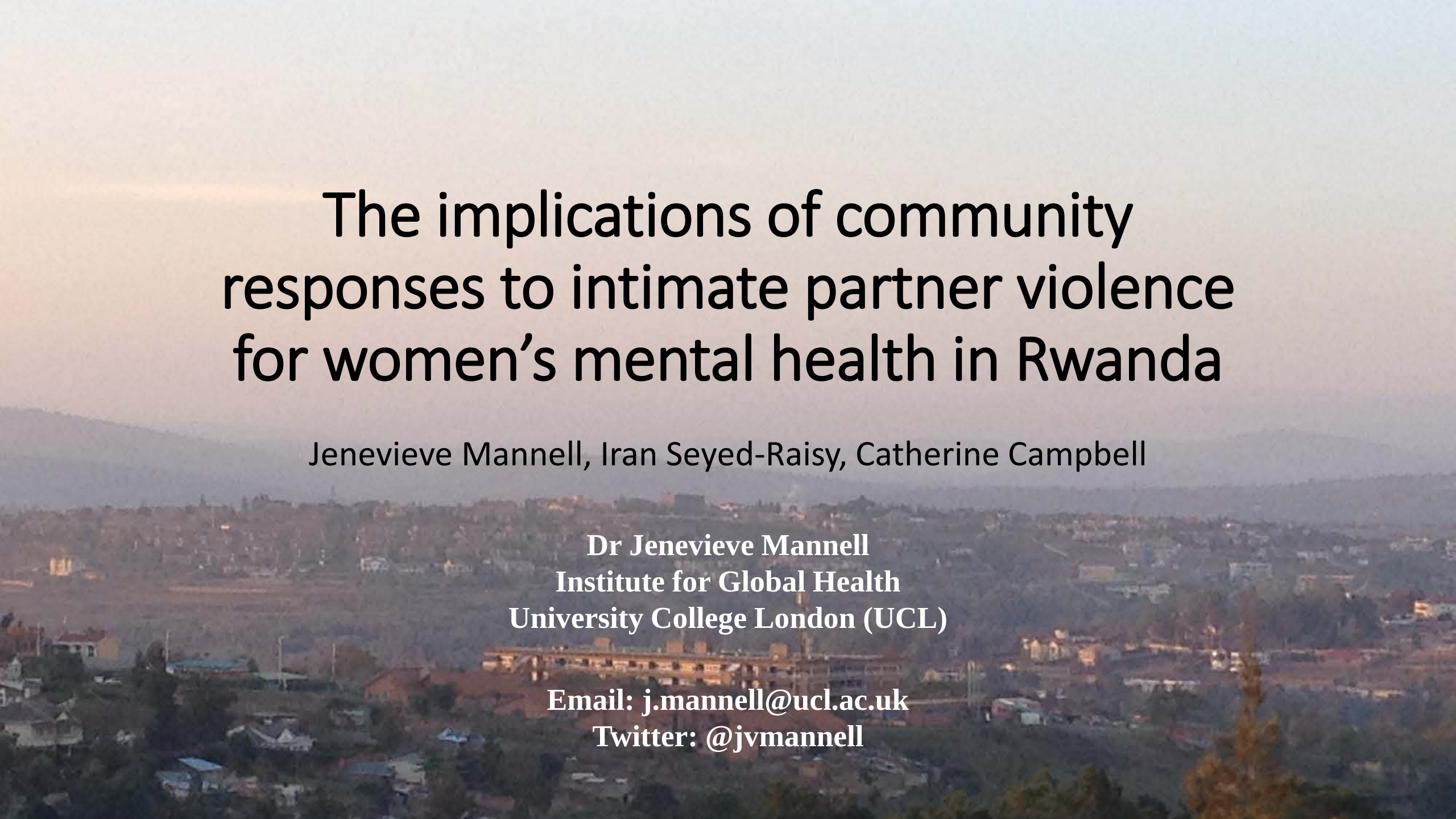


An aerial photograph of a city, likely Kigali, Rwanda, taken at dusk or dawn. The city is densely packed with buildings, and the hills in the background are silhouetted against a soft, hazy sky. The overall tone is calm and contemplative.

