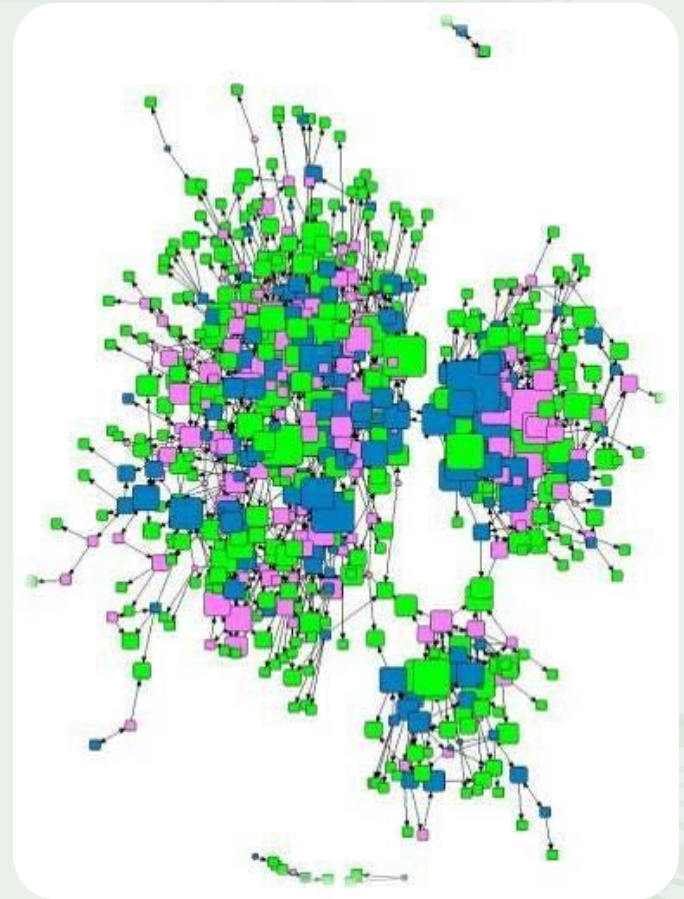# Harnessing the Potential of Social Networks

The ABCs of using social network approaches to design and evaluate health & development programs

Social network analysis: What is it?

A theoretical perspective applied to research and programs

- Recognizes that individuals interact with, learn from, and get information from other people

