

# BANGLADESH

## A Media Experiment to Reduce Intimate Partner Violence in Bangladesh

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### BACKGROUND

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is often used as an instrument by men to gain or maintain control over women's behavior and household resources. The problem is pervasive in developing countries; and yet, theory and evidence on how to reduce victimization rates remain limited. We aim to address this knowledge gap by evaluating the impact on IPV rates of a media campaign designed to challenge gender norms that directly affect men's self- and social-image concerns in Bangladesh.

### PROJECT AIM

The project aims to evaluate the relative effectiveness of a media campaign involving sending messages on changing men's beliefs and social norms around gender norms and men's use of violence against women using public and private transmission channels.

### THE INTERVENTION

Mass media has been found to influence behavior directly, by providing information to individual listeners, and indirectly, by letting individuals know what others learn. Arias (2018) for example shows how a radio program that encouraged listeners to reject violence against women was ineffective when transmitted privately, but highly effective at increasing rejection of violence and support for gender equality when transmitted through public outlets. Through this study we will assess if providing information on respectful relationships is only effective when the husband knows that his neighbors have also been exposed to the information.

We develop a media campaign designed to send the message that "strong men" don't use violence against their wives. The campaign toolkit will comprise podcasts, short movies, and video clips that can be broadcast to a large audience or viewed privately using small electronic devices, such as tablets and mobile phones. We will randomly select and expose individual men and women, couples, and small groups (couples and their closest neighbors) to the campaign for at least 6-8 months, with weekly distribution (or screening) of films, video clips, and podcasts.

The messages will be tailored to the local context. We will conduct a series of in-depth interviews and a pilot study in two communities to determine the optimal number, length, frequency of exposure, and specific contents of the films and podcasts.

This study relates to a growing body of literature documenting that communally held community beliefs on the rights of husbands to abuse their wives are strongly correlated with victimization rates.

### PROJECT METHODS.

We will evaluate the effectiveness of a media campaign by randomly selecting 240 communities from 24 unions in Dhaka Division and allocate one-fourth to each of the following experimental arms:

- i. An individual arm, in which we will randomly select men and provide them movies, audio-dramas, short video clips, and recorded talks by opinion leaders (hereafter, we refer to these materials as the "campaign kit"), adapted to be viewed privately in a small electronic device;
- ii. A couples arm, in which both the husband and his partner receive the campaign kit;
- iii. A neighbors arm, in which we expose households (husbands and wives) and their closest neighbors to the campaign, by screening the audio-visual materials and then distributing the kit to them publicly; and,
- iv. A control group, which does not receive the kit.

A total of 4,800 households (20 from each community) will also take part in a baseline and a follow-up survey.

### PROJECT OUTPUTS

This research will contribute to the larger body of evidence by:

1. Providing evidence on the effectiveness of an entertainment media campaign designed to reduce IPV. We randomly vary the level of publicity of the intervention to study whether pre- and post-treatment beliefs on what is viewed as acceptable by individual men, their neighbors, or the community at large moderates the impact of the intervention on attitudes towards violence and rates of victimization.
2. Serving as a "public good", by producing datasets, academic papers, and policy briefs that help guide the design of future interventions to prevent IPV. We will collect a detailed panel dataset to document changes in attitudes towards gender inequality and rates of IPV, as well as detailed data on economic outcomes—including income, employment, assets, and fertility outcomes—that can be useful for policymakers and academics.
3. Producing a toolkit for designing media campaigns to prevent the use of IPV in Bangladesh. To this end, the project will include a formative research component focused on identifying key messages and delivery methods for our media campaign.

