GLOBAL EVIDENCE ON CONTEXT AND AGENCY INTERVENTIONS TO EMPOWER WOMEN AND GIRLS

WORLD BANK GROUP

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ABET   agency-based empowerment training
AGI   Adolescent Girls Initiative
BCC   behavior change communication
CLARP   Community Led Alternative Rite of Passage (Kenya)
EPAG   Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Program (Liberia)
IPV   intimate partner violence
NGO   nongovernmental organization

1 INTRODUCTION

As gender equity becomes more central to social and economic development, practitioners are increasingly focused on women and girls' empowerment as a sustainable way to enhance well-being and close gender gaps. Empowerment can be defined as "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability" (Kabeer 1999, 435). Empowered women and girls have the ability to envision the futures they want and exert influence over their lives to reach their goals. However, the ability to make a decision and carry it out does not derive solely from the decision-maker. Instead, a broader set of factors need to be in place if women and girls are to drive the process of their own development.

The operational approach to women and girls' empowerment can guide practitioners in systematically translating the concept of empowerment into project designs (Cunningham and Gupta 2023).[1] It is based on the premise that empowering women and girls requires a strategy that emphasizes three pillars—agency, resources, and context—that underpin a person's decision-making capacity. The approach takes as the starting point the achievement that a project intends to reach in support of women or girls. The practitioner then identifies the factors that are preventing women or girls from realizing the desired achievement. The factors may be grouped into three pillars (figure 1). Agency refers to the capacity of individuals to articulate goals and take actions towards reaching them free of violence, retribution, or fear. Resources are the various means, such as capital, assets, tools, and information, that individuals have at their disposal to facilitate their decision-making and to enable them to take the actions toward the achievement of their goals. Context represents the social arrangements and institutions that shape and influence the ability of individuals to use their agency and assert control over resources.

FIGURE 1. The Three Pillars of Empowerment: Agency, Resources, and Context

ACHIEVEMENTS
(Examples: Increased educational attainment, higher wages, reduced fertility rates, elimination of GBV, greater mobility, more leadership roles)

AGENCY
1. Setting goals
2. Sense of agency
3. Mobilization to act on goals

RESOURCES
4. Financial & physical capital
5. Human capital
6. Social capital
7. Information

CONTEXT
8. Formal/informal institutions
9. Statutory/customary laws
10. Customs and norms
11. Relationships

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1   The ideas of Cunningham and Gupta (2023) build on Kabeer (1999) and work commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. See van Eerdewijk et al. (2017).

While World Bank projects are fairly effective at providing women and girls with the *resources* they need to reach their desired achievements, interventions that affect agency and context are much more scarce. Most of the Bank's operations expand women's and girls' resources by providing them with cash transfers, productive grants, education opportunities, health services, public utilities, and access to credit. Some projects are adding on context and agency elements. For example, a cash transfer program in Mozambique includes interventions aimed at engaging male household members (a context intervention) and psychosocial and life skills training for the women beneficiaries (an agency intervention) (World Bank 2023).[2] However, context and agency interventions are still infrequent and often experimental or small in scale in the projects that include them.

This literature review is intended to provide a curated set of examples of interventions that aim to affect the context and agency factors impeding women's and girls' empowerment. The paper starts from the assumption that practitioners are increasingly convinced of the importance of addressing the three pillars of empowerment, but they are unfamiliar with evidence-based context and agency interventions. Information about effective initiatives is dispersed, often leaving task teams to start from zero rather than drawing on prior experience. This paper sorts through the literature and presents some of the most effective examples of agency and context interventions in developing countries.

The paper only covers interventions that can be associated with evidence from impact evaluations demonstrating positive effects on agency or context. To identify such interventions, the analysis begins with an examination of comprehensive literature reviews of programs oriented toward agency or context. From these reviews, programs are extracted that have been implemented in developing countries and that have been shown to have a positive effect. This effect is estimated through a randomized control trial impact evaluation design or a solidly designed quasi-experimental evaluation. These programs are then grouped by type of intervention. A review was also undertaken of the web pages of organizations that research women's and girls' empowerment in various thematic areas, though few additional programs that met the evaluation criteria were identified.

The paper is organized into four sections. Following this introduction, section 2 discusses agency interventions, grouping interventions into four program types. Section 3 presents six types of context interventions. Section 4 concludes.

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2   The interventions include schools for the husbands of beneficiary girls or for the parents of the girls if the girls are unmarried. The schools cover topics such as positive relationships, conflict management, and gender equality.

2 AGENCY INTERVENTIONS

The agency pillar encompasses elements within the individual. It includes the following: (a) the ability to envision and articulate an achievement (goal setting), (b) a belief in the ability to take action to realize the achievement (sense of agency), and (c) the actual ability to take action (mobilization) (Donald et al. 2017). While these abilities may be taken for granted by those who are empowered, those who are not empowered need to access tools and adjust their psychology to acquire these abilities. Program interventions can help women and girls to enhance their skills, knowledge, and confidence to envision choices and take ownership and act on their choices. For example, a financial literacy program may be carried out to help women envision what they may buy if they meet their savings goals. Programs might include interventions that involve mindset exercises to build self-efficacy and self-esteem. Women role models or mentors might encourage program beneficiaries to follow certain paths to realize goals.

This section presents four types of interventions: collective agency through peers and role models, agency-related psychological training, life and resilience skills, and savings and self-help groups. A brief description of each intervention is followed by examples of the intervention design and program impact measured through impact evaluations, most of which relied on a randomized control trial to generate an appropriate comparison group. The presentation also provides links to reference materials. The text highlights which aspect of agency is supported by the intervention, namely, goal setting, sense of agency, or mobilization.

2.1. Collective agency through peers and role models

Interventions that support women in networking and organization contribute to collective agency, which enables the building of knowledge, skills, aspirations, and confidence (DFID 2015). In these interventions, groups of women or girls engage with each other in a process of self-realization, goal setting, and skills building, potentially with strong women role models. Evidence suggests that these interventions have an impact on goal setting and mobilization, while weaker evidence hints at an impact on the sense of agency.

2.1.1. India: friendship at work approach, training, partnering, and role models

In this experimental intervention, the Self-Employed Women's Association, a trade union and India's largest women's bank, provided a short (two half-day) training exercise on basic financial literacy and business skills to women microentrepreneurs. Some of the targeted microentrepreneurs were invited to bring along a friend to participate in the training. Participants were shown a film about successful

women role models in their communities. Following the training exercise, counsellors employed by the association worked with individual participants and the pairs of friends to establish savings and business goals for the subsequent six months and to identify actionable steps to reach the goals. The friend groups were responsible for maintaining accountability to each other as they progressed through the steps, with regular check-ins by the counsellors.

