

Intimate Partner Violence



A still from one of the anti-domestic violence films screened as part of a study in Uganda.

PHOTO: PERIPHERAL VISION INTERNATIONAL

Summary

- » **Globally, violence against women is a leading cause of premature death and morbidity** for women and almost one-third of women report experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their life.



- » **Yet rigorous evidence on scalable and effective ways to reduce IPV is limited**, in part because measuring IPV is challenging.
- » **Current standards of practice for reducing gender-based violence are also relatively limited in scope, focusing mainly on changing gender norms.** Designing and testing new approaches has the potential to yield more effective solutions.

- » **IPA's Intimate Partner Violence Initiative, a partnership with the International Rescue Committee, exists to address these challenges.** The initiative designs and tests innovative solutions to IPV, leverages existing research to identify factors that contribute to IPV, and works to address methodological and measurement challenges in violence research and related fields.
- » **With our academic and implementing partners, IPA has identified a number of effective solutions**, including mass media campaigns, coupling women's economic empowerment with gender dialogue, and teaching secondary school students soft skills.
- » **Results from several initiative-supported studies are forthcoming.** Further research will be needed to validate results in new contexts and at scale, and to design and evaluate new ideas.

The Intimate Partner Violence Initiative at IPA

Innovations for Poverty Action has partnered with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to launch a joint Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Initiative in order to both increase the evidence on IPV and help spur innovation in the sector. Under the research leadership of Jeannie Annan, Chief Scientist at the IRC, and the collaboration of other affiliated researchers, the initiative works to:

1

Design and test **innovative solutions**, and support the scaling of the ones that work



2

Build on existing work to **identify factors** that reduce IPV



3

Address **methodological and measurement** challenges in violence research and related fields



Research Fund

The IPV Initiative offers funding to research projects through a competitive fund. The competitive fund leverages existing studies to investigate ways to reduce IPV and provides researchers a supported path for evaluating IPV in existing or future research. In addition to providing financial assistance, the fund provides technical guidance for research teams interested in improving their capacity to effectively and ethically measure intimate partner violence. Information on funding opportunities is available at www.poverty-action.org/ipv.

1. More Evidence: Evaluating Innovative Solutions to IPV

Human-Centered Design: Learning Before Testing

The IPV Initiative has developed and piloted several projects in partnership with the IRC's Airbel Center. The initiative is working with Airbel to conduct rapid prototyping and iteration with potential beneficiaries, a process known as human-centered design. The prototypes are incrementally tested with continuous incorporation of direct participant feedback. The solutions with the greatest potential for impact and scale are developed into full-scale RCTs. Two of the many initial prototypes that have reached the phase of impact evaluation are:

Marriage counseling about gender roles in relationships by faith leaders in rural Uganda

Researchers: Jeannie Annan, Christopher Boyer, Jasper Cooper, Lori Heise, Betsy Levy Paluck

During exploratory interviews in sub-Saharan Africa, the IPV Initiative consistently noticed a trend: when marriages were experiencing stress, partners and their communities trusted faith leaders for advice and mediation. With this learning in mind, the IPV Initiative is partnering with World

Vision in Uganda to develop and implement a new approach to marriage counseling led by pastors. Key biblical phrases and faith tenets are used throughout the counseling to interweave the "new" relationship improvement techniques with the existing core belief systems held by the participating couples. An evaluation studying the program's impacts on participating couples, focusing on outcomes related to intimate partner violence, should be completed at the end of 2019. Read more: poverty-action.org/study/impact-faith-based-couples-counseling-relationship-dynamics-and-intimate-partner-violence.

Can text messages help men become better partners?

Researchers: Jeannie Annan, Christopher Boyer, Günther Fink

Little is known about IPV prevention programs that focus on men as participants. The Modern Man Challenge (MMC) uses interactive SMS messages to carve out a space for men to critically engage with their masculine identity in the context of their partner relationships. The MMC builds on behavioral science by capitalizing on men's existing aspirational identities to encourage positive behavior change and by providing instructions to achieve their goals through tangible actions in their relationships. Through a series of iterative prototyping and programmatic testing beginning in 2017, these concepts have been tailored to fit the urban Liberian context and encourage participation. An impact evaluation to further inform the program's ultimate design is now ongoing.



Key Findings

With our academic partners, IPA is generating insights to inform programs and policies. A couple examples of results on IPV are:

Video screenings helped communities counter violence against women in Uganda.

