

Reducing Gender-based Violence and Enhancing Economic Autonomy for Women and Marginalized Communities: Building on Synergies to Achieve the SDGs

Summary of the Background Paper for the Global Expert Meeting on
“Reducing Gender-based Violence to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”
2-4 March, Seoul, Korea

Andrew Gibbs, *Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division (HEARD), University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban, South Africa*

James Lang, *Advisor on Gender, Violence and Rights, UNDP, Bangkok Regional Hub, Thailand*

Key messages:

- Women’s economic empowerment is a central component of gender equality, justice, non-discrimination and human rights
- Women’s economic dependency on men not only undermines their social and political autonomy and human rights, but also places them at risk of gender-based violence (GBV).
- As interrelated components of gender inequality, GBV and the inhibition of women’s economic autonomy share many of the same antecedents and drivers.
- Overlapping work to reduce GBV and increase women’s economic empowerment can be framed as local level interventions with desired changes for individuals, households and their communities, and at the level of the enabling environment including laws, policies and institutional practices. A broad set of new SDG targets corresponds to these two levels.
- Some economic interventions with specific gender components have been proven to reduce GBV and HIV risk within the domain of the project site. The IMAGE project is a good example of this.
- Promising interventions for women’s economic empowerment and GBV prevention tend to focusing on economic components as well as gender transformation related to social and political empowerment.
- Women’s economic empowerment and GBV reduction needs to be tailored to specific contexts and populations, recognizing women’s diversities in terms of age and identities
- Women’s economic empowerment interventions to reduce GBV need to strategically plan the roles and responsibilities of men in such programmes
- UNDP, given its broad scope of economic empowerment programming, and it’s mandate to support governments in achieving the SDGs, has great potential to integrate GBV prevention into this portfolio to achieve a greater impact with multiple outcomes including reduced violence and increased social and economic empowerment.

Examples of promising or successful interventions for economic empowerment and GBV reduction

There is now a diverse set of interventions and policy enhancements that aim to reduce GBV and increased women's economic empowerment, and an emerging body of evidence in terms of interventions that are promising or effective in terms of both reducing violence, and achieving economic empowerment goals. These include:

Economic interventions for women

There is a rigorous body of evidence about how combining small group economic and social empowerment interventions for women are effective in reducing women's experience of GBV (Ellsberg et al., 2015). In rural South Africa, the Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equality (IMAGE) trial provided robust evidence of this approach. Women in the IMAGE study participated in microfinance and received 10 gender training sessions (the Sisters for Life curriculum) and support around community mobilization. Using a cluster randomized control trial the evaluators found two-years later women who had been part of the intervention experienced 55% less IPV in the previous year than women who had not (Pronyk et al., 2006). In addition, there was no impact on IPV for women who only received microfinance (Kim et al., 2009), reinforcing the importance of combining economic empowerment with gender empowerment. The IMAGE model has been replicated widely in South Africa and in other countries, with various adaptations also occurring.

Highlighting the importance of tailoring interventions to specific contexts and populations the Shaping Adolescents in Zimbabwe! (SHAZ!) initially used a similar approach to the IMAGE project - microfinance alongside gender training for adolescent girls. However, a pilot study found poor repayment rates and generally weak outcomes (Dunbar et al., 2010). Subsequently SHAZ! developed an mixed economic package including vocational training (many adolescent women chose hairdressing or secretarial skills), microgrants (to enable adolescent women to start businesses), alongside gender training. In a large evaluation they showed that two years later, adolescent girls who'd received the intervention experienced less sexual and/or physical violence (Dunbar, Kang-DuFour, Mudekanye, Lambdin, & Padian, 2014).

In India the collectivization of sex workers including claims around economic rights has been a central component of the Avahan project. In the Avahan approach sex workers are collectivized and work together to gain greater political, social and economic profile and autonomy. Such an approach has led to reductions in sex workers being raped and being beaten by non-partners such as clients and police (Beattie et al., 2015). Other approaches with sex workers have used microfinance, combined with wider social training and also seen reductions in violence, but the impacts of these approaches only apply to those directly involved (Odek et al., 2009).