# The implications of community responses to intimate partner violence for women's mental health in Rwanda

Jenevieve Mannell, Iran Seyed-Raisy, Catherine Campbell

**Dr Jenevieve Mannell**  
**Institute for Global Health**  
**University College London (UCL)**

**Email: [j.mannell@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:j.mannell@ucl.ac.uk)**

**Twitter: [@jvmannell](https://twitter.com/jvmannell)**

# IPV and women's mental health

- Women who experience IPV are twice as likely to experience depression
- And almost twice as likely to have alcohol use disorders (Devries et al. 2013)
- Psychological violence is associated with a 3.2 fold prevalence of depression and anxiety (Ribeiro et al 2009)



# Increase in community-based interventions for GBV/IPV prevention...

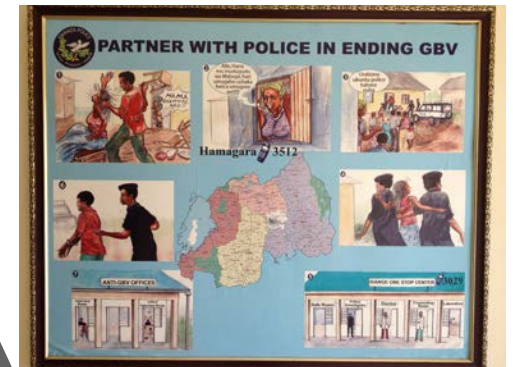


Research question

**What are the implications of community responses to intimate partner violence for women's mental health and wellbeing?**

# Rwanda

- **Strong communities:** Gacaca, umuganda
- **Strong political support for gender and women's empowerment**
- 2008 Gender based violence bill: includes physical, psychological and economic forms of violence + marital rape
- 'Harassing one's spouse' and 'conjugal rape' levy punishments of imprisonment for 8 months to 2 years



# Community-led GBV Committees

- **2008 Gender based violence bill:** includes physical, psychological and economic forms of violence
- GBV Committees in all 14,000 villages (umudugudu) across the country
- 6 elected representatives from the community
- Role: raise awareness, identify and refer victims, report perpetrators, conduct home visits and report statistics



# Conceptual framework

- **“Community mental health competence”** (Campbell & Burgess, 2012):
  - **Knowledge:** To recognise signs and symptoms of distress and available services
  - **Safe social spaces:** To think critically about social and cultural drivers of poor mental health
  - **Partnerships:** With those who have the political power and economic resources to improve mental health outcomes



# Methods

| PARTICIPANTS                                           | N  | METHOD                     | SELECTION/ RECRUITMENT TECHNIQUE                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Round 1 data collection (2013)</b>                  |    |                            |                                                        |
| Mixed community members<br>(4 groups of 6 women)       | 24 | Focus group<br>discussions | Purposively selected by local research<br>assistant    |
| <b>Round 2 data collection (2014)</b>                  |    |                            |                                                        |
| Members of GBV Committee<br>(6 members, 2 communities) | 12 | In-depth<br>interviews     | Communities were purposively selected,<br>Kigali-based |
| Community members (men)                                | 12 | Focus group<br>discussions | Recruited through umudugudu leader                     |
| Community members (women)                              | 11 | Focus group<br>discussions | Recruited through umudugudu leader                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                           | 59 |                            |                                                        |

# Findings

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- Community members play an active role in responding to IPV
- Supportive community responses to IPV can be stress-reducing (Edwards et al. 2015)





This is also what we talk about in the *umuganda*. When we know about a situation in the community that needs attention and follow up, this is where we speak about it.

You say their names in the *umuganda*?

Absolutely!

We might even go straight to their house.