- Focuses on **relationships**, not individuals

"Who delivers the message, and in what interpersonal context, may be just as, if no more important, than the message itself, and may result in better, more relevant, and perhaps more effective programs."
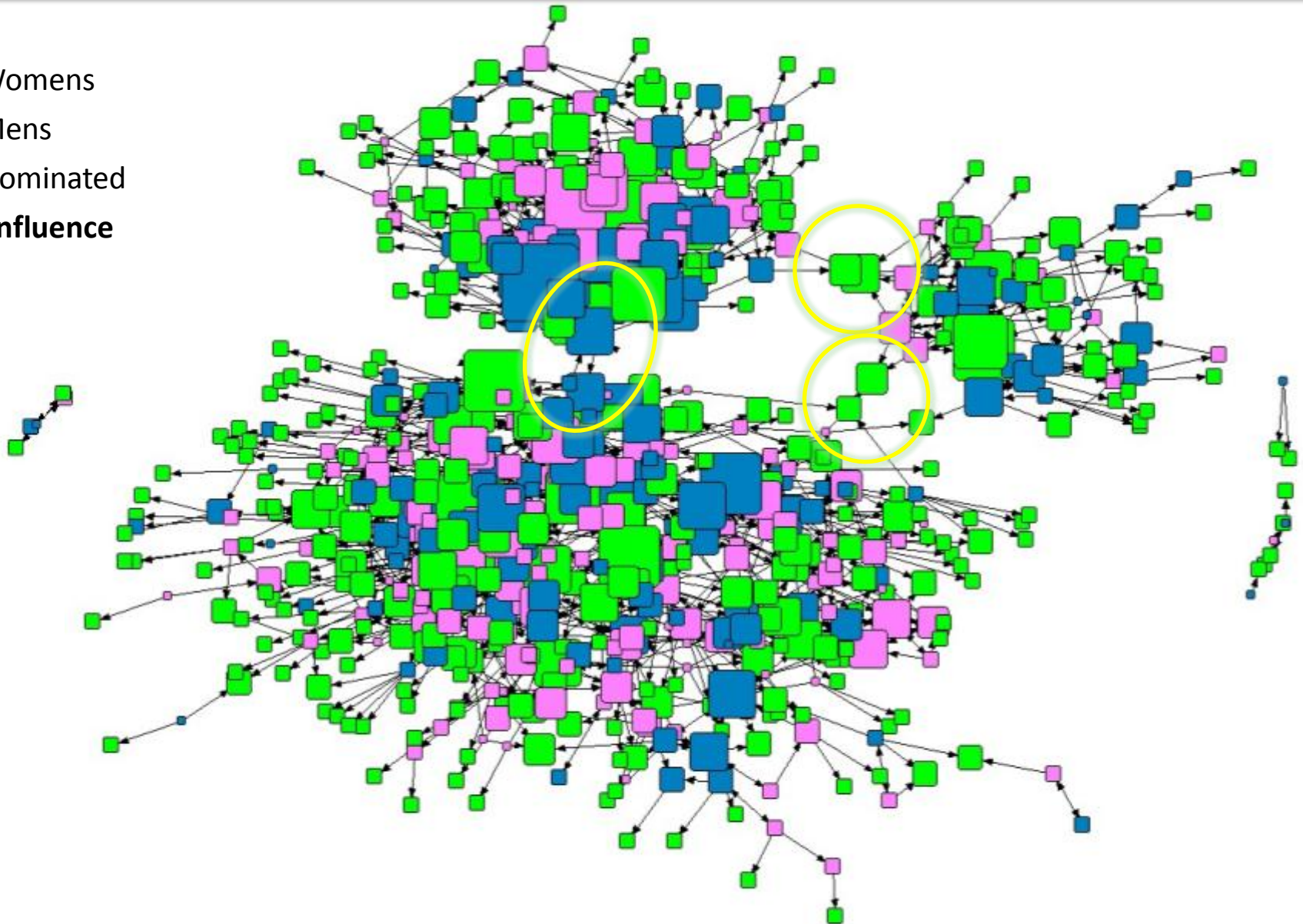
- Valente & Fosados, 2006
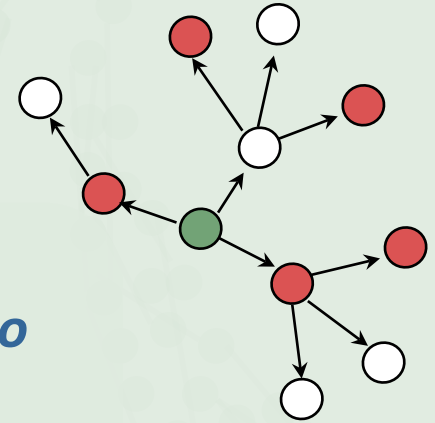
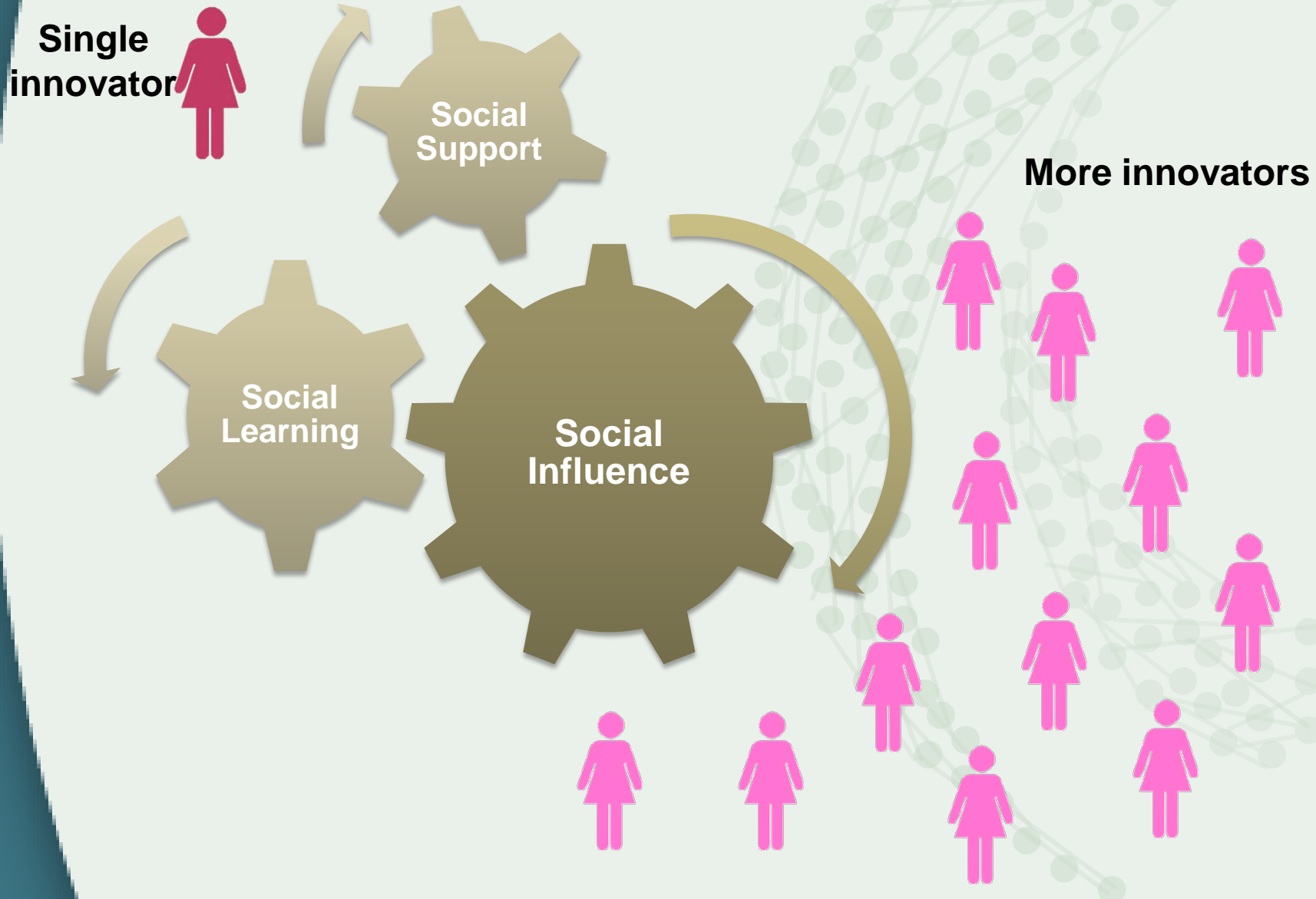# Entire social network in one village in Bandiagara: Influence