Social Protection and Cash transfers

While there are certainly recognized limitations of cash transfers as a form of women's economic empowerment – with many suggesting they reinforce gender relationships through primarily targeting women as carers (Molyneux & Thomson, 2011) – growing evidence, primarily from Latin America, suggests they may also have the potential to reduce women's experiences of violence (UNDP, 2015). A World Food Programme intervention with Columbian refugees in Ecuador provided a short-term (six month) food transfer to women, alongside a short nutritional training programme. The intervention showed that women experienced a significant reduction in moderate physical violence and physical and/or sexual violence (Hidrobo, Peterman, & Heise, 2013). Similar evidence of effect has been seen in the Oportunidades in Mexico (Bobonis, Gonzales-Brenes, & Castro, 2013). While in rural Kenya, the

GiveDirectly programme gave short-term cash transfers to women and men and found that both transfers led to reductions in violence against women (Haushofer & Shaprio, 2013).

Cash transfers also have the potential to strengthen women’s access to economic resources in the longer term through promoting particular health and education outcomes. In particular research suggests cash-transfers for girls school attendance can increase participation in schooling (Sarah Baird et al., 2013). In Malawi the Zomba cash transfer provided cash to the girl child and the family based on the girl’s school attendance. The study showed significant improvements in attendance and a reduced HIV-prevalence at end line (S. Baird, Garfein, McIntosh, & Ozler, 2012). In South Africa girls and family similarly received cash conditional on a girl’s attendance at school. While this study showed no impact on school attendance (it was already over 80%) or HIV-incidence, it did reduce girl’s experience of IPV.¹ (See UNDP background paper on “Re-thinking Finance for GBV programming” by Michelle Remme and James Lang for a further discussion on Zomba cash transfers).

Creating an enabling environment

There is little rigorous evidence – in terms of formerly evaluated research – on the impact on GBV and IPV of creating an enabling environment for women’s economic empowerment, however there is significant programmatic evidence of what would be supportive of such approaches. At the macro-economic level, strategies to strengthen social protection access for women, including lobbying for reform of social protection systems to recognize women’s specific needs and their contribution to domestic labour. In Albania for instance, UN Women worked with the Albanian government to reframe its legal framework to enable women to access state family subsidies, rather than just men. This enabled trafficked women, women filing for divorce and survivors of domestic violence to access social support.² There has been a significant body of research around strategies to secure women’s inheritance and landownership laws in Africa. ICRW published a compendium of strategies highlighting the NGO GROOTS’ approach in Kenya to securing women’s rights. GROOTS’ approach includes training home-based carers to identify property grabbing, and providing support to take cases to local legal systems (ICRW, 2013). ICRW identify GROOTS’ strategies as a promising approach for achieving women’s economic autonomy (ICRW, 2013).

There have been a number of large-scale strategies to support women’s safety both in the workplace and also to and from work. UN Women have been working on the Safe Cities campaign since 2010 to reduce sexual harassment and violence in public spaces, which has the potential to support women’s economic empowerment.³ More specific strategies include providing secure sleeping and storage spaces for informal workers, who often have to sleep where they sell. In Pakistan in 2010 the *Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Bill* was signed into force, which was specific in outlining and criminalizing sexual harassment in the workplace (Taylor, 2015).

Key components of successful interventions to reduce GBV and increase

Gender transformative	As GBV is shaped by and used as a tool to maintain gender inequalities, effective interventions need to ensure they focus on transforming gender norms and relationships. This means not just changes to women’s economic empowerment, but complementary increases in voice and autonomy. In large
------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

¹ Pettifor et al (2015) *Effects of cash transfer for the prevention of HIV in young South African women*. IAS 2015

²<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/macro-economics-policies-and-social-protection#sthash.74dBiSkL.dpuf>

³ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces>

	reviews, gender transformative interventions show much greater success at reducing violence (Ellsberg et al., 2015).
Ensure adequate exposure to messages of change	For interventions to be successful in reducing violence participants have to attend a minimum number of sessions of a curricula (e.g. 70 percent) or have adequate exposure to messages of change. One-off sessions are unlikely to be effective in reducing violence. As such, ensuring active participation of those targeted is critical.
Strategically engage men and boys in change	Men and boys can support or hinder women’s economic empowerment. Considering how to engage them is crucial for effective women’s economic empowerment. Effective approaches to do this include working with men and boys to recognize the challenges they face in their lives, positive aspects of masculinity and building on their empathy to effect wider gender transformative change (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2014).
Community-driven and based on local circumstances	Interventions that are top-down, eternally designed, and not resonating with the realities of people’s lives are unlikely to be successful at transforming gender norms and reducing violence. Working with communities from the ‘ground-up’ and using participatory and co-design approaches are much more likely to be well-received and lead to sustainable change (Ellsberg et al., 2015).
Recognize and programme for diversities	It is critical to recognize that communities are diverse along a range of axes and identities. Programmes that do not respond to and recognize these diversities among individuals are much less likely to be successful.