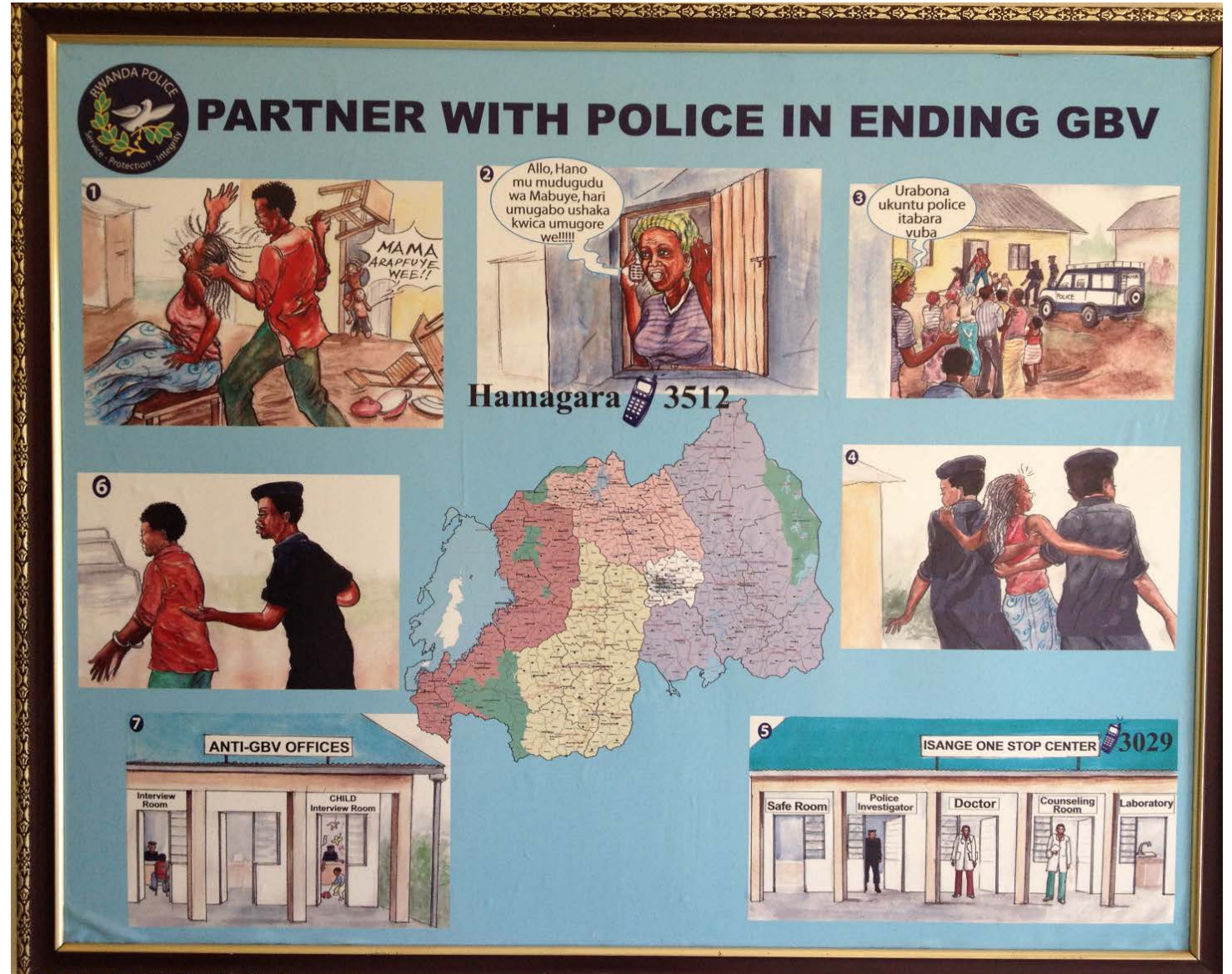
Is this not confidential? Is it alright to do so publically?

