Ninajiamini (I have confidence)
Understanding the transformative effects of a participatory intervention in the Maisha Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Trial in Tanzania

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MAISHA Study in Mwanza, Tanzania

• MAISHA is a mixed methods study evaluating an intervention to prevent women’s experience of intimate partner violence (IPV)

• The CRT 01 cluster randomized trial was conducted among women in 66 microfinance groups in Tanzania, to evaluate the impact of an intervention (gender training) on IPV

• The intervention involved 10 participatory training sessions delivered to women in their microfinance groups
Maisha Trial Design

Established microfinance groups
N=66 groups
Baseline interview

Randomisation

MAISHA intervention
N=33 groups

No intervention (control)
N=33 groups

Outcomes assessment – 24 months
Endline interview
Maisha Intervention

- Empower women
- Prevent intimate partner violence
- Promote healthy intimate relationships
- Participatory and reflective
Participation in the Gender Training

10 sessions over 20 weeks
1. Understanding gender
2. Gender boxes
3. Healthy/unhealthy relationships
4. Power and control
5. Negotiating roles
6. Communication
7. Violence
8. Setting personal boundaries
9. Conflict resolution
10. Empowering change

Around 70% participated in at least 7 sessions
Results

• Violence
  • physical violence was reduced by a third

• Attitudes and beliefs – women less likely to:
  • accept violence
  • believe a woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together
  • believe violence to be a private matter

• No impact on sexual violence or emotional abuse
History and critiques of gender training
• Foundation in consciousness-raising workshops that emerged from the feminist movement in the 1970s in the global north

• Based on a critical perspective where women perceived that their oppression and the structures of their oppression need to be transformed, and working as a collective was an important way to start that process

• Drew on Freire’s theory that the oppressed perceive that the system is the site of oppression that needs to be transformed rather than individuals within it (Freire 2003)
• Gender training’ implemented in the development sector following the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995)

• Seen to be a transformative process that aims to provide knowledge, techniques and tools to develop skills and changes in attitudes and behaviours

• However, criticised for supplanting the work of feminist movements and implementation in a hierarchical way via international gender experts to non-Western contexts
Agency and an Epistemological Lens on Change
Hidden elements of oppression

- Violence against women as a product of oppressive social norms is “embedded in the unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following these rules” (Iris Marion Young 2011)

Hidden elements of agency

- Agency includes the “more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis” (Pells et al., 2016)
Longitudinal Qualitative Study
Methods

• Social Science team within the trial (anthropologist and sociologist)
• Aim of the research was to explore in-depth, and over time women’s experiences of IPV and the gender training

• 18 women attended in-depth interviews – before the intervention, immediately after intervention and 24 months after intervention (total 54 IDIs)

• 9 microfinance groups attended focus groups discussions - before the intervention, immediately after intervention and 24 months after intervention (total 27 FGDs)
Themes

• Articulating Gender Oppression

• Engendering Change

• Engendering Change for Others
Understanding gender as a social construct

I understood that a boy can’t do domestic work. But gender can change. A boy can fetch water, he can cook, he can wash clothes and mop the floor.
Women have a lot of duties compared to men. You wake up in the morning and wash your clothes, you prepare some porridge. Men have little work to do, a man wakes up in the morning and he just washes his body and go to work.
Kubadilika - Engendering Change

• Challenging gender norms

...that a woman could even be a president, or a woman could be a speaker of the parliament—that was just a dream in the past. Now things have changed
Kubadilika - Engendering Change

• Gaining Confidence (Kujiamini)

.. we were taught how to talk with confidence with our partners. So, I really believe that many women in this group have changed, and we have already come out from the boxes.
• Improving communication through conflict management and boundary setting

There are things that have changed ...
...when I came from [the training] I told my husband, ‘It isn’t good that you abuse me before children, that itself is violence. Because when you abuse me in front of the children, they say, “Oh, so mama makes mistakes”’ So, I changed that
We are continuing to educate our colleagues. [My friend] was inside the box but I have helped. She was really afraid of her husband, but I told her, ‘You shouldn’t fear your husband, just talk with him.’ I taught her how to talk to him with confidence.
Summary

• Our findings align with Cornwall’s (2016) assertion that “where empowerment initiatives include a dimension to actively engage women in critical, conscious, reflection on their own circumstances... there can be a marked enhancement of a programme or project's transformative effects”

• The gender training enabled women to
  • to articulate their own experiences of the injustice of gender norms and male oppression in Tanzanian society
  • gain confidence and skills to be more effective agents of change toward violence prevention with their partners, children and neighbours
How does change happen in conversations?
Epistemic Injustice: Ethics and the Power of Knowing
Miranda Fricker (2007)

Hermeneutical Injustice

Testimonial Injustice
What is this person’s role in this change process?
Conclusions about gender training

• Does not erase the broader structural inequalities in which women’s lives are situated

• Should be part of any change process towards gender equality at institutional, societal and individual levels, especially when it can be “harnessed as a catalyst for disjuncture, rupture and change” (Ferguson 2019)

• Attention should focus on power relations at all stages of the gender training process - who commissions, who designs, who implements and who evaluates (Ferguson 2019)

• The change process engendered by the MAISHA gender training may be a catalyst for strengthening feminist movements in Tanzania
### MAISHA team

**Senior Team**
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