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ENGAGING MEN FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

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KEY MESSAGES

- **Promoting women's socioeconomic empowerment means increasing women's control over the resources and decisions that are important for their well-being.** Achieving these goals requires engaging men, since men often have influence over the lives of women in their households and communities.
- **This overview examines evidence on the effectiveness of three different types of approaches that have been tested:**



Adding an engaging men intervention to complement a program designed to support women's individual economic activities: Studies of these interventions show mixed results. Some have had success while others highlight the risk that this type of intervention could reduce women's autonomy.



Complementing support for household production or consumption with programming that encourages cooperative management or joint planning: These types of interventions are promising, especially for increasing women's role in the management of household resources, although they have had limited impact on women's individual-level economic outcomes.



Encouraging men to recognize or enhance their wives' rights to ownership of important assets: There is very limited research available on this category of intervention, although available evidence is promising. Additional research in other contexts is necessary.

- **More intensive interventions are not necessarily more successful than light-touch ones, especially when they are tailored to the context.** Examples of effective light-touch interventions include small incentives and encouragement to transfer assets to the wife's name or the provision of information to update beliefs on the social acceptability of women's labor market participation.
- **The overall mixed record on the effectiveness of engaging men interventions suggests that further adaptation and testing is needed.** The brief identifies priority areas for future innovation and research.

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MOTIVATION

Promoting women's socioeconomic empowerment means increasing women's control over the resources and decisions that are important for their well-being. Engaging men in these initiatives is important because men often have power and influence over the lives of women in their households and communities. Furthermore, increasing men's contribution to unpaid household and care work is essential for enhancing women's economic opportunities. For the past couple of decades, practitioners and researchers have investigated ways to engage men in the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of sexual and reproductive health.¹ More recently, there is increasing attention to the need for engaging men in women's economic empowerment initiatives. This stems

from both an acknowledgement of pervasive gender inequality in the control over essential resources and a desire to protect women against potential backlash sparked by improvements in their socioeconomic status.

This brief provides an overview of rigorous research conducted in low- and middle-income countries that examines the effectiveness of programs that engage men to promote women's economic empowerment. We propose a typology that categorizes programs based on the type of economic intervention and the intensity of the engaging men component. The goal of the brief is to provide a structure for discussions among implementers and researchers about these types of programs, summarize lessons learned from rigorous studies, and identify knowledge gaps for future research.



SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

There is a rapidly growing number of programs that seek to engage men to promote gender equality. Much of this recent work builds on prior research that documented substantial gender inequality within households, with detrimental effects on women's well-being and on their households.² These programs are also motivated by research on intrahousehold dynamics that document incomplete transparency and cooperation between spouses for the management of resources.³ In addition, many of the interventions were informed by previous research on the prevention of gender-based violence, which demonstrated that it was possible to encourage more equitable and cooperative intrahousehold dynamics.⁴ Because those influential bodies of research have been reviewed elsewhere, they are not included here.⁵ Instead, this brief specifically reviews studies that meet three criteria:

1 Evaluate the impact of an intervention that engages men to promote women's economic empowerment

Studies are included if they evaluate and report the impact of engaging men or couples to improve economic outcomes for women. This can include programs of any type that involve women's male partners, other family members, or men in the broader community to increase women's empowerment. On the other hand, studies that do not measure the specific impact of the engaging men or couples component are not included. Some studies were excluded because the activities to engage men were bundled together with other types of interventions.⁶ We excluded a study of a social protection program in Niger that implemented a community-level social norms campaign to encourage support for women's economic engagement because the research only captured the impact of that activity combined with a life-skills training for program participants.⁷ Likewise, we excluded studies, such as the evaluation of the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures program in South Africa, that estimated only the combined impact of support for women's economic activities and the engaging men activities.⁸

2 Measure women's individual-level economic outcomes

To be included in this review, studies had to report women's individual-level economic behaviors or outcomes. This priority set of outcomes included measures of whether and how much women work, type of work, income, savings, and asset ownership. This criterion primarily led to the exclusion of studies that reported only household-level economic outcomes and those that focused exclusively on the impact of interventions on women's decision-making authority and/or experience of gender-based violence.⁹ Given the primary focus on women's economic outcomes, evaluations of adolescent girl programs were excluded when measures of economic activity were not relevant for the program's target age group.