The findings of the program evaluation were as follows:

- The differences in borrowing behavior were substantial between those invited to participate in the program alone and those invited to attend with a friend. Only women invited with a friend had a higher likelihood of borrowing, and they almost exclusively used the loans for business purposes (goal setting and mobilization aspects), compared with women without the friend.
- Four months after the intervention, the women invited with a friend reported a higher volume of business transactions, and a greater number stated that they had business plans to increase revenues. Women invited alone experienced no change in these outcomes.
- Those invited with a friend reported significantly higher household incomes and expenditures and were less likely to report that their occupation was housewife, compared with women invited alone.

Reference: Field et al., 2016

2.1.2. Liberia: beneficiary business groups, Girls Ebola Recovery Livelihood Support Project

The Girls Ebola Recovery Livelihood Support Project, implemented by the Liberian Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, incorporated beneficiary business groups into life and business skills training modules with the objective of creating healthy group dynamics and solidarity among girls. At the onset of the 8–11 days of training, beneficiary business group trainers organized participants into groups of four. The groups were formed based on the nature of the existing or planned businesses pf the girls and were designed so that members had complementary skills. The groups were a mix of girls of different ages and levels of business experience to provide possibilities for peer mentorship within the groups. Each beneficiary business group identified a chairperson, secretary, procurement officer, and treasurer. The groups developed group milestones, established simple individual and joint business plans, defined profit-sharing modalities, and ensured that a portion of project profits were placed into a savings account.

The project's qualitative results included the following:

- The project resulted in 516 functioning business projects among 517 beneficiary business groups. All business projects reported accumulating savings.
- Group members perceived positive effects of the projects on their social capital and business relations.
- Project administrators felt that the group approach was a vital element of the project by making each group member accountable for the joint success of the business. They also stated that the beneficiary business groups encouraged cooperation and boosted the beneficiary recognition of the value of doing business in partnership, which offers both shared benefits and shared risks.

Reference: World Bank (2018)

2.2. Agency-related psychological training (ABET)

Explicit instruction in agency-related psychological concepts can empower women in the context of vocational and business training programs. The evidence on the impact of vocational and business training programs on the sense of agency is mixed, but programs that include at least a stand-alone psychological module or agency-related modules had consistent impacts on women's self-efficacy (Chang et al. 2020).

A standard model is agency-based empowerment training (ABET). The training is based on a four-day workshop guided through a standard curriculum developed by the Empowerment Institute and adapted to the local context. The program beneficiaries participate in an introspective examination of key areas of their lives by drawing on basic tenets of positive psychology and incorporating exercises that are aligned with core properties of individual agency (Bandura 2006). Each exercise is crafted to reflect localized social norms and values by a local certified trainer.

The review found one application of ABET that included an impact evaluation. A project in Kenya to support women and men in becoming cookstove entrepreneurs included a four-day ABET training course. Through individual and interactive exercises, participants examined their emotions, relationships, health, money, and work with the intention of strengthening their sense of agency. The exercises and examples were designed to support responses to specific challenges that would be faced in new entrepreneurial endeavors. ABET trainees were organized into training groups, which met every three weeks to discuss their progress against their business goals. At the end of the support period, entrepreneurs were told that the highest sellers would receive promotions and be admitted to an advanced business skills curriculum program.

The findings of the project's evaluation were as follows:

- Women and men who underwent ABET training sold twice as many cookstoves as entrepreneurs who had only attended a four-day business skills refresher training course.
- There was a notable impact on goal setting and mobilization. Participants in the intervention group were significantly more likely to demonstrate business commitment over time and nearly three times more likely to have more success as sellers compared with individuals who had not received the ABET training. Women outsold men by a margin of nearly 3 to 1 and were more likely to continue to pursue leads despite limited sales.

- Entrepreneurs who attended the ABET course were significantly more likely to take advantage of the promotions and increase their sales in comparison with the control group.

References: Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves (2016); Shankar, Onyura, and Alderman (2015); Straub (2019).

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FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

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A health intervention in Kenya finds similar trends in agency. Participants received culturally customized ABET instruction focused on the attainment of personal health and development goals.
Reference: Shankar et al. (2015).

2.3. Life and resilience skills for adolescents and women

Soft skills acquisition may be a key mechanism through which self-efficacy and gender attitudes among adolescents can be influenced. There is strong evidence that programs targeted to adolescent girls and young women that bundle soft and life skills training components with resource interventions (such as health training or basic livelihood skills) improve various measures of the sense of agency, including self-efficacy, confidence, and attitudes toward gender norms. However, these interventions are not found to improve goal setting among girls consistently in aspirations related to marriage, childbearing, education, and jobs. Thus, to achieve full agency, interventions of this type would need to be accompanied by other interventions that effectively impact goal setting and mobilization.

2.3.1. Kenya: school-based empowerment training to reduce sexual assault
In the Ujamaa Africa and No Means No Worldwide programs, classroom-based interventions among girls and boys were delivered by instructors from the same settlements at the same time through six 2-hour sessions. The girls program had components on empowerment, gender relations, and self-defense.[3] The boys program promoted healthy gender norms.[4]

The findings of the impact evaluation included the following:

- A 37 percent decline in sexual assaults in the study population, compared with those who had not participated.
- Adolescent girls who participated in the study demonstrated a 19 percent statistically significant increase in improved self-efficacy (a measure of the sense of agency).

Study: Baiocchi et al. (2017).

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3 Learning methods included role-plays, facilitated discussions, and verbal and physical skills practice. In session I, rapport, definitions, and objectives were established. Session II focused on personal awareness, self-efficacy, boundaries, and assertive communication skills. Session III was an introduction to physical defense. Session IV reviewed verbal and physical skills and focused on specific strikes using bags and mitts. Session V focused on de-escalation and negotiation to avoid fighting and covered more well advanced defense techniques, such as multiple or armed attackers. Session VI reviewed all previous sessions, and facilitators also encouraged women to share their experiences of assault.
4 This would be an example of a context: a norms and culture intervention that was carried out in parallel. It likely contributed to the outcome, a reduction in sexual assaults.

Other resources: Curricula are available at Research (dashboard), No Means No Worldwide, McLean, VA, https://www.nomeansnoworldwide.org/research.

2.3.2. India: use of the girls first resilience curriculum: teaching resilience in middle school

CorStone, a United States–based nonprofit organization, developed and piloted one of the first resilience-based curricula for middle-school girls in low- and middle-income countries. In India, the resilience-based curriculum is implemented through local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).[5] It is grounded in methods adapted from positive psychology, emotional intelligence, and restorative practices. It is designed for girls in marginalized, high-poverty settings. It aims to strengthen a sense of agency by building emotional resilience (by focusing on coping skills, adaptability, and persistence), self-efficacy, and socioemotional assets, including social skills and beliefs about helping others in the community. The highly interactive program is conducted during 23 weekly facilitated peer-support sessions featuring discussions, activities, games, and projects.[6] It is facilitated in schools, during school hours, by women facilitators, with at least a 10th grade education, who are drawn from local communities. Through this project, the program has been delivered to 58 government schools in Bihar, India.