Next Steps

Given the scope of UNDP’s economic empowerment programming and its mandate to support governments in achieving the SDGs, it is well-positioned to deepen the integration of GBV prevention in its broad portfolio and achieve greater impact with multiple outcomes, including reduced violence and increased social and economic empowerment. Specifically, UNDP has key comparative advantages as a result of its experience in livelihood programming in both stable and fragile contexts, in discrete women’s economic empowerment programming, including vocational training, micro-credit and increasing access to economic tools and opportunities, and policy areas such as social protection, labour policy, land and property rights and trade policy. The following is an example of how UNDP can integrate GBV prevention into its livelihoods programming, adapting the qualities of successful projects listed above.

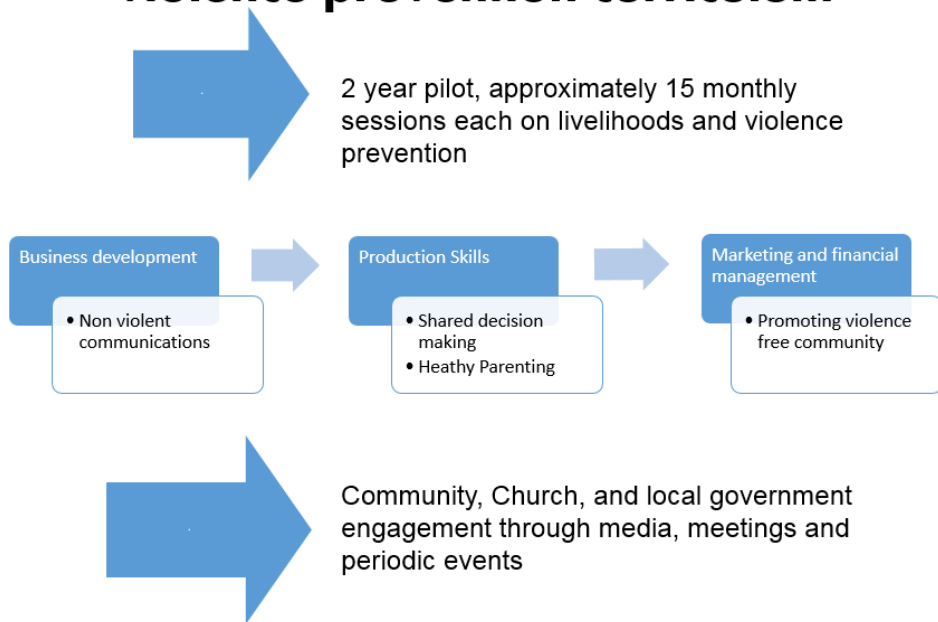
Integrating GBV prevention into existing livelihoods programming: an example from Indonesia

In the Sarmi District of Papua Province, Indonesia, UNDP has supported a successful women’s empowerment/livelihoods project focused on coconut processing into soaps and oils. The project supplied equipment and convened women for a sequence of trainings on coconut processing, product development, marketing and business management skills. As the project grew, men started joining their partners in the work and at the trainings. The project increased cooperation within households - men collected the coconuts, women processed them into valued added products - and the whole family benefitted from the sales.

Based on these successes, and the recognition that GBV is a significant problem for many communities in Papua, the District Government has asked UNDP for technical assistance to integrate GBV prevention into replications and scale up of the successful livelihoods project. For example, in addition to the existing livelihoods trainings, a curriculum for couples focused on healthy relationships and positive parenting,

non-violent communications and problem solving skills can be added. This gender training should be combined with the strengthening of local services for GBV survivors and broader community engagement.

Combining livelihoods training with violence prevention curriculum



Recommended Resources:

[DFID's Guidance Note on Violence against Women and Girls: Economic Development and Women's Economic Empowerment](#)

[USAID's Toolkit for Integrating GBV Prevention & Response into Economic Growth Projects](#)

[VAW Resource Guide \(World Bank et al\) Sector Brief on Finance and Enterprise Development](#)