3 Employ experimental or quasi-experimental research design to measure causal impact

Only studies that use a rigorous design to establish the causal impact of an engaging men intervention were included. Although we did not exclude quasi-experimental methods of constructing a counterfactual, nearly all the studies in this review used a randomized control trial design to compare those who were and were not offered the engaging men activities. Observational research and studies that compare outcomes before and after a program, or between recipients and non-recipients in two distinct populations, helped to inform and refine the design of many of the engaging men interventions.¹⁰ While those studies contain important lessons for the field, they are not included in this brief.



SEARCH STRATEGY

To identify eligible studies, we began with a targeted examination of known studies and engaging men programs. We expanded our search through multiple channels, considering both grey literature from program implementers and academic literature from a variety of disciplines. First, using Google Scholar and Connected Papers searches, we examined the citation networks of the initial set of papers, noting papers that they cited and those that cited them. Second, we extended our search by reading other reviews of engaging men interventions, including those focused on other types of outcomes (see box). We also searched on key implementer websites for information on relevant programs that are not yet the subject of academic research. Third, to identify research that might have been missed by the targeted review, we conducted a search of several databases of academic research, including JSTOR, Science Direct, PubMed, and EconLit.¹¹



KEY RESOURCES

EMERGE: “Engendering Men: A Collaborative Review of Evidence on Men and Boys in Social Change and Gender Equality”

ICRW: “Gender equity and male engagement: It only works when everyone plays.”

Grameen Foundation: “Evidence review on the role of male engagement in women’s economic empowerment (WEE) programs.”

Nutrition International: “Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”

PROMUNDO-UNFPA-MenEngage: “Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and Health”

SEEP Network: “Where are the men? How male engagement in savings groups can contribute to financial inclusion and women’s empowerment.”

What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women: “A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls.”

ENGAGING MEN INTERVENTIONS

The studies included in this review evaluate the impact of interventions that vary widely in intensity, modality of delivery, and content. Some of the lightest-touch interventions test the effects of providing information or nudges to male partners or other family members to increase support for women’s economic activities. These types of interventions are typically delivered in one short programmatic interaction with individual men or groups of men. Other light-touch interventions seek to increase intrahousehold transparency and support for women’s economic activities by inviting men to participate alongside their wives in business or agriculture-focused training of varying lengths.

There are both light-touch and intensive versions of programs that aim to shift intrahousehold dynamics and address gender inequality within households, with the goal of expanding opportunities for women. These interventions are often delivered via participatory workshops to small groups of couples, although the same content is sometimes conveyed through family coaching. To varying degrees, the workshops encourage joint household planning, less strict gendered divisions of labor, and material support for women’s economic activities. Some of the interventions include skill-building components related to action planning or communication skills. Likewise, some of the interventions include activities to encourage reflection on the ways that gender norms limit opportunities for men and women. Researchers have tested the provision of information, financial incentives, and participatory workshops as ways of encouraging men to recognize or enhance their wives’ rights to ownership of important assets.



In the box below, we summarize which questions are helpful to ask when considering the effectiveness of interventions that engage men to promote women's economic empowerment.



VARIATIONS IN THE DESIGN OF ENGAGING MEN INTERVENTIONS

Content? Interventions vary greatly in what they offer to participants. The engaging men intervention may be offering information, behavioral nudges, skills training, action planning, and/or encouragement for reflection on gender roles and norms.

Target? The intervention may be promoting change among women's male partners, other family members, or the community at large. Also, men and women may be engaged together or separately.

Intensity? Intensity varies in terms of hours of programming offered to men, the period of the intervention, and the cost associated with engaging men.

Modality of delivery? Participants may be offered information either individually or in a group, small group workshops, coaching, and/or incentives to promote women's economic empowerment.

Primary goals? All aspects of women's empowerment are interrelated, but different programs identify different primary goals. Intervention design can emphasize increasing women's labor market participation or success, increasing women's asset ownership, increasing household productivity, reducing intimate partner violence, or other goals.

Provider? Some interventions require highly skilled facilitators or gender experts to animate. Others are provided by other types of technical specialists who have been given additional training. Among the light-touch interventions, some are provided by non-experts or survey enumerators.

Integration with other programs? If the engaging men intervention is an add-on to another program, what is the nature of the primary program? In particular, does the underlying program provide support to women's individual activities, to other individuals, or to collectives, such as households or communities? How comprehensive is the base package of support?

