



## STUDY SUMMARY

# THE DO KADAM KI ORE (TWO STEPS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY) PROGRAMME, BIHAR, INDIA: WOMEN'S INTERVENTION

### STUDY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

This intervention targeted married women in existing village-level self-help groups (SHGs) in Nawada, Bihar. It provided gender transformative learning sessions on violence against women (VAW) together with financial literacy and livelihoods training opportunities. It aimed to: 1) change attitudes related to gender roles among women; 2) reduce women's experience of emotional, physical, and sexual violence within marriage; and 3) empower women through building their financial and social assets.

Overall, the intervention contributed to improving women's agency—with respect to decision-making, financial literacy and access to social support. It also succeeded in positive changes to women's attitudes about gender roles and the acceptability of men's controlling behaviours. However, the effects on women's experience of marital violence were mixed with those in the intervention reporting reduced experience of physical violence, but increased experience of emotional violence. There was no effect on levels of sexual violence in marriage.

### BACKGROUND

The Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore (Two Steps Towards Equality) programme was implemented in Bihar, India. It aimed to prevent violence against women through raising awareness about women's rights, changing traditional notions of masculinity and female subordination, promoting women's agency, building support systems to help women at risk of violence, and preventing incidences of violence within the participants' immediate environment.

It consisted of four interventions (see our programme summary) involving married women (and their husbands), young men and boys, elected representatives, frontline

health workers, and communities. The four interventions were conducted in the districts Nawada and Patna in Bihar, and were developed and conducted independently of one another, in different geographic areas, with no overlap.

This study summary summarises one of the four studies conducted to evaluate the impact of the programme. It focuses on an intervention targeting women in existing village level SHGs, providing help and support to women who experience violence and engaging women in activities to prevent VAW in their communities.

### CONTEXT OF BIHAR

- The state of Bihar is one of the least developed states with 34 percent of the population estimated to be living below the poverty line (2011–12), and with high numbers of disadvantaged castes.<sup>1</sup>
- Bihar records the highest incidences of women experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) in India. According to the most recent national survey (2015–2016), 45.2 percent of ever-married women (15–49 years of age) in Bihar reported experiences of spousal emotional, physical or sexual violence in their lifetime—with 40.9 percent of women reporting having suffered physical violence.<sup>2</sup> In previous 2005–2006 national survey (conducted before the intervention),

emotional, physical, sexual IPV among women in Bihar was 60.8 percent—with 56 percent of women have suffered physical violence.<sup>3</sup>

- There are low levels of female literacy, limited female agency, with high prevalence of gender inequalitarian attitudes that condone the perpetration of violence against women in marriage—In 2015–2016 national survey, 53 percent women and 38 percent men justified wife beating.<sup>4</sup> 57 percent of women and men alike justified wife beating in the 2005–2006 national survey (conducted prior to the intervention).<sup>5</sup>

- Child marriage is more widespread in Bihar than in any other state in the country: 69 percent of women in the ages 20–24 years were married before the age of 18 years, 33 percent were married under age 15, and 10 percent were married under age 13 in 2005–06.<sup>6</sup>
- The intervention was based in Nawada district, housing 2 percent of the state’s population, and 90 percent of the district’s population is rural.<sup>7</sup>

## DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION TARGETING WOMEN IN SHGs

- This intervention targeted women in existing village-level SHGs.<sup>8</sup> It focused on: 1) changing gender role attitudes among married women; 2) reducing women’s experience of emotional, physical and sexual violence within marriage; 3) empowering women through building their financial and social assets at the same time.
- It drew from the IMAGE intervention conducted in South Africa, that combined gender transformative education sessions with financial literacy and savings activities to empower group members and reduce their experience of intimate partner violence (IPV).
- The intervention was implemented in 4 sub-districts of Nawada among married SHG members (ages 18–49) belonging to a total of 140 SHGs from 28 villages.<sup>9</sup> Women members of SHGs were targeted in all of the 28 villages, and husbands of the SHG members were targeted in 14 villages to investigate any additional impacts of engaging husbands.
- The intervention provided:
  - 24 sessions, delivered fortnightly to SHG members on financial literacy, links to livelihood training opportunities and access to credit; gender transformative learning sessions on gender discrimination, notions of masculinity and the unacceptability of violence against women and girls (VAWG);
  - 12 sessions delivered monthly to husbands and interactive voice response system (IVRS) messages delivered to husbands’ phones, focused on issues related to notions of masculinity and VAW;
  - Community events, involving SHG members and their husbands, such as street plays about masculinity and VAW.
- The intervention was delivered by peer mentors to SHG members, involving participatory methodology and discussions on case studies, and were supported by project staff; Project staff delivered the sessions to husbands.
- The overall intervention was implemented over a 12 month period, under the input and authorisation of the Women Development Corporation (WDC) of Bihar.

## STUDY DESCRIPTION

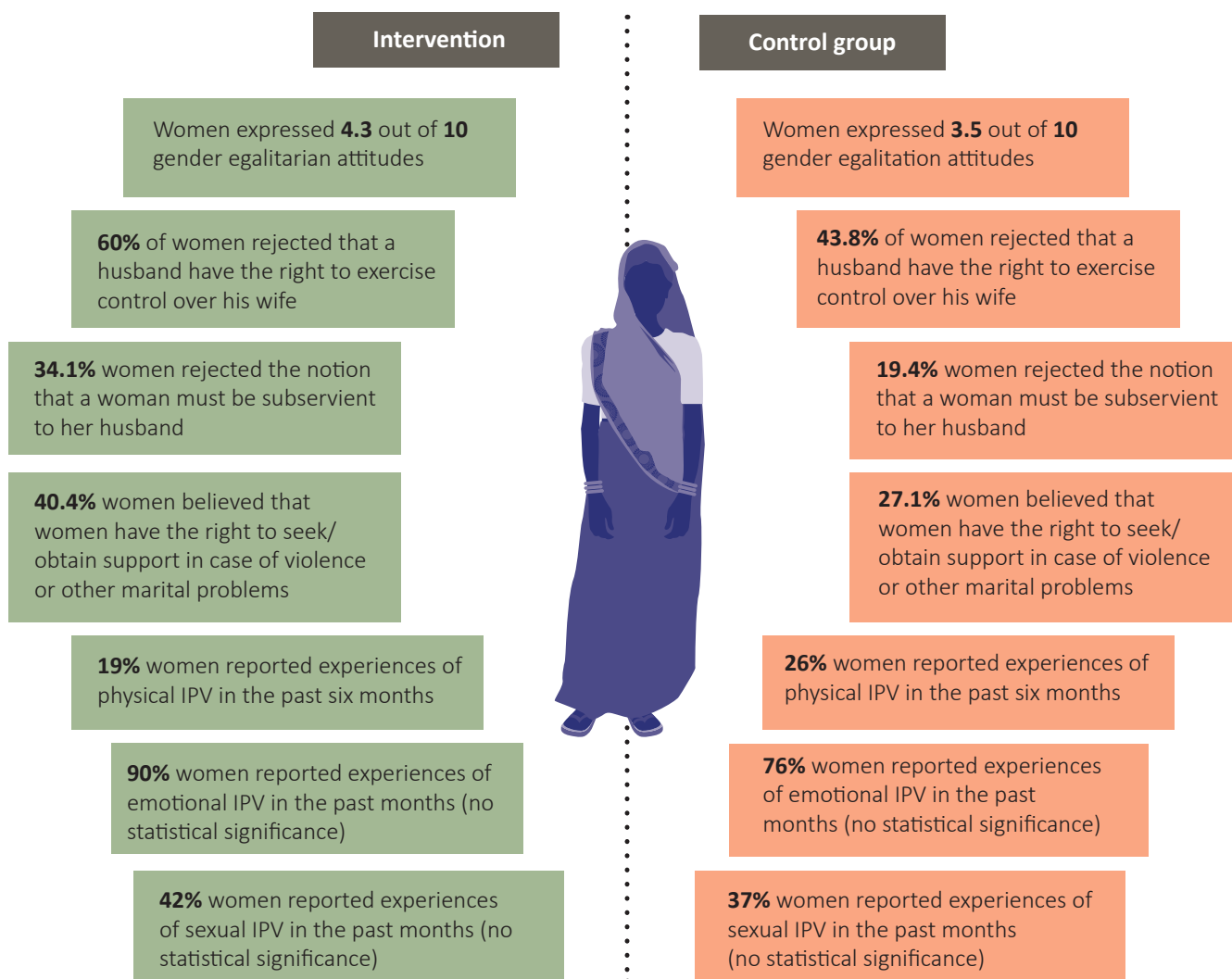
WHAT?	HOW?	WHO?	WHEN?
Evaluation of the impact of an intervention that involved married women in SHGs and their husbands. The intervention aimed to change gender unequal attitudes; prevent violence within marriage; and empower women through building their financial and social assets.	A three-armed cluster randomised trial (CRT) with quantitative panel surveys of married women and their husbands at baseline and endline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arm 1 targeted women SHG members only;</li> <li>• Arm 2 targeted women SHG members + their husbands.</li> <li>• Arm 3 was the control.</li> </ul> Qualitative in-depth interviews with selected survey participants at three points of time—before, during, and at the conclusion of the intervention.	1,686 married women aged 18–49 who were members of the SHGs targeted in the intervention and control study clusters; 688 husbands of SHG members in the intervention and control study clusters.  The study also drew a random sample of 2,078 other currently married women of ages 18–49 from the community, excluding those who were members of SHGs targeted in the study clusters.  A total of 20 SHG members and 10 husbands were interviewed in a longitudinal qualitative assessment at baseline, and (where possible) at midline, and endline.	Baseline survey: August–October 2013.  Endline survey: July–Sept 2015 (approximately two months following the conclusion of the intervention).  Qualitative assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before the intervention started (Jan–Feb 2014);</li> <li>• 6 months after the start of the intervention;</li> <li>• Dec 2014–Jan 2015 after the completion of the endline survey (October 2015).</li> </ul>