The findings of an impact evaluation are as follows:

- All psychosocial assets—emotional resilience, self-efficacy, and socioemotional assets—improved significantly more among for girls who underwent the resilience-based curriculum than among those who were not offered the intervention.
- The resilience-based curriculum also had a positive effect on the psychological well-being and social well-being scores of the participating girls relative to those who had not received the curriculum.

Studies: Leventhal et al. (2015), (2016).

Toolkit: The CorStone Model (dashboard), CorStone, Baltimore, MD, https://corstone.org/model/.

2.3.3. Uganda: development clubs for girls, out-of-school life skills training

BRAC-supported development clubs in Uganda offer girls livelihood training and life skills training aimed at building their sense of agency and enhancing their abilities in goal setting.[7] In addition, the clubs host recreational activities, such as reading, staging plays, singing, dancing, and games. The clubs serve as a protected local space in which adolescent girls may meet, socialize, privately discuss issues of concern, and continue to develop their skills. The clubs operate after school hours, in the afternoon when the parents of the girls may not yet have returned from work. They are commonly offered in fixed meeting places in communities. Because they operate away from school premises, they are a means to reach girls who may not be connected to schools. Club activities are led by a woman mentor from the community who is slightly older than the program eligible girls. Mentors receive small lump-sum

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5   Gramin Evam Nagar Vikas Parishad (website: https://www.genvp.org/) and Integrated Development Foundation (website: http://idfngo.org/).

6   See Leventhal et al. (2016) for an outline of the content and activities in all sessions.

7   The key topics covered in the life skills training sessions include sexual and reproductive health, menstruation and menstrual disorders, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS awareness, family planning, and rape. Other sessions cover enabling topics, such as management skills, negotiations, conflict resolution, and leadership. The final class of life skills training focuses on providing girls with legal knowledge on women's issues, such as bride price, child marriage, and violence against women.

payments for their work. They are trained during a week-long initiation program, and also participate in monthly refresher courses.

An impact evaluation of the intervention found as follows:

- Four years after the intervention, adolescent girls who had participated in the clubs were a third less likely to have become pregnant and a third less likely to have been obliged against their will to have sex (relative to a randomly selected control group), suggesting that the clubs enhanced the sense of agency and mobilization of participants.
- There was a 48 percent increase in the number of girls who participated in the clubs, compared with the control group, which had engaged in some form of income generation activity. Participating girls also showed positive aspirations about age at marriage and the number of children they desired, reflecting a shift in goal setting.

Reference: Bandiera et al. (2020).

2.3.4. Kenya: Ninaweza Program, technical training plus
The International Youth Foundation and the African Center for Women, Information and Communication Technology joined forced to implement the Ninaweza Program, which incorporated a life skills component in a technical training curriculum to strengthen self-awareness, emotional intelligence, problem solving, goal setting, job searching, and health practices among participants. To strengthen women's sense of agency, the program guaranteed post-training support to encourage participants to achieve their goals after the completion of training. Toward the end of their training, the young women were supported in forming groups and brainstorming on a group project, after which they took part in a series of workshops that taught financial modeling skills, mentorship and life skills, and business presentation methods. This phase of the training was intended to enhance the women's foundational problem solving, creativity, and teamwork skills to help them stay competitive and succeed as they embarked on new career paths.

An impact evaluation found as follows:

- The treatment groups that received the life skills component were more likely to apply for and work in internships relative to those who received only vocational training, suggesting that the life skills enhanced the women's goal setting and mobilization.
- The treatment groups that received the life skills component exhibited statistically significant improvements in their confidence and optimism (sense of agency) relative to the control groups.
- Young women who participated in all three phases of the program—life skills training, technical training, and post-training support—were statistically more likely to obtain jobs than youth who had not received any intervention or who had only received technical training and postgraduation support. This confirmed the program's success in increasing participant's mobilization.

Reference: IYF (2013).

2.3.5. Nepal: Employment Fund through the Adolescent Girls Employment Initiative

The government of Nepal and the NGO Helvetas created an employment fund to finance implementation partners to provide of technical training, a 40-hour life skills training program, and post program job placement support to adolescent girls. The 40-hour curriculum covered topics such as negotiation skills, worker rights, sexual and reproductive health, engagement with discrimination, contributing to goal setting, and building a sense of agency. Program participants were reported to have overwhelmingly responded positively to the life skills training, often claiming that it was one of their favorite parts of the course. Upon completion of the classroom-based training, the program provided the participants with job placement services. Service providers whose trainees had become employed within three months or six months after the completion of the training received a bonus. The outcome-based payment system created an incentive for the providers to supply quality placement assistance thereby reinforcing the ability of trainees to set goals, believe in their goals, and act upon them (mobilization). The program emphasizes the placement of trainees in gainful employment in which they earn a minimum of Nr 3,000 (US$40) a month, enhancing a sense of agency among participants.

The findings of the program impact evaluation were as follows:

- Graduates were more likely to have taken control over their household incomes and savings, plus show greater self-reported ability to delay gratification, stick to difficult tasks, and make plans for their lives, thus displaying enhanced goal setting, compared with the control group that did not receive the intervention.
- The participants also demonstrated stronger self-assessed confidence in personal and economic areas of action (that is, a sense of agency) relative to the control group.
- Women were more likely to reach out to peer mentors for employment advice or collaboration, demonstrating greater mobilization than the control group.

Reference: Chakravarty et al. (2016), (2019).

Toolkits: AGI Resource Guide, Implementation: Delivering Life Skills Training, Adolescent Girls Initiative, World Bank, Washington, DC, https://www.s4ye.org/agi/html/Implementation_Delivering_Life_Skills_Training.html.

2.3.6. Liberia: Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Program

The Liberian Ministry of Gender and Development's Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Program (EPAG) combined six months of classroom-based technical and life skills training to adolescent girls and young women and six months of follow-up support to assist program participants in entering wage employment or starting a business. All trainees were provided with transport allowances and free childcare to remove potential barriers to attendance in class. The life skills component focused on the development of qualities valued by employers—honesty, integrity, problem solving, work ethic, communication, teamwork—and the skills needed by individuals entering the workforce, including self-regulation, self-confidence, and goal setting. The follow-up financial support helped remove post-training uncertainty by, for instance, enabling the payment of household expenses, which freed the participants to mobilize their job searches and realize their entrepreneurial ambitions.

