

NEPAL

Diffusion of Gender Norms Change at the Community Level in Nepal

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BACKGROUND

In response to the well-recognized burden of intimate partner violence (IPV), there has been a growth in funding for primary prevention with an emphasis on norms change as an approach to widespread and sustained prevention. Norms and diffusion theorists believe only a small group of “trend-setters” may be needed to reject a standing norm and to effect change. But research into how norms change, particularly diffusion from a group to a community, is limited. Evidence supporting the best strategies to measure and track norms change at the community level is nearly non-existent, with most evidence stemming from laboratory experiments or games leaving IPV researchers without effective tools and processes to determine the impact and pathways to larger-scale norms change.

INNOVATION

This 12-month investigation will evaluate the diffusion effects of an existing norms change intervention—Change Starts at Home—in communities in Nepal. This project will provide novel insights into the pathways of change that will be of immediate use to the field.

PROJECT AIMS

The project will aim to:

1. Identify characteristics supportive of diffusion through mixed-methods analysis of existing data spanning 24 months including: 3 waves (March 2016, March 2017, and March 2018) of survey data from representative samples of study communities (wards=72; individuals=1440) and from a longitudinal cohort of 360 female interventions participants, qualitative data from in-depth interviews among a cohort of intervention couples (N=18 couples) and their family members (N=4 groups) and 9 months of qualitative and quantitative monitoring data.
2. Map the longitudinal diffusion of ideas, attitudes, and practices within a community through participatory research and GPS documentation of support for violence free households.

PROJECT METHODS

This study is a mixed methods assessment and evaluation of diffusion pathways of a promising social behaviour change communication (SBCC) intervention originally tested through a pair-matched, 2-armed trial comparing radio programming and listening and discussion groups (LDGs) and community outreach to radio programming alone for its impact on physical and / or sexual IPV at 12 and 24 months post-baseline. The original trial was not designed to trace norms diffusion pathways but did hypothesize diffusion of study impact from intervention participants (LDG members and community leaders) to the wider community. The proposed study builds upon the trial’s existing data cache to identify existing pathways of diffusion (Aim 1) and then uses a participatory research design to prospectively examine the activation of these pathways over the course of subsequent circularized community outreach and engagement, including the use of public displays of commitment to violence free households (Aim 2).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The project offers a unique opportunity to map, in a small set of intervention communities, the nuanced process by which norms have changed among participants, and how these changes spread to salient constituencies in the wider community. Longitudinal data combined and compared with visual markers (flags and GPS) will examine whether the visual process of documenting norms change, is in itself a participatory intervention, informing scholarship and guiding practitioners about groups most likely to accelerate or reject change.