## OUTCOMES

- Women’s attitudes about gender roles (men’s perceived right to exercise control over women; women’s subservience to men; women’s right to seek help in case of violence);
- Women’s experience of emotional, physical and sexual marital violence in the last 6 months;
- Women’s agency (measured by independence in decision-making authority);
- Women’s financial literacy (measured by knowledge of budgeting);
- Women’s social support (measured by having a friend in marital village from whom they can request help).

# KEY FINDINGS

## ENDLINE SURVEY 2015 RESULTS



## OTHER OUTCOMES

Reported increased decision making, freedom of movement and possession of a bank account. SHG members in the intervention group, who had attended the programme regularly, compared to the control group:

- Were 2.8 times more likely to exhibit independent decision-making;
- Were 2.0 times more likely to own a bank account, and were significantly more likely to operate their account independently;
- Their freedom for mobility was 0.36 higher.

The intervention was able to enhance SHG members' financial literacy:

- Out of five items probed, those in the intervention group expressed financial literacy on 2.3 items, while those in the control group did so in 1.6 instances. The effect remained significant irrespective of regular' attendance.

The intervention succeeded in increasing SHG members' confidence about their access to social support:

- SHG members in the intervention group scored 1.9 out of 3 in comparison to 1.5 by those in the control group with regard to their confidence in social support.

Engaging husbands did not have a stronger effect on SHG members' gender role attitudes, their experience of marital violence, and their agency, financial literacy, and access to social support than intervening only with SHG members.

The community level activities had a mixed impact on women from the intervention group and other women from the community who were not part of the intervention.