An impact evaluation of the EPAG found as follows:

- EPAG graduates demonstrated more self-regulation—formulating plans, staying on course—in their entrepreneurship activities relative to peers who had not undergone training. The graduates also demonstrated long-term aspirations beyond the EPAG training, such as returning to school to receive training in nursing, for example, referring in interviews to the EPAG training as a stepping-stone and demonstrating goal-setting capability.
- EPAG graduates reported a more positive attitude. They felt more in control and more comfortable, and they had greater confidence in their own business abilities as well as in their personal and social lives, reflecting a greater sense of agency.
- EPAG graduates experienced statistically significant enhancements in their attitudes toward collaboration with their girl and women peers, including through a readiness to ask for support and a willingness to present themselves to peers in a positive light, a sign of greater mobilization.

Reference: Adoho et al. (2014).

Toolkit: See the module for a similar program, "South Sudan: Life Skills Training for Adolescent Girl Leaders," AGI Resource Guide, Implementation: Delivering Life Skills Training, Adolescent Girls Initiative, World Bank, Washington, DC, https://www.s4ye.org/agi/html/Implementation_Delivering_Life_Skills_Training.html.

2.3.7. Haiti: Adolescent Girls Initiative Program, intensive life skills component

Informed by extensive consultations, Haiti's Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) Program mirrored the vocational, placement, and apprenticeship interventions found in the Liberia and Nepal examples (see above), but included a more intensive eight-module life skills and psychosocial component. Haiti's AGI Program implemented a two-pronged focus on agency: the individual in relation to self (goal setting, sense of agency) and the individual in relation to others (mobilization, but also relationships, as described in section 3, below). The program was delivered by partner NGOs with experience in working with vulnerable girls and young women. These NGOs—staffed by women—also acted as mentors, including by undertaking site visits, and helped provide services and guidance among women who had encountered threats at home. Employers were consulted throughout the training process and contributed in the provision of safe, limited-commute internships and relevant training content.

The findings of the program impact evaluation were as follows:

- AGI graduates demonstrated better self-regulation than their peers even if faced with obstacles. Graduates also demonstrated increased aspirations after program completion, including a drive to pursue further education, reflecting a sense of agency. Qualitative evaluations found that trainees reported that both the technical and soft skills training helped make them feel more in control of choices with respect to their professional lives.
- AGI graduates displayed additional impacts related to their sense of agency, including increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-assertion in their intimate lives.
- While AGI graduates showed no rise in participation in girl- or woman-only groups, hypothesized to be an effect of the mentorship they received, the project had an impact through an expansion

in the support networks available to them to help them cope with difficult decisions and situations, including increasingly supportive family members, thereby potentially enhancing their mobilization.

Study: World Bank (2015).

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Learning brief on graduation programs: Laszlo (2019).
Technical note on Girls Clubs sponsored by UNICEF: Plourde et al. (2020).
Toolkit on engaging adolescent girls: CAG (2015), Austrian and Ghati (2010), McKelway (2018).
Technical note on life skills programming sponsored by UNICEF: Boender, Singh, and Belachew (2019).

2.4. Savings and self-help groups

Savings and self-help groups have been found to have a positive impact on agency if they are combined with other training programs or other types of programs. Savings and self-help groups are (often) informal woman-organized groups that are established jointly to save money and use the savings to provide credit to group members. They have become a staple of development programming, particularly in favor of women and girls. Although their impact on agency and other measures of empowerment is mixed, they can exert positive effects if they are combined with gender equality, health, or life skills training or connected to a broader program (Chang et al. 2020). The effect is especially forceful on goal setting and mobilization through better household decision-making and reduced sexual and gender-based violence. Savings or self-help groups can also provide an excellent entry point for gender equality programming, because they bring women and girls together in a safe setting where they can meet, discuss, and learn from one another (Mutebi et al. 2017).

2.4.1. India: self-help groups and Self-Employed Women's Association
The Self-Employed Women's Association has been a supporter of the self-help model in India since the 1980s. Self-help groups are widely used village-based organizations that focus on (a) savings and credit, which enhance women's goal setting; (b) links to formal banking (the resources pillar); (c) alternative (informal) service delivery, including contracting for vocational skills, health care, childcare, and other services that support mobilization; and (d) establishing a platform for members, usually women, to engage in local civic and community affairs, thereby also supporting mobilization to encourage collective agency. They function as entry points to broader governmental and NGO programs, particularly those aimed at improving the quality of life among women in rural areas.

Two impact evaluations of programs that relied on self-help groups to promote the connection of women to broader programs on livelihood and civic participation revealed the following effects on agency:

• Women members were more likely than nonmembers to exercise influence on household decisions about children's schooling, family medical care, and family planning, signaling greater goal setting.
• Women members were more likely to mobilize to engage in civic actions fostering their interests.

References: Desai and Joshi (2013); Prillaman (2023).

2.4.2. South Africa: intervention with microfinance for AIDS and gender equity

The Small Enterprise Foundation combined a Grameen Bank savings group model with a participatory learning program, Sisters for Life.[8] The program was realized in two phases delivered over 12 to 15 months. Phase 1 (the first six months) consisted of 10 training sessions of one hour each and covered topics such as gender roles, cultural beliefs, power relations, self-esteem, communication, domestic violence, and HIV. The training sessions were intended to build a sense of agency and foster goal setting, among other aims. Participatory methods were used with a view to increasing confidence, communication skills, and critical thinking. Phase 2, which covered the remaining time, encouraged wider community mobilization to engage youth and men (the context pillar) in the intervention villages. Women deemed natural leaders by their peers were elected by actors at loan centers to undertake an additional week of training and subsequently worked with the centers to address priority issues, including HIV and intimate partner violence (IPV), to help mobilize the women.

An impact evaluation found that participants in the Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity Program showed greater progress in the following areas compared with individuals who had not received gender equity training:

• Statistically significant improvements in self-confidence, more autonomy in decision-making, and greater participation in collective decision making
• Reduced incidence of IPV and reduced risky HIV behaviors, potentially reflecting a greater sense of agency and mobilization[9]

References: Kim et al. (2007), (2009).

Toolkit: Kim and Mosei (2002).

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Learning brief: Rickard and Johnsson (2018).
Toolkit: CARE International (2017).
Toolkit: Promundo-US and WorldFish (2016).

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8   Smaller groups (five women in this intervention) act as guarantors for each other's loans, and all members must pay back their loans before anyone else may become eligible to receive credit.

9   Qualitative data suggest that reductions in violence resulted from a range of responses to the program that enabled women to challenge the acceptability of violence, expect and receive better treatment from partners, leave violent relationships, give material and moral support to those experiencing abuse, mobilize existing and new community groups, and raise public awareness about the need to address domestic violence.

3 CONTEXT INTERVENTIONS

The context pillar includes those elements that help create an environment that enables women and girls in making choices.[10] The most pertinent intervention areas for creating such an environment are those that relate to (a) formal and informal institutions, (b) statutory and customary laws, (c) customs and norms, and (d) personal relationships. Unlike agency, which involves a transformation within women and girls, changing the context requires an engagement with those who perpetuate constraints to women's and girl's efforts. These may include governmental entities that determine the allocation of resources and pass statutory laws; informal institutions, such as village councils, that enforce customary laws; households that may define the goals of women or girls, and personal relationships that implicitly set the rules of the game among individuals that may not be aligned with other social or legal norms. All these actors may establish and enforce social norms.[11] Interventions may affect any of these actors, such as modifications to laws, working with influencers to change customary laws or alternative norms, or working at the household level to open discussions with men on how to engage positively with their wives and daughters.

