended consequences, and lead to stigmatisation of individuals aiming to change their behaviours.
- Social norms and attitudes about sex, sexuality and gender matter. There is evidence that gender inequality is linked to the acceptance of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and violence against children.
- Community activist approaches to changing norms can achieve significant reductions in VAWG up to or over 50% impacting an entire population. Change does not have to take generations.
- Interventions aiming to change gender inequitable social norms are likely to cause backlash in communities. However, the potential for harm can be minimised, for example by working with existing and embedded local organisations, working with skilled providers and well trained facilitators, and working at all levels in the community. These considerations are particularly important when aiming to scale-up social norms interventions.

#### **UPDATES FROM LINEA**

<u>Dr Ana Maria Buller</u> detailed the risk factors for engaging in transactional sex including poverty, lack of education and hegemonic masculinities. She then summarised what we know about what works to prevent transactional sex. For example, structural interventions such as cash transfers seem to work, but results are inconclusive and more research is needed to robustly evaluate the potential added benefits of combining cash transfers with skills training and mentorship programmes.

Ana Maria then gave an overview of the LINEA multi-component intervention to prevent age-disparate transactional sex between adolescent girls 13-15 years-old and adult men in Mwanza, Tanzania. The intervention includes a radio drama and curricula for adolescent girls and men.

### BREAKOUT ROOMS: LINEA INTERVENTION DESIGN AND FEASIBILITY TESTING

In the first breakout room <u>Dr Piotr Pawlak</u> (Independent Consultant) and <u>Dr Lori Rolleri</u> (Lori Rolleri Consulting) discussed how a behaviour-determinant intervention logic model was used to develop the LINEA curricula. They spoke of the curricula's unique features, such as how gender transformative and gender synchronised approaches had been applied throughout its development, and they emphasised the importance of targeting communities, not just individuals.

In the second breakout room Mr John Riber (Media for Development International) and Ms Lottie Howard-Merrill (LSHTM) gave an overview of LINEA's radio drama development process, and plans for the evaluation of the series in Tanzania. They highlighted that in order to effectively change norms, it is critical that mass media interventions are carefully disseminated to the intended audiences.

In the third breakout room <u>Dr Ana Maria Buller</u> (LSHTM), <u>Mr Revocatus Sono</u> (Amani Girls Home) and <u>Ms Veronicah Gimunta</u> (Amani Girls Home) outlined the co-creation process of the multi-component intervention to prevent age-disparate transactional sex. In addition to the intervention, they emphasized the importance of promoting a resilient socio-economic environment that enables the development of adolescent girls.

# **DAY TWO**

#### PANEL 2: INNOVATIVE USES OF MASS MEDIA FOR SOCIAL NORMS CHANGE

The panel began with <u>Dr Vandana Sharma</u> (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health) discussing the value of leveraging low-cost technologies to prevent IPV in resource poor settings. She then outlined the process of co-creating podcasts with Somali refugees in Ethiopia, and empowering them to create and disseminate local solutions to issues such as sexual harassment.

<u>Dr Natsayi Chimbindi</u> (Africa Health Research Institute) and <u>Dr Thembelihle Zuma</u> (Africa Health Research Institute) also demonstrated the potential for mass media interventions to positively influence gender roles, attitudes and practices. They outlined how an 'edu-drama' series called MTV Shuga is helping address unsafe sex among young people in South Africa, and support adolescent sexual and reproductive health, particularly HIV prevention.

Ms Gemma Ferguson (Equal Access) discussed how Tech4Families, a family-centred approach to social norms change, is helping break down the digital gender divide by working with communities in Northern Nigeria to promote women and girls' access to and use of technology. She outlined the development of an innovative curriculum and radio programme. Mr Novatus Urassa (UZIKWASA) then discussed the potential of reflective couples' trainings for improving family communication and reducing IPV.

## PANEL 2 KEY LEARNINGS AND TAKEAWAYS

- Innovative, low-cost approaches to improving sexual and reproductive health outcomes such as podcasts and 'edu-dramas' can be effective, leading to strengthened communication between partners and healthy conflict resolution.
- There are multiple modalities for delivering mass media interventions (radio, podcast, television, broadcast, social media, YouTube...). Choosing the correct modality is important to ensure the target population is reached, and to maximise their exposure to the intervention.
- The effectiveness of mass media interventions is improved when they are paired with curriculum or discussion group components at the couple, family or community level. However, this raises important challenges for measuring the isolated impact of the individual intervention components.
- There is exciting potential to work creatively and collaboratively with community members and community leaders to coproduce mass media interventions from the inception phase.

