December 2020

ENGAGING MEN TO TRANSFORM GENDER ATTITUDES AND PREVENT INTIMATE-PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Authors: Kathryn Falb, Mazeda Hossain, Rocky Kabeya, Estelle Koussoubé, Milli Lake, Chloé Lewis, Rachael S. Pierotti, Danielle Roth, and Julia Vaillant

KEY MESSAGES

- Over a third of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have experienced physical or sexual intimate-partner violence (IPV) in the past year (2013-2014 DHS). In this context, the Africa Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) in collaboration with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) tested the effectiveness of the Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP) program.
- EMAP is a male-only discussion group intervention aimed to prevent IPV, and to transform gender attitudes and couples' power dynamics; all male discussion groups are informed by and accountable to women's groups in the community.
- The EMAP program significantly improved the quality of the couples' relationships, and led to changes in men's behaviors that are often associated with IPV, like reduced alcohol consumption. Further, the study found that the discussion groups led to improvements in men's gender equitable attitudes—reducing their support for violence against women, and increasing their support for a woman's right to refuse to have sex.
- Despite these changes on the journey to IPV prevention, female partners of male EMAP participants reported, on average, no change in the levels of IPV that they experienced.

GENDER INNOVATION LAB

The Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) conducts impact evaluations of development interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa, seeking to generate evidence on how to close gender gaps in earnings, productivity, assets, and agency. The GIL team is currently working on over 70 impact evaluations in more than 25 countries with the aim of building an evidence base with lessons for the region.

The impact objective of GIL is increasing take-up of effective policies by governments, development organizations, and the private sector to address the underlying causes of gender inequality in Africa, particularly in terms of women's economic and social empowerment. The Lab aims to do this by producing and delivering a new body of evidence and developing a compelling narrative, geared towards policymakers, on what works and what does not work in promoting gender equality.

Public Disclosure Authorized

- The in-depth qualitative study of the EMAP program found continued support for men's position of dominance in the household. The qualitative work found that though men did change their day-to-day practices, like participation in housework, they maintained control of any changes in their household—indicating a lack of willingness to relinquish authority.
- Increasing the intensity of the intervention or layering of interventions to address contextual factors—such as economic stress, community-level norms about gender and IPV, or conflict-management skills—could be critical elements to add to an IPV-prevention program to realize change in IPV.

WHY ENGAGE MEN TO PREVENT IPV?

Many factors can contribute to higher prevalence of violence against women in conflict-affected settings, including normalization of violence, economic instability, and increased psychological distress within families. Across the DRC, its prevalence is widespread; evidence has indicated that violence against women and girls occurs early, and can remain present over the course of their lives. In addition to the critical need for women to be free from violence in their daily lives, IPV has further negative impacts: it can be a barrier to economic and social empowerment.

Engaging men to improve gender attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, especially through sustained and highly intensive approaches can be a promising strategy to prevent violence, as male partners are the key perpetrators of IPV against women in heterosexual relationships.

HERE'S WHAT WE DID

In collaboration with the IRC, GIL evaluated the impact of the Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP) program, a 10-month primary prevention intervention created for men and women from conflict affected communities, which aims to reduce violence against women and girls by addressing its root causes. EMAP includes a 16-week men-only discussion group developed by the IRC designed to engage men in transformative individual behavior change guided by the input and realities of the women in their communities. Through the discussion series, the program develops a cohort of male allies who practice and promote gender equity, and do not utilize violence. Male participants in the program develop the skills to rethink their belief systems and spark individual behavioral change to prevent IPV. Specific topics ranged from the underpinnings of masculinity, to causes and consequences of violence against women and girls, and opportunities for positive role modeling. The empowered cohort can then help to transform gender relations in the community.

To explore the impact of this model on the prevalence of IPV, GIL and the IRC worked with 1,300 men and 1,200 women across 28 communities using a matched-pair cluster randomized design. The 28 villages were divided into pairs that were matched based on sociodemographic characteristics. Within each pair of villages, one site was randomized to either the treatment or control group. In addition, extensive qualitative research captured baseline gender attitudes through in-depth interviews in all treatment communities and examined processes of change using a variety of qualitative and ethnographic research methods throughout program implementation in six communities.