This section presents six intervention types: engagement with local influencers, male engagement (groups), media campaigns, women's and girls' spaces, gender dialogue, and psychosocial training sessions. Each subsection includes a brief description of the intervention and several examples of intervention design. The subsections also provide links to reference materials.

3.1. Engaging local influencers

Local influencers may refer to traditional leaders (such as community leaders and chiefs) or religious leaders (such as priests, bishops, imams, ulama, or other traditional faith leaders), but may also refer to other focal points of power within local communities. Working with religious and traditional leaders, who are dominantly men, is critical to changing social norms (V4C 2017). These groups embody local moral values, have legitimacy and respect that NGOs and the government may not have, and have extensive communication channels to their communities. Similarly, local influencers can provide legitimacy to interventions that target relationships at the household or individual level. Engaging influencers should promote awareness of gender equality issues, help build alliances that may catalyze change, and take a long-term view (V4C 2017).

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10 Kabeer (1999) does not separate out context or institutions, instead lumping them with resources. From an operational viewpoint, the distinction between contextual and capital resources is significant; the two are therefore separated here, as they are by van Eerdewijk et al. (2017).

11 Social norms can be defined as behavioral rules that: (a) are developed and shared by a group and that differ from individually held beliefs or attitudes; (b) are defined by an individual's beliefs about what others do (empirical expectations) and about what others think the individual should do (normative expectations); (c) are maintained by social influence, including positive or negative social sanctions; and (d) vary across different groups (CARE USA 2017).

3.1.1. Uganda: SASA!, engagement with local influencers

The SASA! Activist Kit for Preventing Violence against Women and HIV is a community mobilization intervention that seeks to change the community attitudes, norms, and behaviors that underlie gender inequality, IPV, and increased HIV vulnerability among women. SASA! was designed by Raising Voices and implemented in Kampala by the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention. SASA! recognizes that eliminating IPV requires the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders within the community, including community activists, local governmental and cultural leaders, professionals, such as police officers and health care providers, and institutional leaders. The program engages community activists (any women and men who wish to reduce IPV), alongside staff among local influencers who are essential for IPV prevention, including police, leaders, and health care workers. Pairs of activists and influencers undergo three stages of training together—awareness, support, and action—whereby they build skills and confidence and start to train peers in their communities and institutions, thus slowly building a critical mass of change.

An impact evaluation of the program finds that social norms shifted as follows:

- Significantly less social acceptance of IPV among women and less acceptance among men compared with the control communities, where the program was not offered
- Significantly greater acceptance by women and men that a woman may refuse to have sex, relative to the control group
- 52 percent lower incidence of physical and sexual IPV against women during the previous year
- Women who had experienced violence in intervention communities were more likely to receive supportive community responses relative to the control group

Reference: Abramsky et al. (2014).

Toolkit: "SASA! Activist Kit: Evidence-Based Community Mobilization," Raising Voices, Kampala, Uganda, https://raisingvoices.org/women/sasa-approach/sasa-activist-kit/.

3.1.2. Kenya: community-led alternative rite of passage model: engaging a community to redefine social rituals

Amref Health Africa in Kenya designed and implemented a novel intervention, Community Led Alternative Rite of Passage (CLARP) with the aim of reducing the high incidence of female genital mutilation/cutting in the country. Successfully piloted and rolled out in Kajiado County, Kenya, this community-led intervention sought to change social norms and reverse trends in the rates of female genital mutilation/cutting by involving and engaging community stakeholders, including cultural leaders. The CLARP process took 6–48 months to complete and entailed six steps that involved the whole community, including traditional leaders, men, and boys.[12] It sought to define among the target population alternative rites of passage,

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12 Step 1: *Context analysis* involves engaging stakeholders, such as cultural leaders, female circumcisers, traditional birth attendants, county government department staff, and religious leaders.
    Step 2: *Triggering* consists of structured community dialogue.
    Step 3: *Sensitization and training*, whereby communities define their own CLARP process, are focused on cultural elders, morans (members of a warrior group consisting of younger unmarried men), women's groups, and circumcisers.
    Step 4: *Community mobilization, sensitization, and training* involves collaboration with civil society organizations (for example, local women's groups and youth-led organizations) and capacity strengthening among civil society organizations through the allocation of subgrants.
    Step 5: *Three-day CLARP training sessions* among boys and girls on sexual and reproductive health rights, positive norms and values, self-esteem, and life skills.
    Step 6: A *closing ceremony* includes the graduation of girls through CLARP, a blessing by cultural elders and leaders, and public denouncements of female genital mutilation/cutting.

engage leaders in these rites of passage, strengthen the community, undertake sexual and reproductive health training, implement training in agency, and generally promote alternative rites of passage in the practice of society.

The findings of the program's quasi-experimental impact evaluation were as follows:

- A 24 percent reduction in the incidence of female genital mutilation and an increase in schooling among girls by 2.5 years, in the CLARP communities relative to the control communities that did not receive the intervention
- A decline in forced marriages and teen pregnancies
- The emergence of new social norms regarding rites of passages have been accepted among CLARP community members

Reference: Mveyange et al. (2020).

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Case study for engaging faith leaders: ERD (2018).
Guidance note for engaging religious leaders: CARE Norway (2017).
Toolkit: Save the Children (2014).
Toolkit: Rise Up's (2018) Let Girls Lead curriculum provides a strategy for adolescent girls to engage with local influencers about their rights.
Evaluation of a project to engage religious leaders: Plan International Canada and Promundo-US (2020).
Guidance note on shifting gender norms: Alexander-Scott, Bell, and Holden (2016).

3.2. Male engagement (groups)

Interventions aimed at changing men's knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors can be an effective approach to gaining men's support for women's empowerment. Programs that engage men and aim to change men's knowledge or behaviors in specific domains, such as household finance and maternal and child health, can effectively encourage joint household decision-making (Doyle et al. 2018; Seshan and Yang 2014). Similarly, antiviolence programs designed to target couples or families can successfully reduce violence against women (Doyle et al. 2018; Gupta et al. 2013; Ismayilova et al. 2018). However, even more general gender-transformative male engagement strategies that are not domain specific, such as Equimundo's Program P, which creates dialogues about gender norms and masculinities, can be an effective intervention for shifting norms and culture and relationships.[13]

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13   Program P (dashboard), Equimundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice, Washington, DC, https://www.equimundo.org/programs/program-p/.