#### PANEL 3: DEVELOPING QUANTITATIVE TOOLS TO MEASURE SOCIAL NORMS

The third panel began with Ms Rebecca Meiksin (LSHTM), who presented preliminary findings from cognitive interviews with adolescents in England, which she is using to develop survey items measuring social norms relating to sexual behaviour, dating and relationship violence, and gender. <u>Dr Nancy Perrin</u> (Johns Hopkins School of Nursing) then discussed measuring social norms and attitudes about age-disparate transactional sex in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She presented on the process of creating a measure of a community's norms and attitudes, that could be used to evaluate future interventions.

<u>Dr Ilana Seff</u> (Colombia University) shared her research on how to develop valid quantitative proxies for social norms which influence individual's behaviour from large data sets (such as DHS, VACS, MICS). She highlighted the need to interrogate the various clustering techniques used in data analysis to ensure they accurately reflect the reference groups for a given norm. <u>Dr Cari Jo Clark</u> (Emory University) concluded the third panel with a presentation on the development and measurement properties of the IPV help-seeking norms scale, which aims to strengthen access to holistic, responsive and accountable justice for those who have experienced IPV.



A challenge with the models is that they're mostly developed in western settings or with immigrant populations in the U.S.

CARI JO CLARK, EMORY UNIVERSITY

#### PANEL 3 KEY LEARNINGS AND TAKEAWAYS

- The quality and diversity of quantitative methods for social norms measurement has greatly increased in the last few years, and this has allowed for a more nuanced assessment of gaps in knowledge and practice.
- There remain many questions about how to quantitatively measure reference groups, and how to identify the most relevant reference group for a social norm. Individuals' reference groups may range greatly in their number, size and homogeneity.
- The evidence suggests that men see other men as their reference group, whereas women's views about their reference groups are less clear. There might be great potential in letting participants define who their reference groups are through formative research.
- There are important questions to be answered about which quantitative measures of social norm change are most important for interventions aiming to prevent gender-based violence or sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Different approaches to measuring social norms could include measuring changes in the strength of social norms, or measuring changes in the structure of social norms for example measuring changes in sanctions.
- Presenters discussed the use of a 'don't know' or 'neutral' option in scale questions to measure social norms. They raised that this might be an important way to capture evidence that certain social norms are not important for individuals, but highlighted that these options could also be overused by participants.

## PANEL 4: PEER INFLUENCE AND WOMEN AND GIRLS' SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH DECISION-MAKING

The fourth panel commenced with <u>Dr Meghna Ranganathan</u> (LSHTM) discussing how factors such as peer acceptance, belonging and self-actualisation may influence women and girls' sexual health decision-making in rural South Africa. She explained that motivations for transactional sex among this group extend beyond acquiring basic needs (items for survival) and wants (items that are desirable), to fulfilling higher order needs such as the need for peer acceptance. Similarly, <u>Dr Joyce Wamoyi</u> (National Institute for Medical Research) explained in her presentation that adolescent girls and young women's motivations for participating in transactional sex are strongly influenced by aspirations shaped by their peers, role models and social circles.



Aspirations are relational, dynamic and are often connected to other aspirations held by the individual and significant people within their context.

JOYCE WAMOYI, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ms Leah Kenny (London School of Economics and Political Science) described her research that explores how social norms around family planning and child spacing are influenced by social networks, among nomadic and semi-nomadic populations in Kenya. Similarly, <u>Dr Holly Shakya</u> (UC San Diego) discussed how social norms and social networks are associated with adolescent pregnancy in rural Honduras. She noted that in cases of low social control, descriptive norms are strong drivers for adolescent childbirth. She also found that adolescent girls are far more likely to have had a pregnancy in adolescence if people in her proximal network have also had an adolescent pregnancy, while perceived norms in her proximal network appear to be a less salient predictor.

#### PANEL 4 KEY LEARNINGS AND TAKEAWAYS

- Commonly researchers classify two types of transactional sex: one for basic needs and the other for consumer iterms. In reality, however, the distinction between these is blurred for most adolescent girls. Peer influence and acceptance appears to be a very important motivator for girls' participation in transactional sex.
- As adolescents transition from childhood to adulthood, their aspirations evolve and shape their life choices, including those related to sexual behaviours such as transactional sex.
- Adolescent girls' aspirations are dynamic and girls are influenced by both long- and short-term aspirations. Girls'
  aspirations are also relational, and heavily influenced by others within their context, such as role models, family
  members and their peers in particular.
- Social network methods are a relatively new and important way to help identify who is influencing individuals' behaviour. This might unearth surprising and helpful findings about people who support gender equitable norms, which is important for social norms interventions.