Adult men over the age of 18 were eligible to participate in the program. Participants were also required to have lived in the community for at least six months with plans to continue living there for an additional six months, to have the ability to actively participate in the group, and to commit to refraining from violence for the duration of the program.

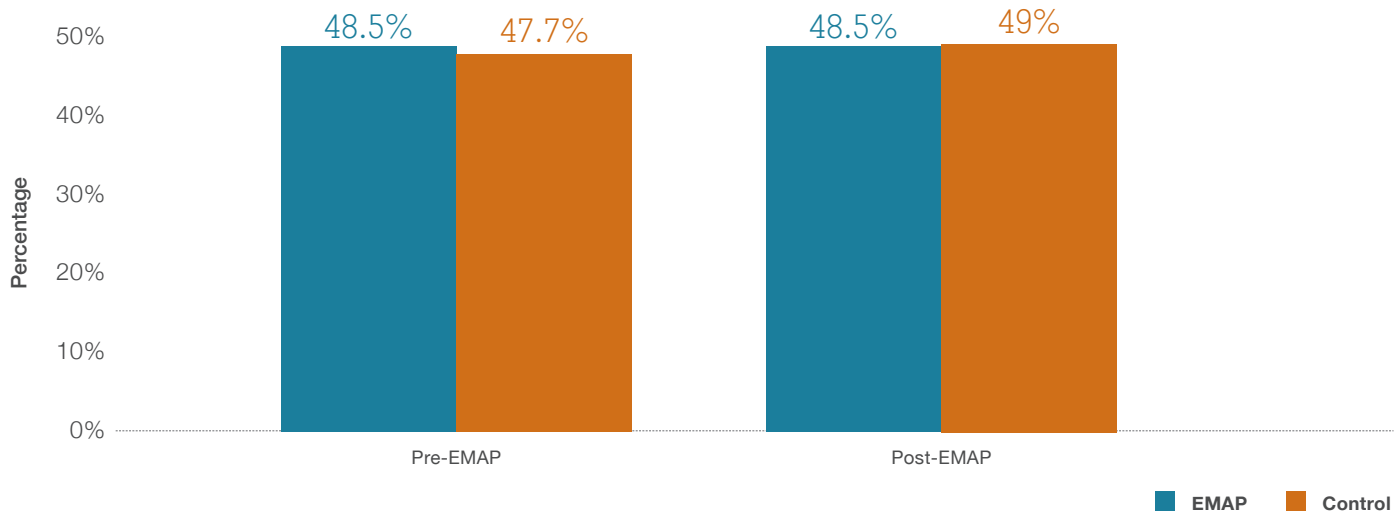
HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND

Intent to treat results show that the frequency of women's reports of IPV (i.e. physical, sexual and emotional violence, and economic abuse) remained stagnant across both treatment arms. However, EMAP led to positive impacts on other outcomes: an improvement in men's gender attitudes, a reduction in their support for violence against women, and an increase in support for a woman's right to refuse to have sex. And further, EMAP led to more gender-equitable behavioral changes, including greater participation of men in housework. Men and women shared more information about their income with their spouses, and intra-household cooperation improved. Women reported that the quality of their relationship improved.

One potential explanation for the stagnant levels of IPV is that expectations of male dominance in the household did not undergo a shift. The study showed that though men did change their day-to-day practices, like a greater participation in housework, they maintained control of any changes in their household. Participating men demonstrated greater willingness to promote a more equal division of labor than to establish a relationship based on the equal sharing of authority. Including women, at least in some of the sessions, in a carefully designed intervention could potentially promote accountability and more meaningfully transform gender power dynamics within households. Complementing EMAP's individual behavior-change focus with work that targets community leaders—to support deep engagement with social norms change at the community level—could help to engender transformative change. Further research on the impact of IPV prevention interventions should systematically incorporate measurement of indirect effects on other members of the community, to further understand community level dynamics and capture potential negative or positive spillovers, including longer term follow up.