Researchers: Jasper Cooper, Donald Green, Anna Wilke

In Uganda, researchers evaluated whether videos encouraging communities to speak out about and counter violence against women (VAW) in the household could change behavior, attitudes, and norms related to VAW. In surveys conducted eight months after the intervention, the proportion of women who reported any VAW in their household over the preceding six months was substantially lower in villages where the videos were screened than in villages randomly assigned to the comparison group. The impact appears to be driven by a reduction in the perception that those who speak out against violence will face social sanctions. A follow-up study, currently underway in Tanzania, is building on this research. Read more: poverty-action.org/study/mass-media-experiment-reduce-violence-against-women-rural-uganda.

Adding gender dialogue to an economic empowerment program for women made it more effective at reducing intimate partner violence in Côte d'Ivoire.

Researchers: Jeannie Annan, Katherine Falb, Jhumka Gupta

This study evaluated the impact of an economic empowerment and gender dialogue program on domestic violence and gender norms. They found that adding the gender dialogue component, in which men and women discussed household dynamics, to a savings and loan program for women was more effective than the savings program alone at reducing intimate partner violence.

Read more: poverty-action.org/study/reduction-gender-based-violence-against-women-cote-d-ivoire.

Teaching adolescents soft skills and entrepreneurship in secondary school led to reductions in intimate partner violence.

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. Read more: poverty-action.org/study/soft-skills-and-entrepreneurship-training-secondary-school-students-uganda.

2. Leveraging Existing Research to Measure IPV

The IPV Initiative is also working with researchers to leverage existing IPA studies to investigate IPV outcomes. This approach enables research on a broader set of interventions than have been evaluated in the past, including economic, educational, and mental health interventions, contributing knowledge on factors that may reduce or contribute to IPV. It also expands the base of researchers and disciplines working on IPV-related research. Examples of this research include:

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

Researchers: Tara Bedi, Markus Goldstein,

Michael King, Alejandra Ramos, Julia Vaillant

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

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. Read more: poverty-action.org/study/temporary-labor-migration-mitigation-strategies-managing-seasonal-famine.

3. Addressing Measurement and Methodological Challenges

Ethics and IPV Research

One purpose of researching intimate partner violence is to identify and expand programs that directly ease IPV-related trauma. For some women, however, being asked about past violence may lead to re-traumatization, raising ethical concerns for research teams working to measure IPV.

Researchers may encounter a girl or woman who reports she is in immediate danger. It is important that research teams are prepared for these and other challenges. In addition to a standard best practice guide for all teams, the initiative works with research teams, local psychosocial service providers, and legal counsel to tailor ethical protocol for each research project in need of assistance.

Measurement Innovations

Given the unique challenges and sensitivities involved in measuring intimate partner violence, the IPV Initiative

works to develop, refine, and standardize innovative best practices for measurement. For example:

Measurement Error in Self-Reported Data and Solutions: Experimental Evidence for IPV

Researchers: Jorge Agüero, Úrsula Aldana, Erica Field, Verónica Frisancho, Javier Romero

The initiative is supporting a study (within a larger evaluation) in Peru that compared three types of strategies to measure IPV within a face-to-face survey (direct response, quasi-anonymous poll, and a truly anonymous poll). The results contribute to identify what are the best strategies to elicit honest answers on sensitive topics such as IPV. Researchers found that both methods that provide greater privacy levels, the quasi-anonymous and the truly anonymous poll, garnered more honest answers when compared to the direct responses method.

Reducing IPV Measurement Error: Experimental evidence of audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) project

Researchers: Shilpa Aggarwal, Jenny Aker, Dahyeon Jeong, Naresh Kumar, David Sungho Park, Jonathan Robinson, Alan Spearot

Asking questions through audio and handheld tablets interfaces has the potential to improve measurement of IPV by allowing for more anonymity and privacy. Successful implementation of ACASI to measure IPV and suggestive evidence that it improved reporting in Kenya (by Mahreen Mahmud, Kate Orkin and Emma Riley) spurred the IPV Initiative to invest in a large randomized evaluation comparing computer-administered surveys to other methods in Liberia and Malawi.

Collaboration with IPA Measurement Initiative

The initiative is continually reviewing potential improvements to IPV measurements in interviews. Recently, it has begun to investigate “anchoring vignettes” to help provide a reference for participants explaining how often they experience IPV in their relationship. The hope of this technical exercise is to give researchers the tools to more accurately discern the level of IPV, as opposed to only measuring whether it is happening or not.

Questions about the IPV Initiative or other IPV work at IPA? Please contact ipvinitiative@poverty-action.org.

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Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) is a research and policy nonprofit that discovers and promotes effective solutions to global poverty problems. IPA designs, rigorously evaluates, and refines these solutions and their applications together with researchers and local decision-makers, ensuring that evidence is used to improve the lives of the world’s poor. Our well-established partnerships in the countries where we work, and a strong understanding of local contexts, enable us to conduct high-quality research. This research has informed hundreds of successful programs that now impact millions of individuals worldwide.