## PANEL 5: SOCIAL NORMS MEASUREMENT FOR PRACTICE AND POLICY

The final panel of the day commenced with <u>Ms Claire Hughes</u> (Freelance Consultant), who presented the findings from a review of practices in the measurement of social and gender norms. She noted that many current approaches are complex and resource intensive, and that whilst these efforts are important for building the evidence base, simpler approaches are required. Similarly, <u>Dr Bryan Shaw</u> (Georgetown University) highlighted the need to simplify and adapt current approaches to monitoring norm change, after discussing the development of the <u>Social Norms Measurement Resource Guide</u>.

The final presentation was by <u>Dr Sadhvi Kalra</u> (CARE USA), who outlined CARE's Tipping Point Initiative, which focuses on addressing the root causes of child, early and forced marriage. She explained Tipping Point's approach to building girls' agency and transforming discriminatory social norms.



Building agency, as well as changing relations and transforming structures goes together in bringing about change.

SADHVI KALRA, CARE USA

## PANEL 5 KEY LEARNINGS AND TAKEAWAYS

- The quality and variety of tools to measure social norms change in programmes and policy has increased greatly in recent years.
- Most current approaches to measuring social norms are complex and better suited for large-scale impact evaluations. Simpler approaches are needed for smaller-scale interventions.
- There are existing tools to measure social norms change that can be integrated into programmatic monitoring and evaluation frameworks. While there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach, existing tools can be adapted for new contexts.
- It is important to think about when in programmatic timelines to measure social norms change. Measuring social norms change during programme delivery may enable practitioners to identify and respond to backlash. The 'endline' point for data collection, whether this falls at the end of programme delivery or a number of weeks or months later, will have an important influence on how much social norms change can be detected.

# DAY THREE

## PECHA KUCHA PRESENTATIONS: REMOTE DATA COLLECTION METHODS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Presenters spoke about the wide-ranging, innovative remote data collection methods that they have employed during the pandemic to measure the impact of gender-based violence, and other social, economic and health effects. Firstly, Ms Venetia Baker (LSHTM) discussed using social media to conduct a real-time analysis of online viewer engagement with 'MTV Shuga', a TV drama that aims to help young people make informed decisions about their health using entertaining storylines.

<u>Dr Sadhvi Kalra</u> (CARE USA) then spoke about some of the adaptations that had been made to monitoring tools and processes by CARE's Tipping Point Initiative following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included activity tracking, outcome tracking, and implementation fidelity on social norms linked to child, early and forced marriage. <u>Dr Michele Decker</u> (Johns Hopkins University) also discussed using remote quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, such as phone surveys and focus group discussions, to measure the impact of COVID-19 on gender-based violence among young people in Nairobi, Kenya.

<u>Dr Tia Palermo</u> (University of Buffalo) and <u>Dr Lusajo Kajula</u> (UNICEF) then discussed leveraging mobile phone technology to investigate the impacts of COVID-19 among young people, their families and their communities in Tanzania. They noted several challenges, including contacting 'hard to reach', rural and poor populations. <u>Dr Pinky Mahlangu</u> (South African Medical Research Council) also highlighted several challenges surrounding remote data collection when exploring the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and livelihoods of South African populations. She noted that rapport was not easy to establish over the phone due to lack of visual cues and frequent line-cuts.



It is important to deepen our knowledge in using remote data collection methods ... particularly in creating conditions that enable participants to speak about violence.

PINKY MAHLANGU, SOUTH AFRICAN MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

#### PANEL 6: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF INTERVENTIONS THAT TACKLE SOCIAL NORMS OR TRANSACTIONAL SEX

The panel began with a presentation from <u>Dr Cari Jo Clark</u> (Emory University) and <u>Ms Gemma Ferguson</u> (Equal Access) who highlighted the value of diffusion as an important mechanism for social norms change, and the reduction of IPV in communities in Nepal. <u>Dr Tia Palermo</u> (University at Buffalo) and <u>Dr Lusajo Kajula</u> (UNICEF) then discussed the implementation of a pilot intervention designed to test how a national government cash transfer programme in Tanzania could improve adolescent well-being and tackle transactional sex. Although they found no significant impact on the reduction of transactional sex, the intervention increased related knowledge and decreased sexual violence.