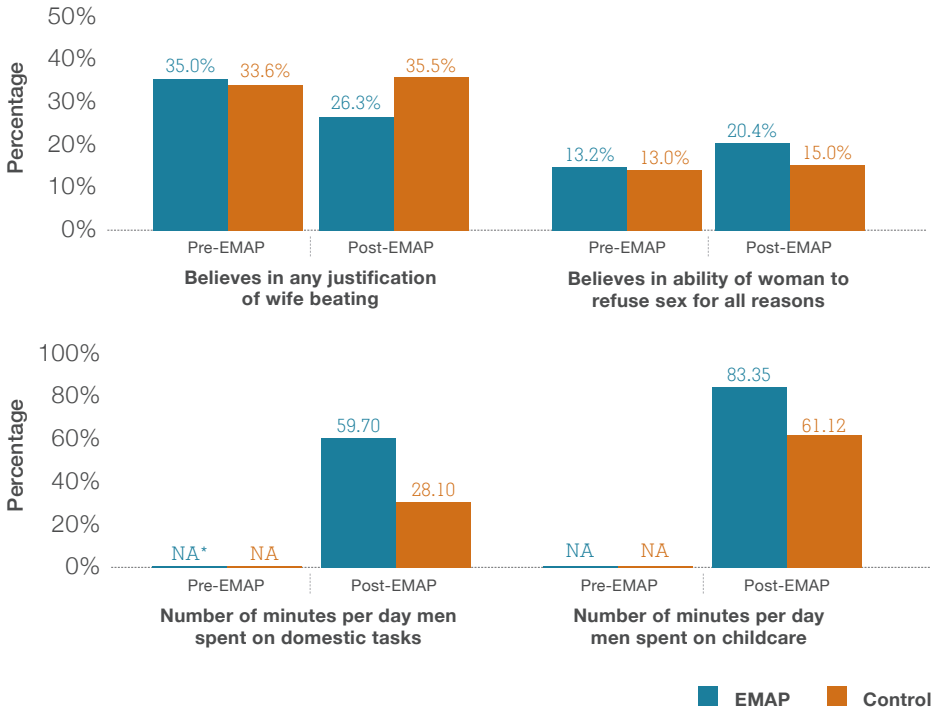
In addition, it is possible that while men's intention to commit violence was reduced – as men's self-reported outcomes indicates – greater investment in male participants capacity to identify and address potential harmful behaviors is needed to avoid perpetration of violence within the households. The EMAP program did not include activities on conflict management which could help realize these changes. Further consideration of the broader context of the program may also be necessary in order to generate IPV reduction. Addressing economic stress of households, including the economic

GRAPH 1: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL IPV (PAST 12 MONTHS)



Note: No statistically significant differences between treatment and control in women's experience of IPV at follow-up.

GRAPH 2: CHANGES IN MEN'S GENDER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS



** Not administered at baseline*

Note: Highly statistically significant differences between treatment and control in men's gender equitable attitudes and behaviors at follow-up.

empowerment of women may be a meaningful programmatic addition. In eastern DRC, an economic empowerment intervention found strong trends towards reduction of IPV 18 months post-intervention.

Despite the stagnant levels of IPV, the changes in men's attitudes and behaviors suggest that in the long term, there is the possibility of improvements in well-being that could break the cycle of violence. Preliminary analyses also suggest that the EMAP program may be effective in reducing violence for some subgroups of men. An upcoming note will elaborate on these results. In North and South Kivu, gender inequality is deeply entrenched, and EMAP may be one important component of reducing men's use of IPV and transforming gender relations over the long term.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Markus Goldstein
mgoldstein@worldbank.org

Amy Copley
acopley@worldbank.org

1818 H St NW
Washington, DC 20433 USA
www.worldbank.org/africa/gil

Photo credit: Vincent Tremeau, World Bank

This work has been funded in part by the Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality (UFGE), which is a multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank to advance gender equality and women's empowerment through experimentation and knowledge creation to help governments and the private sector focus policy and programs on scalable solutions with sustainable outcomes. The UFGE is supported with generous contributions from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.