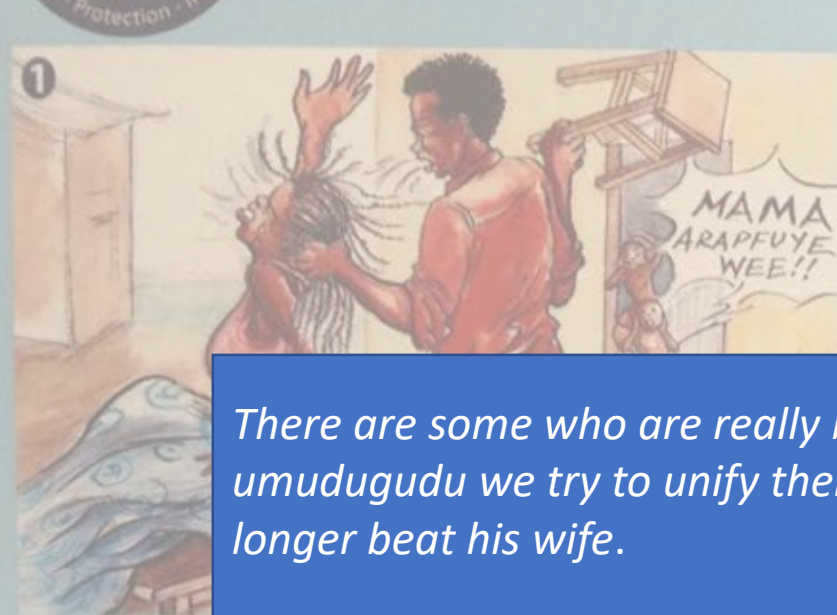
No, it is fine. It has to be done so that everyone can see this, because you can be affecting the neighbourhood and causing disturbance in the whole community.

When you are abusing your wife, you are also affecting the whole community.

# Findings

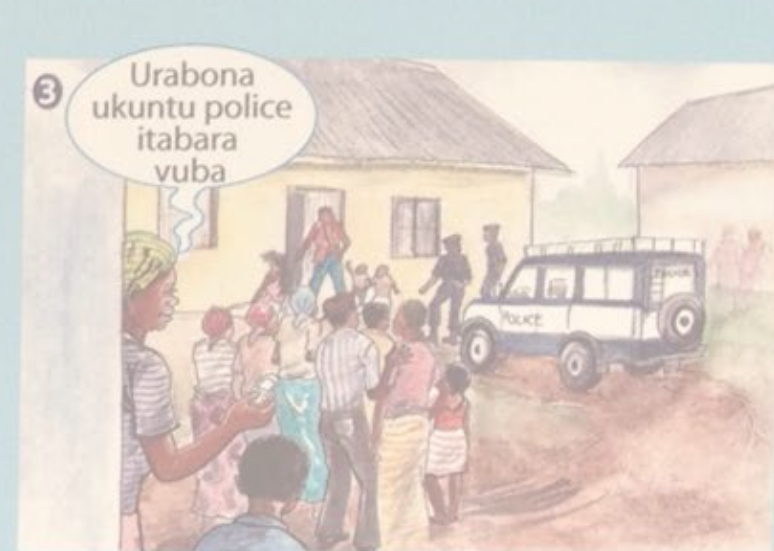
- However, many community responses to IPV show that women's mental health is not being prioritised
- Communities responded effectively only when the violence is physically 'severe'





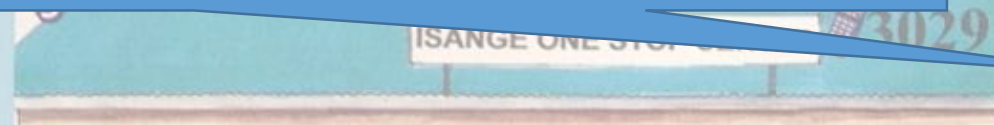
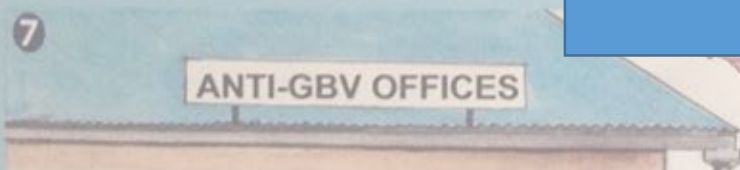
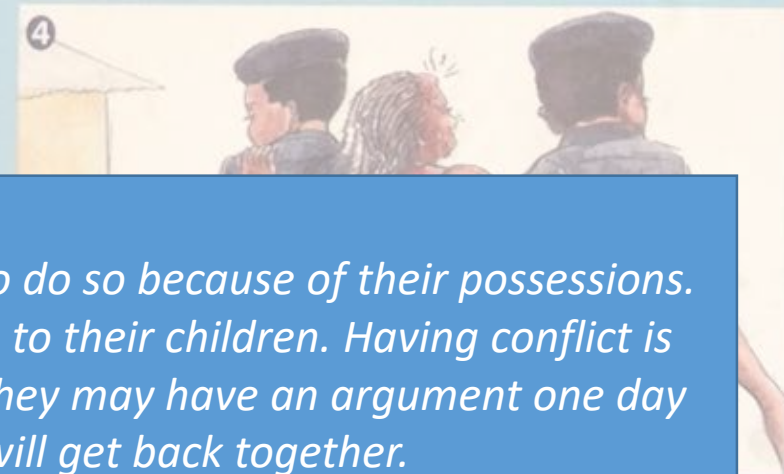
*There are some who are really brutal, but here in our umudugudu we try to unify them and the man promises to no longer beat his wife.*