3.2.1. Malawi: male motivator approach for contraception use

This program, implemented by Save the Children, engages men to break down gender norms by improving man-initiated couples communication about family planning. The approach identifies men who use modern contraception and trains them to become male motivators. The curriculum is designed for man peer outreach workers to catalyze social and gender norm change, increase couples communication about child spacing and family planning, and ultimately raise the use of family planning. Over the course of eight months, trained man motivators visit other men in the community an average of five times to discuss the socioeconomic benefits of birth spacing, provide information on contraceptive methods, practice the skills needed to discuss fertility desires and birth spacing with wives, explore perceptions of men who use family planning, and identify local resources to access family planning.

An impact evaluation of the intervention found the following:

* Contraceptive use rose significantly more among men who had engaged with male motivators compared with men who had not received the intervention.
* The increased use of contraception was attributable (statistically significant) to the greater ease and frequency of communication between couples.

Reference: Shattuck et al. (2011).

Toolkit: Save the Children (2007).

3.2.2. Rwanda: gender-transformative couples intervention for male engagement

The Bandebereho (role model) couples intervention engaged men and their partners in participatory small-group sessions of critical reflection and dialogue on gender and masculinity. The intervention used a structured 15-session curriculum adapted from the open-source Program P manual for engaging men in maternal and child health, which includes a curriculum for fathers and couples and resources for designing health provider training and community campaigns (REDMAS, Promundo, and EME 2013). Men participating in the Bandebereho intervention were invited to 15 sessions and their partners to 8 sessions (with a maximum of 45 hours and 24 hours, respectively). Sessions addressed gender and power, fatherhood, couple communication and decision-making, IPV, caregiving, child development, and male engagement in reproductive and maternal health.

An impact evaluation of the Rwanda intervention found the following 21 months after the program launch:

* Women and children were exposed to less sexual and physical violence in households where the men had participated in the Bandebereho program compared with households in which the men had not received the intervention.
* Participating couples were using significantly more contraceptives.
* Men who had gone through the program participated more often in unpaid care and household chores (redistributing tasks from women), and the women experienced more bargaining power within their households.

Reference: Doyle et al. (2018).

Toolkits: Promundo, UNFPA, and MenEngage (2010); Promundo-US and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (2018); REDMAS, Promundo, and EME 2013.

3.3. Media campaigns

Media campaigns can complement more highly targeted programming around norms, culture, and relationships. While mass media campaigns seem to produce limited behavior change, there is evidence that they can change behavioral intentions and self-efficacy, such as men and boys' intentions to talk about violence against women (Chang et al. 2020). Limited evidence suggests that mass media interventions can shift attitudes about IPV (Banerjee, La Ferrara, and Orozco 2019; Green, Wilke, and Cooper 2018; Lecoutere, Spielman, and Van Campenhout 2019). Others find that soap operas portraying small families in Brazil led to reduced fertility (La Ferrara, Chong, and Duryea 2012).

3.3.1. Uganda: media campaign to increase the reporting of violence against women
Peripheral Visions International and Innovations for Poverty Action created an educational entertainment series of videos to shift norms around the perception that false accusations of sexual and gender-based violence are common. This norm contributes toward an antidisclosure norm, a situation whereby those who could disclose alternative opinions about violence are shunned by the community for gossiping and therefore refrain from speaking out.

During a film festival held in rural villages, three short video vignettes were shown to present differential modeling narratives.[14] The first video takes place in the antidisclosure village. The protagonist is a sympathetic and personable woman whose husband beats her severely despite her sincere efforts to appease him. The protagonist's neighbor overhears her screams but decides not to speak out. The second video begins with the protagonist's hospitalization and ends with her funeral, and the audience learns that not only her neighbor, but also her daughter and parents knew about the violence. They express regret for failing to speak out sooner. The third video takes place in the transparency village. The focal woman in the story is also beaten by her husband, but, unlike the woman in the preceding vignettes, she decides to disclose this information to her parents. Rather than scold, her parents intervene to help mediate. Moreover, the parents share the information with the local women's counselor (Nabakyala),

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14 "Characters representing relevant segments of the viewing population are shown adopting the beneficial attitudes and behavior patterns. . . . Other characters personify negative models exhibiting detrimental views and lifestyles. Transitional models are shown transforming their lives by moving from uncertainty or discarding adverse styles of behavior in favor of beneficial ones. Differential modeling contrasts the personal and social effects of different lifestyles. Viewers are especially prone to draw inspiration from, and identify with, transforming models by seeing them surmount similar adverse life circumstances" (Bandura 2004, 83, cited in Green, Wilke, and Cooper 2020).

who visits the household to provide guidance. A voice-over confirms that the situation has improved and implores viewers to speak out before it is too late if they learn of violence in their community.

An impact evaluation six months after the videos were screened found the following in the communities that had been shown the videos:

- The incidence of IPV decreased compared with the communities that had not viewed the videos.
- Community members stated that they were more likely to report any incidents they witnessed.

Reference: Green, Wilke, and Cooper (2018).

Videos: "Uganda IPV Messaging," Dropbox.com, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/sl247uz2xu6t8fg/AAAQsJul9sd28CS4Gh6-QkGUa?dl=0.

A similar intervention was conducted in Nigeria through *MTV Shuga*, a popular dramatic television series. The results were similar. See Banerjee, La Ferrara, and Orozco (2019).

3.3.2. Uganda: agricultural services video that considers the gender of the actors

The International Food Policy Research Institute implemented a program that presented information on maize-growing techniques through short videos viewed on tablets carried by extension workers. Various intervention designs, which varied the sex of the presenters (men, women, both) for different audiences (men, women, both), were used to assess the effectiveness of the various configurations.

The impact evaluation found as follows:

- Using women as video presenters, which the authors interpret as role models, inspired women beneficiaries to seek to change maize-growing techniques, though the results did not carry through to a change in crop yields or sales.
- Women who viewed the video alone had the best economic outcomes, and their independent decision-making increased; women who viewed the video with their husbands did not experience a significant boost in economic outcomes, but the incidence of their sole and joint decision-making rose.

Reference: Lecoutere, Spielman, and Van Campenhout (2019).

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES
Tip sheet: Promundo (2020).

3.4. Women's and girls' spaces

Girls' or young women's clubs have become a common component of school-based and community-based programs that aim to improve outcomes and well-being among girls and young women in developing countries (Marcus et al. 2017). Through this type of intervention, girls (in-school, out-of-school, or a combination) come together in a safe environment to extend their peer networks, gain a life skills education (focused primarily on sexual and reproductive health), learn communication skills, and participate in efforts to challenge gender norms in their households and communities. Some clubs also provide skills-based training (that is, vocational training) or provide skills in savings and loans. The most successful girls club interventions typically engage the parents of the girls and other community members and undertake parallel activities among boys and young men.

