

Can targeting men prevent and reduce violence against women?

Impact evaluation of an intervention with male partners of survivors of conflict-related rape and intimate partner violence in North and South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Background

International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) 2012 in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC):

- Men's exposure to war and traumatic events is a risk factor for men's use of violence against women.
- Men cope with distress and trauma using strategies that affirm their masculinity and domination over women.

Living Peace methodology:

- A pilot intervention of 15 weeks was developed in 2013 targeting husbands of women survivors of war-related rape and intimate partner violence (IPV), using a psychological approach to change men's harmful coping mechanisms.
- Results immediately after the three-month pilot interventions were positive, but no further studies were done on the lasting impact.
- Since 2015, the Living Peace methodology has been scaled up in DRC and implemented among thousands of men and families.

Research Question

Can psychological interventions for men prevent and end IPV?

- 1) What are the lasting effects of the Living Peace intervention on male participants?
- 2) What are the lasting effects perceived by participants' wives, children, and family members?
- 3) What are the lasting effects of former participants as role models and activists on the community?
- 4) What are the lasting changes in norms related to IPV, as perceived by the community?

Methods

This time-series qualitative research was conducted with former participants of Living Peace groups in North and South Kivu, DRC, as well as with their partners/spouses, other family members, and community members. This impact evaluation of Living Peace was conducted in 2016, three years after the intervention was piloted.

Preparation: January 2016

Round 1: February 2016

Round 2: April 2016

Location: Democratic Republic of the Congo

- Goma (North Kivu)
- Luvungi (South Kivu)

Sample:

- 153 participants: men, spouses, family members, neighbors, community members
- 43 individual interviews
- 15 focus group discussions (FGDs)

Results

- The violence at home has stopped in 30 out of 40 families since 2013.
- All the men (37) have accepted their wives after they were raped, as well as the children that were born after rape (12).
- 10 families reported relapses of men's behavior, primarily due to alcohol abuse or conflict and stress around money/unemployment.

Women and children stated:

- The atmosphere at home has become more pleasant.
- Men are more positively engaged in household tasks and child care.
- Women have become more involved in household decision-making.
- Their families' socioeconomic situations have significantly improved as a result of men's participation in the intervention.

Community members, friends, and extended family members adopted nonviolent attitudes and reduced alcohol abuse.



Conclusions

The Living Peace methodology, as a psychosocial intervention targeting men, is effective in preventing and reducing intimate partner violence in the context of conflict-affected areas in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The positive impact on men's personal wellbeing due to improved partner relations, harmony at home, and improved economic situations were main drivers for the long-lasting sustainability of men's transformation. These positive changes had radiating effects on the wider community.

Men and families with severe mental health problems, including substance dependency, require specialized mental health interventions.

Living Peace, as a psychosocial, community-based intervention, is a gender-specific and culturally appropriate approach that could be effective as a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) intervention in other conflict-affected settings, but further research is needed to measure the impact and significant change factors.

References

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