For example:

- Women in the intervention group were more likely to experience emotional IPV than other women in the community who took part in community events. While experiences of physical and sexual IPV were similar, women in the intervention group were less likely to experience physical IPV in six months preceding the interview.



## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

- The successful result of this intervention in some areas suggests that gender transformative group learning curriculums can improve women's agency, financial literacy, access to social support, and change their attitudes about gender roles.
- With respect to the missed effects on women's experience of marital violence, the study authors suggest two reasons. Firstly, they may be more likely in the short run to recognise an incident of violence and hence report it to the researcher at endline. Secondly, they may stand up for themselves more following the intervention and consequently expose themselves to further violence. More research is needed to unpack these results.
- This intervention had limitations with regard to SHGs as a platform for the intervention, including the WDC through which SHGs operate. In future it is recommended to strengthen meeting structures to be gender transformative, to ensure regular meetings, and to build the confidence and skills of SHG leadership.
- The intervention was not successful in reaching out to and engaging husbands. The authors suggest that this was due to various issues including migration for work, long hours of work, alcohol consumption and apathy towards women's rights—all of which limited their attendance at programme activities. Future programmes should explore new platforms and strategies to engage husbands more effectively in such contexts.
- Community activities did not succeed well in attracting or engaging community members, especially the men. Future programmes need to be more innovative around better ways to engage communities.
- Even though women and men were sensitised to receive support services, these services were not readily available. Future programme will have better impact if awareness activities are conducted alongside improving the accessibility to support services.

## SOURCE DOCUMENTS

**Jejeebhoy, S.J & Santhya, K.G. (2018).** Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls in Bihar: Challenges for Implementation and Evaluation. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 26(52), pp.92-108.

**Jejeebhoy, S.J., Acharya, R., Pandey, N., et al. (2017).** The Effect of a Gender Transformative Life Skills Education and Sports Coaching Programme on the Attitudes and Practices of Adolescent Boys and Young Men in Bihar. New Delhi: Population Council.

**Jejeebhoy, S.J., Santhya, K.G., Acharya, R., et al. (2017).** Empowering Women and Addressing Violence Against Them Through Self-help Groups (SHGs). New Delhi: Population Council.

## OTHER REFERENCES

1. Planning Commission. (2013). Press Note on Poverty Estimates, 2011–12.
2. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. (2017). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015–16: India. Mumbai: IIPS.
3. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International. (2007). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), 2005–06: India. Mumbai: IIPS.
4. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. (2017). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015–16: India. Mumbai: IIPS.
5. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International. (2007). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), 2005–06: India. Mumbai: IIPS.
6. Jejeebhoy, S.J., Santhya, K.G., Acharya, R., et al. (2017). Empowering Women and Addressing Violence Against Them Through Self-help Groups (SHGs). New Delhi: Population Council.
7. Jejeebhoy, S.J., Santhya, K.G., Acharya, R., et al. (2017). Empowering Women and Addressing Violence Against Them Through Self-help Groups (SHGs). New Delhi: Population Council.
8. In Nawada district, there is a total of 2,694 functional SHGs spread over 591 villages operating under the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Bihar. SHGs are expected to act as a means of empowering women financially by engaging them in group savings and loan activities and linking them to income-generating activities, building confidence by offering them a range of leadership development opportunities, and creating awareness by familiarising them with their rights and available entitlements.
9. Each village had more SHGs. However, the intervention activities were restricted to only 5 randomly selected SHGs per village.



The Prevention Collaborative works to strengthen the ability of key actors to deliver cutting edge violence prevention interventions informed by research-based evidence, practice-based learning and feminist principles. For more information go to [www.prevention-collaborative.org](http://www.prevention-collaborative.org).

### **Citation: The Prevention Collaborative (2019) Study Summary:**

The Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore (Two Steps Towards Equality) Programme Involving Women in Self-help Groups to Prevent Violence Against Women in Bihar, India.

© The Prevention Collaborative, August 2019.

Written by Prashanthi Jayasekara; designed by Samson Mwaka.