Girls' and young women's clubs can be used as both an agency and a context intervention aimed at shifting norms at the community or household level. An extensive review of girls' clubs programming analyzed 63 studies covering 44 interventions and found significant impacts on context (relationships, norms) and agency (sense of agency, mobilization) (Marcus et al. 2017), as follows:

- 37 interventions were found to increase agency.
- 32 programs helped shift some gender-related attitudes and gender-discriminatory norms and practices.
- In 37 interventions, girls reported greater confidence in speaking out among their peers and families, reflecting changes in relationships, sense of agency, and mobilization.
- In 13 evaluations, girls reported expanded social networks outside their households, while also building stronger connections and gaining support from adults in their communities that affected relationships, social norms, and mobilization.
- Almost three-quarters of the 44 programs that were reviewed succeeded in changing attitudes on gender equality, while more than half helped reduce gender-discriminatory practices, such as child marriage or restrictions on girls' mobility outside the home that were related to social norms.
- Success in reducing child marriage rates was usually associated with the engagement of parents and other family members of club attendees and shifting their norms and the relationship with their girl children, as well as girls feeling more empowered to speak out through a greater sense of agency, goal setting, and mobilization.
- Of the 29 programs on which there is evidence on attitude change, 23 engaged other stakeholders (typically parents) through community outreach, including awareness-raising campaigns, community dialogue, street theatre, other community events, and home visits, which proved useful in allaying the worries of parents about proposed activities, thus shifting their norms and the relationships with their girl children.

To maximize the ability of girls' and young women's clubs to shift agency and social norms at the community or household level, the club initiative should be paired with interventions that engage local stakeholders (influential community members, parents, religious leaders) or men and boys. Girls' Clubs had more success at shifting discriminatory norms if they were paired with boys' clubs (see the TUSEME example below) that deployed similar activities focused on gender equality. They are also quite effective in shifting internalized norms among the girls and young women themselves (Marcus et al. 2017).

3.4.1. Multicountry power to lead alliance to promote girls leadership

The Power to Lead Alliance was funded by the United States Agency for International Development for implementation by CARE USA in six countries—Egypt, Honduras, India, Malawi, Tanzania, and Yemen—over three years. The intervention focused on 10- to 14-year-old girls, with the intention of promoting girl leaders in vulnerable communities. The program had three intervention goals: (a) cultivate opportunities for girls to practice their leadership skills, (b) create partnerships to promote girls leadership, and (c) enhance knowledge to implement and promote girls leadership programs. These goals were met through music, art, drama, debate, health, and sports activities; beneficiary participation in youth councils, parliaments, or boards; life skills groups; academic clubs; scouts; awareness campaigns; environmental work; and classroom support. Many of these activities incorporate social network or civic action components.

The impact evaluation reported as follows:

- Across all countries, there were statistically significant differences between girls in the active and comparison groups in their perceptions of gender equality in rights. Girls in the active group agreed with 78 percent of the items on an index measurement scale regarding gender equality. By contrast, girls in the comparison group agreed with only 10 percent of the items. Girls from sites in Egypt, Honduras, India, and Tanzania agreed with more than 80 percent of the items.
- Community attitudes toward girls became more positive in the treatment group, which may be taken as a proxy for a shift in social norms.
- Girls in the treatment group built relationships with a range of people, including peers, parents, and community leaders. Encouragement by peer leaders, parents, and teachers emerged as the most important factor in leadership development.

References: Baric et al. (2009); CARE USA (2011).

3.4.2. Uganda and Tanzania: adolescent development clubs

The BRAC-implemented Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents Program mobilized girls ages 14–20 into adolescent development clubs, which held meetings at a fixed location in participating communities. Club participation was voluntary, and sessions were facilitated by mentors, who used discussion, role-play, drama, and workshops to deliver a life skills curriculum, alongside vocational skills training. Sessions were focused on gender norms, laws and rights, and health-related knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. The clubs also served as a safe space for girls to meet and socialize with other girls, free of any pressures exerted by adolescent and older men.

The program impacts include the following:

- An increased sense of agency in terms of a self-perceived ability to run a business compared with girls in control communities.[15]
- Program beneficiaries reported a 30 percent decline in unwillingly engaging in sex during the previous year. This outcome was partly attributed to a sense of agency and mobilization in that participants were better able to negotiate sexual relations.

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15   This includes the ability to run a business, identify business opportunities, obtain and manage capital, manage employees, bargain over input and output prices, protect assets, and collect debts.

- The ideal age of first marriage increased more among the girls who participate in the clubs than among girls who did not participate. Similarly, the ideal age for the birth of a first child also rose more among the club participants than among those who did not live in intervention communities.

Reference: Bandiera et al. (2020).

Operations Manual (South Sudan): BRAC Southern Sudan (2010).

3.4.3. Tanzania: the TUSEME intervention

The United Nations Children's Fund and the Forum for African Women Educationalists have implemented the TUSEME (speak out in Kiswahili) intervention in Tanzanian schools.[16] TUSEME is a school-based gender and empowerment peer education and skills building program. Among other goals, it is aimed at building the agency of girls by teaching them to identify and analyze the problems that hinder their academic and social development, to speak out and express their views about these problems, and to take action to solve them. It also helps to boost gender equality by showing how girls can be leaders in activities that are traditionally performed by boys. The program uses two types of interventions: TUSEME clubs among pupils and gender-responsive pedagogy among teachers and other education officials.

An evaluation of Tanzania's TUSEME programming found the following:

- The attitudes of boys and girls toward gender equality markedly improved, thereby shifting social norms.
- Decreases in the share of boys and girls who think violence is acceptable, thereby shifting gender norms.
- Statistically significant improvements in the sense of agency among girls, including self-efficacy and self-esteem.

References: FAWE (2018); Mhando, Shukia, and Mkumbo (2015).

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES
Evidence synthesis: Marcus et al. (2017). *Toolkit:* CAG (2015). *Technical note* on life skills programs: Boender, Singh, and Belachew (2019). *Toolkit* on girl-centered program design: Austrian and Ghati (2010).

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16   The TUSEME model has also been introduced in other African countries, including Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In these countries, a common focus is the promotion of the participation of girls in education and development.

3.5. Gender dialogues

Gender dialogues are interventions wherein partnerships of women and men, or girls and boys engage in joint and parallel training to discuss gender dynamics, social norms, and specialized content targeted to specific gender norms that the intervention intends to shift. Power dynamics and the pathways that women negotiate in their decisions are incorporated into the dialogues so that women participants are able to strengthen their sense of agency and practice mobilization. Similar in nature to engaging men and boys programming (see above), this variation can be used, where culturally appropriate, among pairs (couples, siblings) to intermix and discuss sensitive content. Depending on the scale of the activity, this can address social norms on a wider level, but the dialogues are designed primarily to enhance relationships at the household and community levels.