Womens

Mens

Nominated

Size = Influence

How do networks support diffusion?

Single innovator

Social Support

Social Learning

Social Influence

More innovators

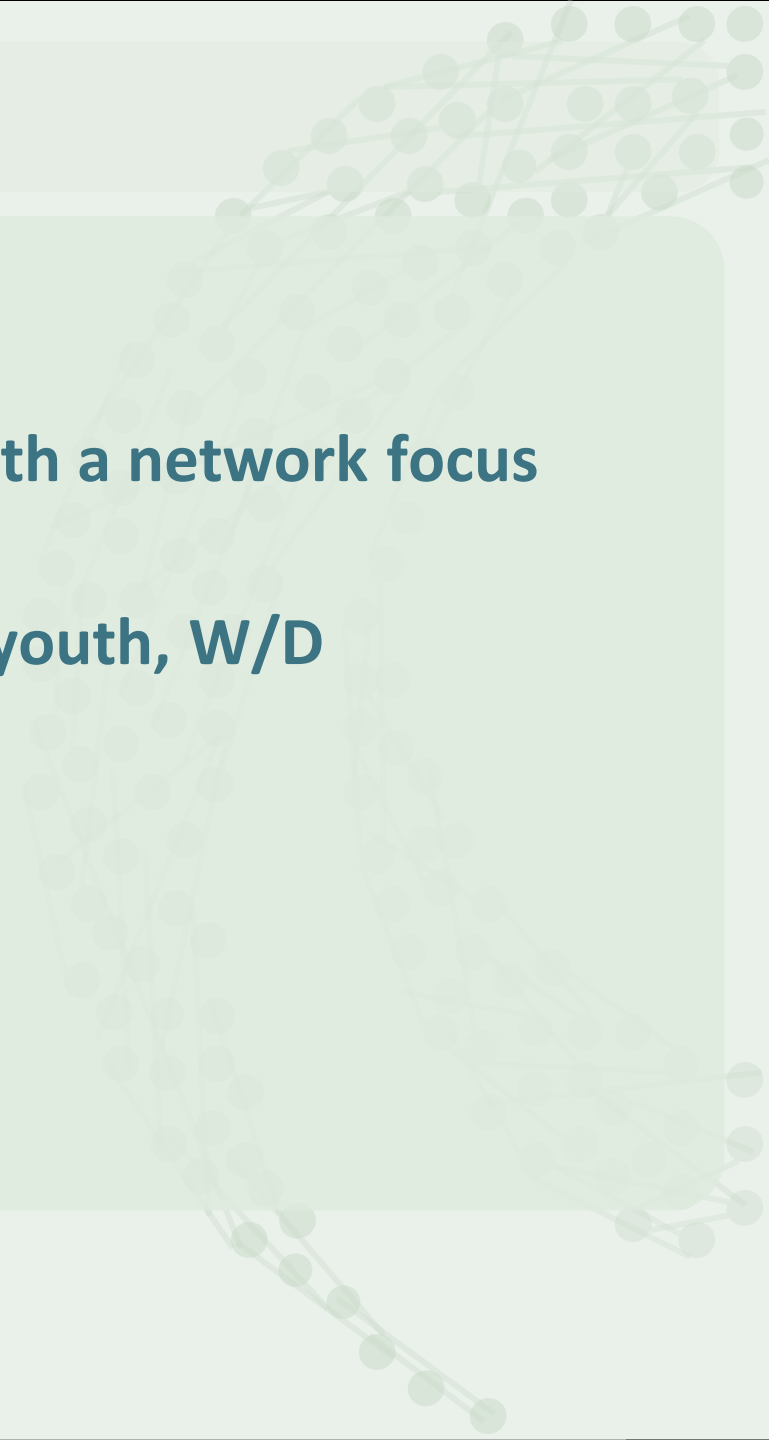# How do SN interventions differ from conventional outreach approaches?

- Focused on changing flow of information and social influence, rather than on individual behavior

- Address social norms rather than practices

- Work through *informal* as well as formal leaders to diffuse change through networks

- Use influencers/connectors to inform, facilitate comparison, filter conflicting information and model attitudes/behaviors

Using social networks for learning and influence

1. **Opinion Leaders /** *Leaders Influents*

2. **Strategically Targeted Groups /** *Groupes Stratégiquement Ciblé*

3. **Leaders of Established Groups /** *Leaders des groupes établis*

4. **Snowball Approach /** *Chacun invite trois*

5. **Bridges and Connectors /** *Liaison & connecteurs*

6. **Rewiring linkages, ties /** *Reconfiguration de liens*

Discussion Ideas

1. **Why networks?**
2. **Strategy development with a network focus**
3. **M&E implications**
4. **Specific sub-groups, e.g. youth, W/D**

Tool: Social Network Design Grid

Problem: FP use among newly married couples considered unacceptable

Who will influence?	Who will be influenced?	What activities?	SN approach(es)
Mothers-in-law	• Daughters-in-law • Sons	Teas with mothers-in-laws Activity-based discussions facilitated by animators MILs talk with others	Snowball
Grin members via social leader	• Grin members • Their wives • Other male friends	Animators catalyze reflective dialogs with *grin* leaders Request to talk with others	Informal leaders of groups Snowball
MOH supervisors and CHWs	• Male social groups	CHWs visit *grins* and give clinic tour	Reconfiguring networks

Illustrative Outcome Indicators

Network properties

- Flow of fertility/FP info through network partners
- Mean/% of network
- Size and composition of women's network
- % who report network partners use FP

Social factors

- Perception that husband and network partners support FP
- Couple communication (index score)
- Woman/couple efficacy for FP use

Community catalyzing capacity

- Ownership/ participation among members to interventions
- % of members with favorable attitudes
- Cohesive social network supporting FP use

Individual changes

- Use of FP services
- Men/women with unmet need
- Proportion of segments p/year with met need for effective FP
- Method continuation