Community Activism in Practice: Lessons Learned from the Indashyikirwa IPV Prevention Programme in Rwanda

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What is Indashyikirwa?

- IPV Prevention Program Implemented Aug 2014-2018 in 7 districts of rural Rwanda:
  - (1) Participatory training with couples (couples curriculum)
  - (2) Community-based activism with set of trained couples adapted from SASA!
  - (3) Support to survivors of IPV through women’s safe spaces
  - (4) Training & engagement of opinion leaders
Community Activism to Address IPV

- Community activism critical strategy to shift inequitable gender norms & ensure enabling environment to prevent & respond to IPV
- Ensure diffusion & wider reach of change
- Study evaluated processes and impact of Indashyikirwa activism component
Methods: Quantitative

- Community randomized control trial (cRCT) assessed whether diffusion of Indashyikirwa activism to communities

- **Among residents who were NOT direct beneficiaries, does *Indashyikirwa***
  - Reduce intimate partner violence?
  - Improve community norms around violence?
  - Increase help seeking among & support for women experiencing IPV?
Methods: Qualitative

Across 1 site per province:
- 3 rounds of interviews with 9 opinion leaders
- 3 rounds of interviews and observations with 6 WS attendees
- 3 rounds of interviews with 3 women’s safe space facilitators
- 3 rounds of interviews with 15 couples
- 2 rounds of interviews and observations with 12 activists

Across all sites:
- 2 Rounds of IDIS with 9 RWAMREC staff and 6 RWN staff
- Interviews conducted in Kinyarwanda, transcribed & translated into English
- Data analyzed thematically
Quantitative Findings:

No significant difference in prevalence of IPV between communities that received activism and response activities and those that did not, whether reported by women or by men.
Qualitative Insights: Insufficient Time for Activism

- Took time to adapt SASA! materials to Rwandan context
- Need to brief all village leaders to gain support delayed roll out
- 4 SASA! phases informed activism but Support and Action behavior change materials introduced a few months before end of programme b/c of limited time
- CAs and WSFs reaching stride as programme ended
Formalized Spaces for Activism

- SASA! Fidelity brief suggests activism occur in informal settings
- In Rwanda, activism in formal spaces with larger/repeated groups
- Critical for trust, access, safety & sustainability
- May have limited diffusion/opportunities for interpersonal communication
- Evolved to more informal activism including safe spaces and home visits but took time

“Rwandans are not used to discuss their issues in public. You need to choose a safer place to help people gain their trust. On the side of the road or at a market it is hard.” (RWAMREC Field Supervisor)
Strengths of Activism

- Couples curriculum platform for activism esp in rural areas where difficult for staff to be regularly present
  - Generated motivation among activists
  - Could facilitate activism with spouses
  - Built support networks among activists
- Women’s safe spaces for referral, empowering responses to IPV survivors
- Trained opinion leaders enablers for activism and value of quarterly meetings btw activists, safe space facilitators and leaders
Lessons Learned

- Qualitative research suggests + trajectory; greater awareness & ownership to address IPV, more support of IPV survivors, more equitable gender norms
- Strength of innovations: women’s spaces, couples curriculum before activism
- Careful adaptation to Rwandan context valued (1 year inception phase critical) yet would have benefited from additional time
- Activism needs sufficient time (3-5 years) for diffusion and key principles i.e. participatory approaches & interpersonal communication
- Value of mixed methods to capture more comprehensive processes of change
Thank You!