

STUDY SUMMARY

IMPACT OF A MICROENTERPRISE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (WINGS) ON IPV REDUCTION IN POST-CONFLICT NORTHERN UGANDA

STUDY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

This was a multiphase study of different variants of the Women's INcome Generating Support (WINGS) programme, a microfinance intervention designed to help ultra-poor women in vulnerable villages in post-conflict Northern Uganda to start small businesses by providing cash grants, training and ongoing organisational support. This cluster randomised control trial looked at the impact of the programme on a number of outcome measures including intimate partner violence (IPV) compared to no programme as well as the impact of a programme variation to engage male partners (WINGS+) compared to the standard WINGS.

This study found that WINGS increased business ownership and monthly earnings among women, but economic benefits were much lower for women who reported poor partner relations. Engaging male partners (WINGS W+) improved relationship quality, but decreased measures of autonomy and business success. Neither variant showed a significant reduction in IPV over a year after the start of the intervention.

BACKGROUND

Interventions that focus on women's empowerment as a means to reduce intimate partner violence (IPV) are increasingly popular - particularly those that focus on economic empowerment by providing cash transfers, livestock and/or micro-finance opportunities. However, theory and empirical evidence on the impact of economic interventions on IPV is mixed.

- A randomised study of IMAGE, a group-based microfinance, gender and HIV training program for poor, rural women in South Africa suggested that, while the combined programme improved partner relations and reduced IPV by more than half, microfinance alone had little effect.

- Mixed findings have also emerged from more recent studies of cash transfer programs in Mexico and Peru.
- Unconditional cash transfers in Kenya and Ecuador showed significant reductions in IPV.

The success of interventions appears to be highly context-dependent and related to multiple factors including prevalent gender norms, family structures, and community or systemic support. As such, this study aimed to identify: 1) whether there is a positive impact of a microenterprise assistance programme on IPV among couples in post-conflict northern Uganda; and 2) whether engaging male household members in the intervention would improve the outcomes in this context.

CONTEXT

The study period (2009-2011) followed two decades of civil war in Northern Uganda. By 2009, security had improved since the conflict ended in 2005 and most of the population had returned to their homes from displacement camps. However, war and displacement left many impoverished and undereducated.

Gulu and Kitgum districts were the most severely affected. Typical income-generating activities in these districts included crop sales, animal raising, casual labour, and non-farm self-employment, such as petty trading. Independent earning opportunities were particularly limited for women as most lacked seed money or credit.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

In 2009, the Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI), designed a cash transfer programme called Women's INcome Generating Support (WINGS) to help ultra-poor women start small businesses.

The WINGS programme is similar to other "graduation style" capital transfer programmes. Distinctive aspects include: the focus on ultra-poor women in a post-conflict setting, cash grants rather than livestock, the focus on retail or trading enterprises and a comparative evaluation of multiple programme components.

- The core programme (WINGS) offers cash grants of \$150 USD, 4-5 days of business skills training and ongoing support and monitoring every 6 weeks for 6 months. This grant was estimated to be 30 times the typical monthly earning for participants.

- Some participants (WINGS + GD) attended a three-day training on group dynamics after individual businesses had been launched (e.g. building support groups, organisational support and a rotating savings and credit association within villages).
- Some participants (WINGS W+) were asked to bring another household member responsible for financial decisions to all trainings sessions plus a one-day session on barriers to female entrepreneurship, communication and problem solving. The framing of this variant emphasised working together more than women's autonomy.
- The number of follow-up visits varied for different groups of participants.