*-- Community A, Head of GBV Committee*



*Mostly people who are not married, we advise them to do so because of their possessions. We tell them that it is necessary because it gives value to their children. Having conflict is not a reason to tell them not to get married because they may have an argument one day and get back together the next. We believe that they will get back together.*

*-- Community B, Umudugudu Chief*

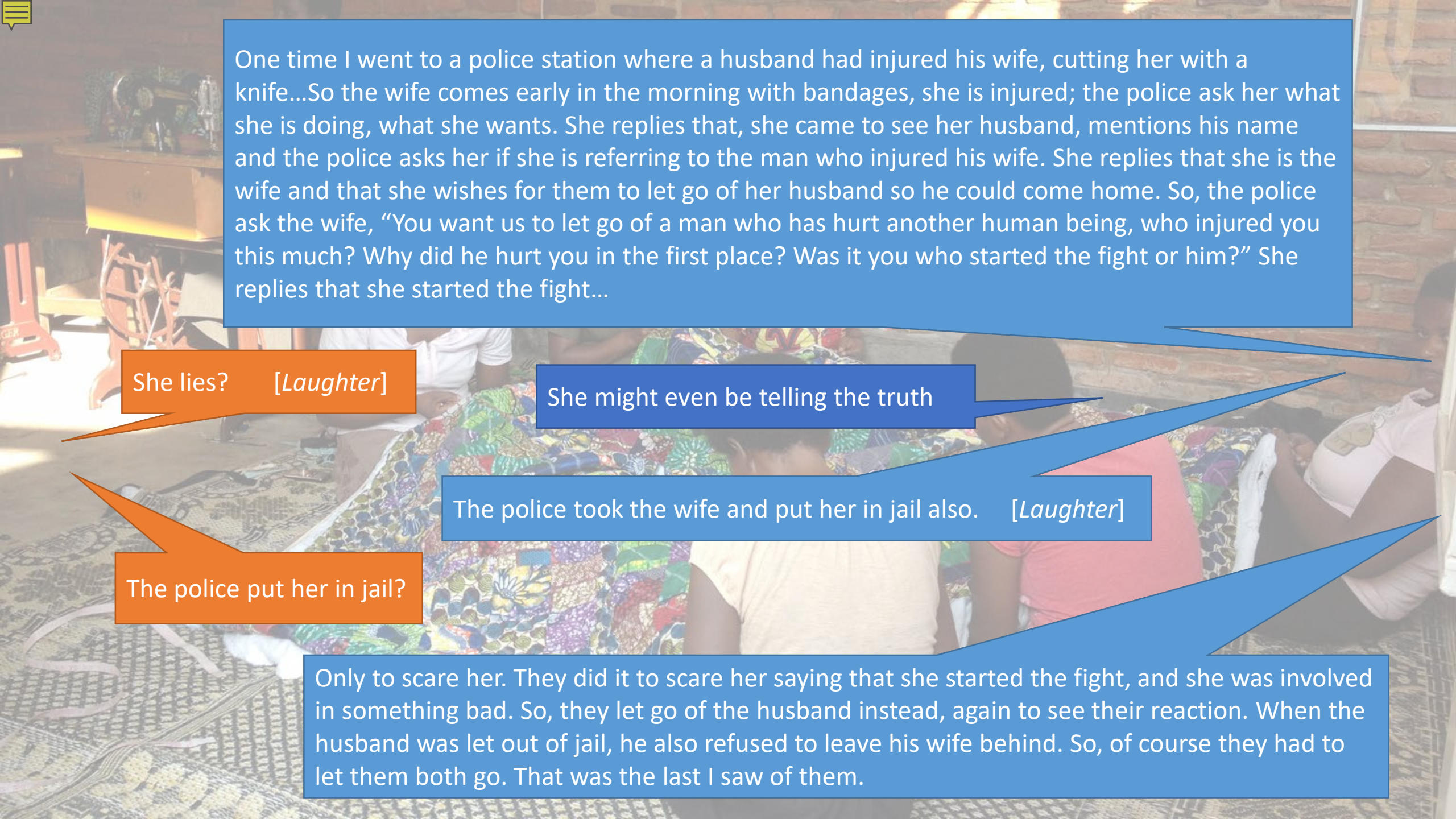


# Findings

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- Community solidarity with women experiencing IPV is often undermined by broader gender inequalities that shape decision-making at a community level
- This may compromise the mental health benefits of community solidarity for women experiencing IPV





One time I went to a police station where a husband had injured his wife, cutting her with a knife...So the wife comes early in the morning with bandages, she is injured; the police ask her what she is doing, what she wants. She replies that, she came to see her husband, mentions his name and the police asks her if she is referring to the man who injured his wife. She replies that she is the wife and that she wishes for them to let go of her husband so he could come home. So, the police ask the wife, "You want us to let go of a man who has hurt another human being, who injured you this much? Why did he hurt you in the first place? Was it you who started the fight or him?" She replies that she started the fight...

She lies? [Laughter]

She might even be telling the truth

The police took the wife and put her in jail also. [Laughter]

The police put her in jail?

Only to scare her. They did it to scare her saying that she started the fight, and she was involved in something bad. So, they let go of the husband instead, again to see their reaction. When the husband was let out of jail, he also refused to leave his wife behind. So, of course they had to let them both go. That was the last I saw of them.