3.5.1. Côte d'Ivoire: gender dialogue groups

The International Rescue Committee's Gender Discussion Group series targets beneficiaries of cash assistance and their husbands or other man decision-makers in the household. The groups cover topics such as the value of women in the household, gender equality, financial decision-making, budgeting, planning, communicating, negotiating priorities within a household, and the management of stressful situations. The groups guide participants through a participatory process during which they may reflect on their own experiences, attitudes, and behaviors that condone or promote violence and on strategies to create the conditions so women are safe within their homes. Parallel groups consisted of 15–18 members and met every two weeks over a six-month period to work through eight modules developed by the International Rescue Committee.

An evaluation of the intervention found as follows:

- The participants in the Gender Dialogue Groups reported a greater reduction in IPV relative to those who only received the financial intervention. The impact increased depending on the extent to which couples participated in the dialogue program. Women in couples who attended at least three-quarters of the sessions exhibited a 55 percent relative decline in the likelihood of experiencing physical violence by the end of the study, compared with women who only received the financial intervention. It is not clear from the intervention if the results are associated with a shift in context-specific variables (gender norms, relationships), women's agency (sense of agency, mobilization), or both.
- The Gender Dialogue Groups contributed to an increase in economic agency. Women who participated in the dialogue groups reported a 61 percent relative decrease in the likelihood that they would be forced to hand over their earnings to their partners or that their partners would withhold money for household necessities, compared with women in the savings groups. It is unclear if a shift in the context of man partners or a shift in women's agency were the driving factors.

References: Green (2014); Gupta et al. (2013).

Toolkits for men's sessions: IRC (2013a), (2013b).

Toolkit for women's sessions: IRC (2012).

3.5.2. Bangladesh: asset transfer and behavior change communication

The World Food Programme and the Eco-Social Development Organization supported a behavior change communication (BCC) intervention as a complement to cash or food interventions. The beneficiaries received a cash or food transfer, coupled with a suite of intensive nutrition BCC interventions focused on education and behavior change at the household and community levels. The BCC strategy involved three activities: (a) weekly group BCC training, some with beneficiaries only (that is, the target woman receiving the transfer) and some with other household members invited to attend along with the beneficiaries; (b) semimonthly visits to the homes of the beneficiaries, plus more visits as needed for individual counseling; and (c) monthly group meetings with influential community leaders.[17] There was no explicit focus on violence or gender issues in any of the BCC components. However, negotiating conflict within the household over the purchase and consumption of foods, particularly those not typically consumed by these poor households, did form part of the interactive exercises in the BCC, which could also serve to build relationships.

The program evaluation found as follows:

- Women receiving the transfer and BCC reported a greater ability to negotiate household decisions.
- As a result, women receiving the transfer and BCC reported declines in IPV 6 to 10 months after the program ended, while those who received the transfer alone did not report declines.

Study: Roy et al. (2019).

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Toolkit: Promundo-US and WorldFish (2016).
Guidance note: FAO, IFAD, and WFP (2020).
Guidelines: IASC (2015) contains some tips for incorporating gender dialogue into humanitarian interventions that can be used in various initiatives.

3.6. Psychosocial training sessions

Psychosocial training sessions that incorporate a focus on gender equality, challenge social norms, or directly engage family members may have impacts on women and girls' agency and may also be utilized as a relationship intervention.

One psychosocial training session with an impact evaluation was identified in Burkina Faso. The Trickle Up Plus intervention combined economic and family coaching packages and was run alongside the Trickle Up economic support-only program. The package of economic interventions engaged women caregivers as the primary beneficiaries and included (a) savings group formation and training using the village savings and loan association model, (b) livelihood planning and household management training, (c) seed capital grants to jump-start or expand livelihood activities, and (d) one-on-one mentoring and

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17   Nutrition workers also conducted semimonthly home visits to observe household practice and encourage the adoption of positive behaviors. This was followed up by home visits for individual counseling among beneficiaries as needed.

coaching on livelihood development conducted by trained field workers. Trickle Up Plus beneficiaries also received a gender-sensitive family coaching component that was primarily intended to raise the awareness of all members of the household about child protection issues (for example, early and forced marriage, girls education, child labor, and labor-related child separation) and address normative gender beliefs about family violence and the role of wives in household decision-making (for instance, a wife's contribution to household economy and decisions affecting a child's future). Family coaching sessions were 30–45 minutes long and followed savings group meetings.

Impact results included the following:

- Trickle Up Plus participants and their families reported a significant increase in acceptance of more equitable norms and equitable decision-making within the household relative to participants who did not receive the coaching.
- This may have underpinned the statistically significant improvement in financial autonomy among the beneficiaries who received the family coaching. The greater acceptance of gender norms may have also improved household relationships, leading to a statistically significant reduction in the cases of emotional violence experienced 12 months after the intervention by Trickle Up Plus beneficiaries compared with participants who did not receive the coaching.[18]

Reference: Ismayilova et al. (2018).

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES
Refer to subsection 2.2 for additional examples.

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18   There is also increasing evidence that women's empowerment interventions that incorporate the participation of multiple stakeholders, including men and boys and integrate economic strategies with community-based gender educational interventions are more effective than economic interventions alone in reducing violence (Ellsberg et al. 2015; Gupta et al. 2013; Jewkes, Flood, and Lang 2015). Furthermore, economic empowerment interventions that involved husbands and men community members demonstrated that involving men in women's empowerment interventions increases women's involvement in household decision-making (Jewkes et al. 2014; Slegh et al. 2013).

4 CONCLUSIONS

This review highlights dozens of programs that have successfully shifted agency and context and thereby achieved greater empowerment among women and girls in developing-country contexts. It illustrates that it is possible for programming to address agency and context challenges. The paper carefully cites the evidence base, as well as includes further reading and toolkits to guide readers toward incorporating tested design elements into their own projects.

The review provides a few overarching lessons, as well. First, the design of successful interventions can take many different forms. The paper groups the agency interventions into four categories and the context interventions into six categories. But even within each category, interventions take different forms. They also affect different aspects of agency and context constraints that women and girls face, highlighting the importance of adapting interventions to meet the unique needs of the target population.

Second, most of the examples cited in the paper operate among the women and girls themselves. These are often agency interventions. However, the review also includes evidence-based examples of programs that engage men and boys or the household or community more broadly in order to shift social norms and relationships, which fall under the context pillar.

Third, most of the interventions that met the criteria to be included in this review have been developed and implemented by NGOs and are small in scale. The review did not identify evidence-based interventions aimed at shifting larger institutions within specific contexts, such as laws and regulations or service delivery within public institutions. Likewise, it does not identify evidence-based large-scale publicly run programs. These are important areas requiring further evaluation.

A large learning agenda remains to be addressed through experimentation and better measurement of empowerment outcomes. However, as this review illustrates, such learning is possible, and meaningful results can be achieved through pioneering work in the context and agency space.

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