STUDY DESCRIPTION

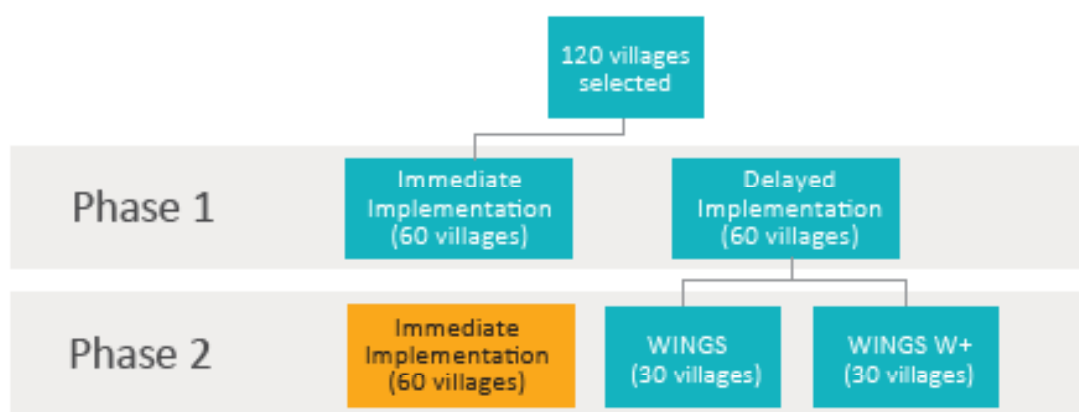
This study aimed to investigate whether the standard WINGS programme and/or its variations could also reduce IPV through changes such as increased economic security within households, increased communication and support between intimate partners, and less restrictive attitudes about gender roles.

Of 120 villages selected, half were randomised to receive the programme immediately, the other half were randomised to receive the programme after a 20-month delay. Phase 1 of this study compared outcomes between villages that had received the programme and villages that had not yet received the programme.

Those villages in the immediate intervention group were further randomised to receive the core programme alone (WINGS) or with the additional group dynamics curriculum

(WINGS + group dynamics). All individual participants from the villages in the immediate intervention group received the same number of follow-up visits.

The villages in the delayed intervention group were further randomised to receive the core programme (WINGS) or the core programme with the other household member (WINGS W+). Phase 2 compared outcomes between villages that had received the programme immediately (both with and without the group dynamics curriculum), villages that had received the programme after a 20-month delay, and villages that had received WINGS W+ after a 20-month delay. Individual participants from the villages in the delayed intervention group were also randomized to receive 0, 2, or 5 follow-up visits.



STUDY DESCRIPTION (IMPACT EVALUATION)

WHAT?	HOW?	WHO?	WHEN?
Villages in Northern Uganda were randomised and ultra-poor women received different variants of the WINGS programme.	<p>Comparisons across both phases of the overall study.</p> <p>Phase 1: Immediate (after programme implementation) to Delayed (before programme implementation)</p> <p>Phase 2: Immediate to Delayed WINGS to Delayed WINGS W+</p>	<p>120 vulnerable villages (average population 699 people, 45 km from the capital) in Gulu and Kitgum districts of northern Uganda.</p> <p>1800 participants across the two phases, 85.9% female, with an average age of 27 and 2.8 years of education.</p> <p>Individual participants were selected based on vulnerability as indicated by community nomination, interviews and home visits.</p> <p>896 participants were from villages randomized to the immediate intervention group and 904 were from villages randomized to the delayed intervention group.</p> <p>439 of these received the standard intervention and 465 received WINGS W+ variant.</p>	<p>The study took place between 2009-2012 and participation was between 2 and 3 years.</p> <p>Data was collected at three time points: baseline, 20 months (16 months after the immediate intervention group received cash grants) and 36 month (1 year after participants in the delayed intervention group received cash grants).</p>

OUTCOMES

- Self-reported experience of IPV.
- Attitudes toward gender norms.
- Quality of relationship with partner.
- Support from partner.
- Autonomy and influence in household purchases.
- Economic impact and expenditure patterns of cash grants were also measured.

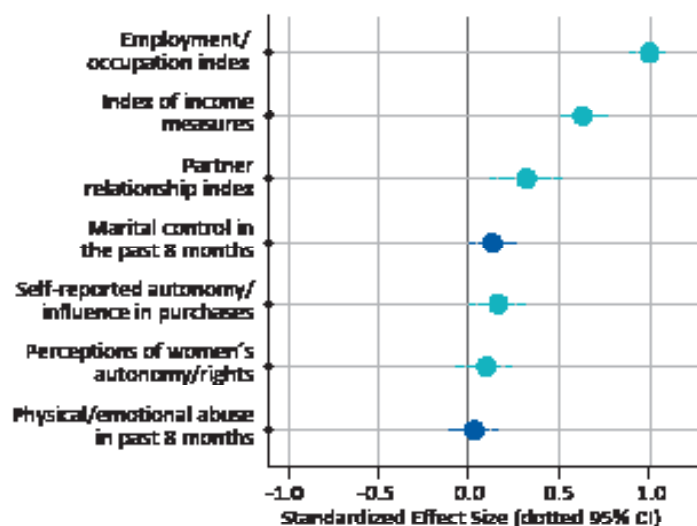
OLS regression was used to estimate the adjusted impact of the different programme variants on outcomes. We focus on results for all women (as assigned) and all women with intimate male partners (as assigned)

