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Intimate Partner Violence Initiative: Why, What, and How to Help



Enumerators working with the IPV Initiative's Modern Man Challenge project. Photo: Ellen Bates-Jefferys.

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Globally, about one in three women will experience intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetimes.¹ Certain regions of the world are “hotspots,” with IPV rates over 70%.² Innovations for Poverty Action’s IPV Initiative exists to create stronger evidence to address this urgent issue, in particular by operating a research fund that leverages existing studies to include IPV research and encourages multidisciplinary collaboration.

We are pleased to announce that we are accepting proposals for our current round of research funding until May 17, 2019. In particular, we encourage researchers who might already be running or planning studies in other areas of development to apply to broaden knowledge of how other kinds of interventions may also affect IPV.

Why IPV?

Intimate partner violence has only recently—since the 1990s—begun to attract the combined critical attention of policymakers, researchers, care providers, and activists. As a relatively new area of study and direct intervention, there is a growing but still limited number of evidence-based strategies for reducing IPV.³ While there have been some groundbreaking studies in the field,⁴ there is still a gap of both knowledge and practice to address IPV across its full—often hidden—branches of influence.

So what are we doing about it?

Starting in 2016, Innovations for Poverty Action created the IPV Initiative, an Initiative committed to combating IPV through a coordinated effort to improve evidence-based IPV interventions. Collaborating closely with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and academic lead Dr. Jeannie Annan, the IRC’s chief scientist, the IPV Initiative quickly honed in on several priority areas:

- **Identify interventions appropriate for low-income countries.** In the Global North, IPV interventions often require fully-certified social workers, psychologists, and other support staff—not to mention the assumptions of participants’ available time and ease of travel. We need to find ways to reduce IPV in areas with lower resources and tailor programs that fit other settings, such as post-conflict zones. Using human-centered design and iterative processes, we are actively changing nascent “good ideas” into “good programs.”
- **Improve our understanding of factors that influence IPV.** Often enmeshed with survivors’ closest relationships, IPV is correlated with many aspects of survivors’ lives. We know that IPV is connected to—but not necessarily caused by—education level, wealth, mental health indicators, previous exposure to violence, community and generational norms, and many other factors. To find out how to substantially reduce IPV, we must pinpoint the programmatic levers among these myriad factors.

- **Improve how we measure IPV.** We are asking people to tell us about their personal experiences with violence in their closest relationships, so there is understandably a lot of potential for bias and measurement error. We need to improve techniques to ensure more accurate data. We are exploring several methods to improve measurement, including randomized tests of different techniques.
- **Find crossover projects.** We need to link appropriate IPV projects to existing positive development programs to understand any underlying causal connections and maximize impact of programs that might help. We currently support projects in multiple sectors exploring the IPV impacts of programs such as improved soft-skill education, gender-targeted cash transfers, and livelihood interventions.

So how can others become involved in building the evidence to end IPV?

The IPV Initiative invites proposals from researchers working on randomized evaluations for the third round of the research fund. The purpose of this research fund is to leverage existing randomized trials to generate wide-ranging insights into the underlying causes and influencing factors of the pervasive problem of intimate partner violence. Expanding studies of programs that target household finances, educational attainment, or other standard development outcomes that may also reduce IPV can contribute knowledge of possible pathways to reduce IPV.

Here are some examples of how researchers have used funding like this to add an IPV component to an existing research project:

What are the effects of the Graduation approach on rates of intimate partner violence?

Researchers: Michael King, Tara Bedi, Julia Vaillant, Markus Goldstein, Alejandra Ramos

An ongoing study in Malawi is evaluating the impact of different variations of the Graduation approach—a model for holistic livelihoods programs that has been proven to have lasting impacts on poor families’ income, assets, food security, and mental health—on measures of poverty, psychological well-being, and rates of intimate partner violence.

What happens when men are given small loans to participate in seasonal migration?

Researchers: Gharad Bryan, Shyamal Chowdhury, Mushfiq Mobarak, Alejandra Ramos

Previous research in Bangladesh found that offering households small incentives (usually used by men) to migrate for seasonal work increased wages and work hours in the village of origin and indirectly benefited residents who stayed home. In an ongoing

study, researchers are asking how both partner absence and increased household economic surety impact violence in intimate relationships.

What happens when adolescents are taught soft skills and entrepreneurship in secondary school?

Researchers: Laura Chioda, Paul Gertler

This study evaluates the impact of the Educate! Experience program, a leadership and entrepreneurship skill development program for secondary school students in Uganda, on youth's economic and social welfare, as well as on intimate partner violence. Four years after the intervention, important social spillovers are recorded. Educate! graduates report fewer sexual partners, being less sexually active, and delaying family formation. They exhibit more egalitarian gender views and express reduced social acceptability of violence, as well as a lower incidence or threats of physical violence. Further data collection is planned and final results are forthcoming.

The IPV Initiative has recently put out another [call for proposals](#) from researcher teams interested in expanding their existing studies to this important topic. Proposals are due by May 17th, 2019. We particularly encourage multidisciplinary teams that include researchers from gender/IPV fields and other backgrounds, but if your team doesn't have a specialist in this area, we can also make introductions to colleagues with that expertise.

In this round, the IPV Initiative will consider proposals that:

- Add IPV focused survey modules to existing studies.
- Add IPV focused survey rounds to current or past studies.
- Add an IPV targeted treatment arm to an existing study.
- Add an IPV measurement tool testing component to a current or past study. We will consider non-randomized evaluations for this type of grant.

[More information about the fund is available here.](#)

1. Intimate partner violence and alcohol, World Health Organization, 2006, 5
https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/fs_intimate.pdf?ua=1
2. *ibid.*
3. Heise, Lori L., and Andreas Kotsadam. "Cross-national and multilevel correlates of partner violence: an analysis of data from population-based surveys." *The Lancet Global Health* 3, no. 6 (2015): e332-e340. 1-3.
4. Bourey, Christine, Whitney Williams, Erin Elizabeth Bernstein, and Rob Stephenson. "Systematic review of structural interventions for intimate partner violence in low-and middle-income countries: organizing evidence for prevention." *BMC public health* 15, no. 1 (2015): 1165, 1-3.

April 24, 2019