Dr Isolde Birdthistle (LSHTM) presented findings from PEPFAR's (The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe) partnership, which aims to reduce new HIV infections and violence among adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa. The panel was concluded by <u>Dr Andrew Gibbs</u> (South African Medical Research Council) who discussed the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures (SSCF) intervention which aimed to transform gender norms and strengthen the livelihoods of women and men in South Africa. He noted that transactional sex, while having similar risk factors to IPV, requires specific interventions and approaches beyond those effective for IPV prevention.

#### PANEL 6 KEY LEARNINGS AND TAKEAWAYS

- Diffusion is an important mechanism for social norms change. However, diffusion does not happen organically. It takes time, effort and repeated reinforcement of the positive norms before they are internalised.
- None of the presented interventions seemed to prevent or reduce transactional sex. While having similar risk factors to IPV, transactional sex requires specific interventions and approaches beyond those that have been shown to be effective for IPV prevention.

# PANEL 7: SOCIAL NORMS AND MASCULINITIES

Panel seven commenced with <u>Dr Kirsten Stoebenau</u> (University of Maryland) exploring how fundamental gendered expectations of men's roles as providers are manifested in gendered norms and internalised beliefs among women and girls that support transactional sex. Next, <u>Ms Lottie Howard-Merrill</u> (LSHTM) discussed findings from a qualitative study that aimed to gain clarity on men's behaviours within, and perspectives of, transactional sex relationships. Results suggested that transactional sex presents an opportunity for men to enact provider norms and heightened sexuality norms, and align themseleves with a hegemonic masculinity.

Ms Rachel Marcus (Overseas Development Institute) detailed findings from ALIGN's (Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms) evidence review, highlighting that high-quality mentoring was found to be extremely important for changing male attitudes about sexual harassment. Dr Caroline Ferraz Ignacio (Promundo) concluded the panel by outlining a study that aimed to uncover social norms that justify or foster SECA in favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

# PANEL 7 KEY LEARNINGS AND TAKEAWAYS

- There is a knowledge gap around how gendered norms influence adolescent boys, and how these play out as boys enter adulthood. Similarly, there are few rigorously designed and evaluated gender equality interventions targeting adolescent boys.
- Interventions aiming to change gender inequitable social norms among men would benefit from identifying and promoting positive gender equitable male role models.
- There appears to be greater and more consistent adherence to gender inequitable social norms among men, compared to women. Men also tend to cite other men as their reference groups.

# CONCLUSIONS

This report documents the rich and varied presentations from the Third LINEA Biennial Meeting. The meeting paved the way for increased cohesion between various actors working on social norms and SECA. Open discussions around the successes and challenges of operationalising social norms theory and intervention implementation has set the scene for exciting developments in researching social norms and social norms change.

# KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE MEETING, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

#### SOCIAL NORMS MEASUREMENT

**Time frames:** One particularly important question is whether and how research can determine the permanence of social norms change when it occurs. Although it is clear this measurement should take place beyond programmatic time frames, it is difficult to define the time frame for 'permanence' of a social norms change.

**Reference groups:** Researchers have made great progress in asking questions about reference groups in social norms research. However, this has unearthed questions for researchers about how to ensure we are collecting data about the reference groups that are most relevant for the particular social norm. It is also important for researchers to determine whom people are thinking about when they answer questions about reference groups. It is likely that questions need to be more specific than asking about 'people in your community', and that reference groups should be identified during formative research.

**Sub-populations:** There is potential for future research to explore the differences in how social norms impact different groups of people (for example the differences between men and women, and boys and girls). Questions include differences between groups in terms of how norms and behaviours align, the importance and role of reference groups, and how sanctions play out.

#### INTERVENTIONS

Mass media: Innovative, low-cost approaches to preventing IPV such as podcasts and 'edu-dramas' demonstrate the potential for mass media interventions to influence gender roles, attitudes, and practices that support adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

**Funding:** It is crucial that more evidence-based social norms interventions are developed and funded. This will require us to leverage existing and new research to make a compelling argument to both funders and policy makers.

'Naturally occurring' change: There is potential to think further about how social norms do, or should, complement 'naturally occurring' norms change and structural change. This is important to ensure the sustainability of social norms interventions, and has important consequences for the evaluation of social norms interventions.

**Unintended consequences:** Now that the focus of social norms interventions is moving to scale-up and adaptation to new contexts, backlash mitigation is increasingly important. Challenges may arise when working with more mainstream (non-gender-based violence focussed) providers, or in not fully adapting interventions to social norms in different contexts.

**Co-creation:** Researchers and practitioners are increasingly beginning to explore opportunities to co-create social norms interventions. Further research and experience will help determine who should be involved and how. This may provide important evidence to help convince funders that co-creation is necessary and cost-effective.

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