KEY FINDINGS

PHASE 1: IMPACT OF WINGS

- Full economic results are reported elsewhere, but it is estimated that the WINGS programme increased microenterprise ownership among women from 40% to 79%, with a 94% increase in non-agricultural employment hours and an increase in monthly earnings from \$7.15 to \$15.25 USD.
- Economic effects were moderated by partnership quality: women reporting poor partner relations earned \$18.12 USD less per month and fewer continued to operate businesses at 16 months.
- When compared to women who had not yet participated in WINGS, WINGS participants reported trends toward more positive gender norms and increased autonomy and influence over household purchases.
- WINGS participants reported increased quality of partner relations, but no change in IPV and increased experiences of marital control (mostly driven by intimate partners attempting control women's earnings).

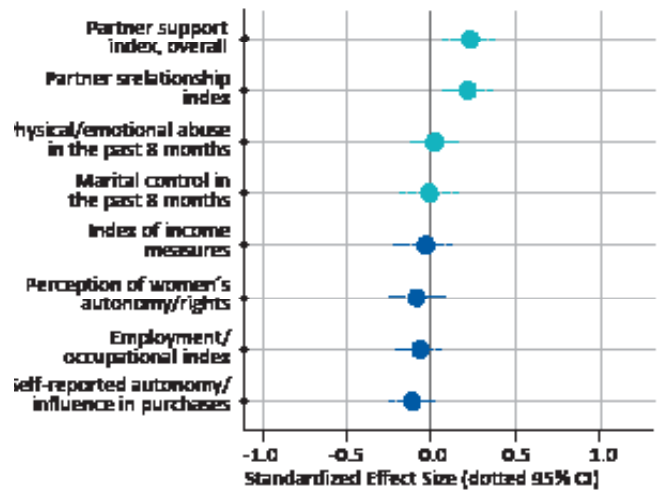
Panel A: Impacts of full programme (Phase 1)



PHASE 2: IMPACT OF WINGS W+ VARIANT

- 9% fewer women in the W+ group continued to operate businesses at 12 months. Women assigned to the W+ variant reported increased relationship quality and more household support. These effects are up to twice as large among women with an intimate partner before the start of the intervention.
- Women assigned to the W+ variant reported less autonomy and influence over household purchases.
- Among those with a male intimate partner, women assigned to the W+ variant reported a 10% decrease in repeated IPV and 16% decrease in experience of marital control (mostly driven by fewer limits on contact with family and friends), but neither reached statistical significance.

2)



IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

- WINGS successfully improved economic outcomes for ultra-poor women in highly vulnerable villages in a post-conflict setting in Northern Uganda.
- In this context, the results show that relationship quality is an important determinant of economic success, but economic success does not necessarily improve relationship quality or impact IPV.
- Engaging men in these interventions can improve relationships, but it may unintentionally communicate that the involvement of a man is necessary to legitimise the business effort or that the business does not truly belong to the woman. As such, engaging men may not improve gender attitudes and may negatively impact women's autonomy and business success.
- Therefore policies and programmes that hope to reduce IPV as a direct/parallel outcome of economic assistance need to think carefully about how economic factors and partner relations influence each other.
- The study had several limitations including reliance on self-reported data for frequently underreported outcomes and limited generalisability given the extreme nature of the study context. Additionally, in order to engage men, the WINGS W+ variant was framed as a joint effort which may have undermined goals related to gender equity.

SOURCE DOCUMENTS

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- 1 Pronyk PM, Hargreaves JR, Kim JC, Morison LA, Phetla G, Watts C, Busza J, Porter JD. Effect of a structural intervention for the prevention of intimate-partner violence and HIV in rural South Africa: a cluster-randomised trial. *The Lancet*. 2006 Dec 2; 368(9551):1973-83.; Kim J, Ferrari G, Abramsky T, Watts C, Hargreaves J, Morison L, Phetla G, Porter J, Pronyk P, 2009. Assessing the incremental effects of combining economic and health interventions: the image study in South Africa. *Bulletin of the World Health Organ*. 87, 824e832.
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