# Conclusions and recommendations: Community responses and women's mental health in Rwanda

- 1. Improve understandings of indigenous community responses:** Communities in low-income settings do respond to IPV in potentially effective ways
- 2. Improve understandings of the wider implications of community-based IPV prevention interventions for women's mental health**
- 3. Draw attention to gender inequalities:** Interventions that seek to address IPV through communities need to address the wider gender inequalities shaping community decision-making about mental health

## RWANDA: GENDER BASED VIOLENCE COMMITTEE DUBS INFIDELITY A FORM OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT



Some members of Gender Based Violence committees in Muhanga district say cheating on your partner "gupfubura" is sexual violence.

"Gupfubura" is a Kinyarwanda word where a married partner is not satisfied sexually and looks for an outside partner to satisfy her or him.

When the unsatisfied partner woman to look for pleasure, it is

called "Kwipfubuza" while the one who helps her get sexual satisfaction is called "umupfubuzi".

According to the committee members, this habit should be eradicated by gender based violence authorities and every Rwandese should participate in the eradication program.

Coordinator of National Women's Council in Muhanga district Prisca Mukayibanda asserts it's called sexual violence because some innocent people get affected.

Mukayibanda laments: "If a young boy is asked by a married woman to give her sexual satisfaction harasses him sexually because the boy is lured into sex because of material things."

"When a woman cheats, she has violated her innocent husband", Mukayibanda adds to [togetherrwanda.com](http://togetherrwanda.com).

Although "kwipfubuza" is common in women, some men too cheat on their wives with young girls or other married women.

As one way of fighting against gender based violence, "utugoroba tw'ababyeyi" (parents evenings) were put in place where married women meet and talk about their problems and make decisions.

Mukayibanda adds that this issue will be discussed in national women's council so that a resolution is made.