TYPOLGY OF PROGRAMS

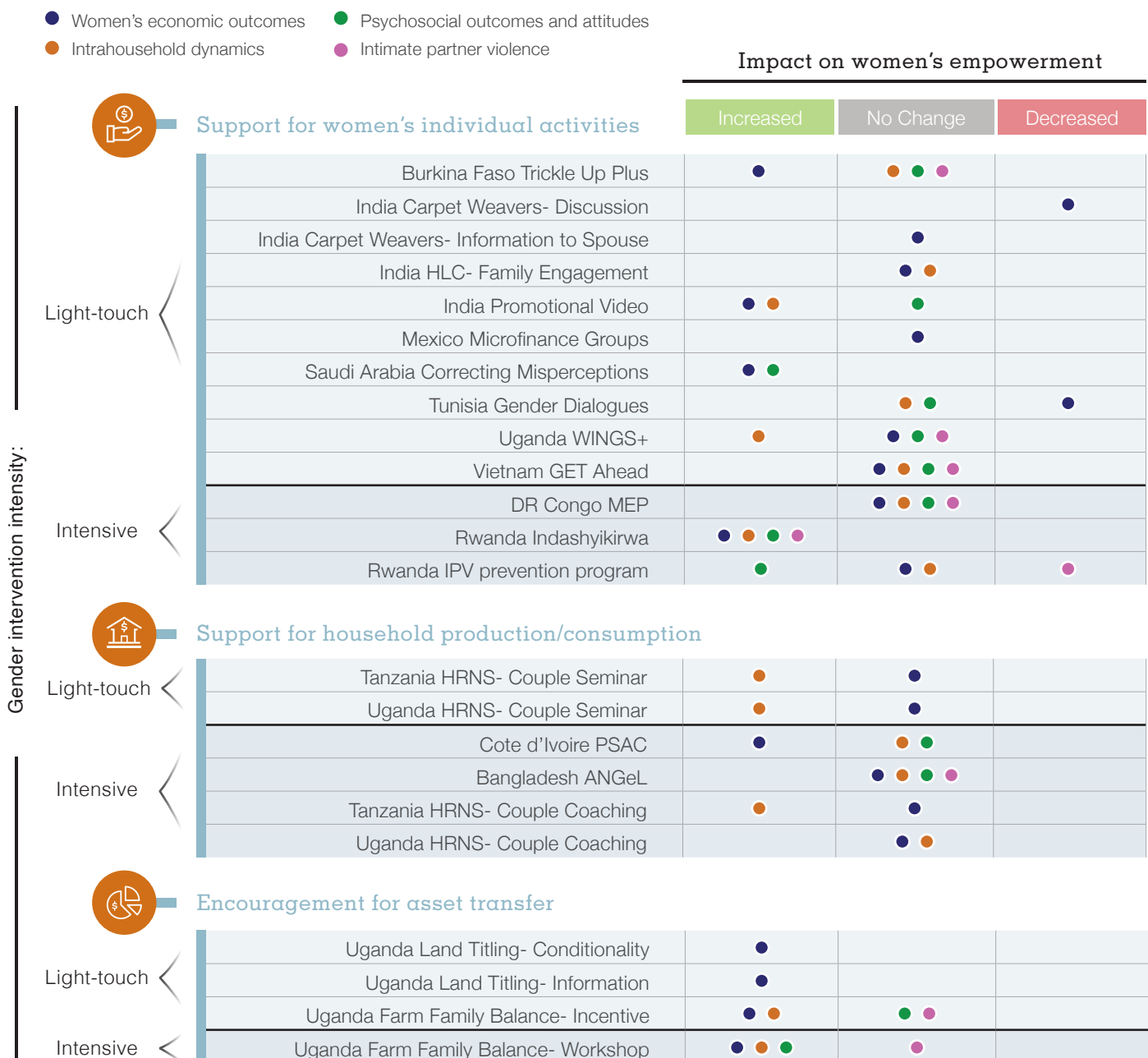
To enable comparison across studies, we developed a conceptual typology to categorize the engaging men interventions that were evaluated. Each intervention is categorized along two dimensions: (1) the type of economic support the program offers, and (2) the intensity of the engaging men component. Within the first dimension, programs are grouped depending on whether they offer assistance to women's individual economic activities, provide support for household production or consumption, or encourage women's asset ownership. On the second dimension, the engaging men component is classified as light-touch or intensive based on the amount of time that men spend

participating in program activities. The intensity is not necessarily a measure of the cost of the intervention. Light-touch interventions involve fewer than 10 hours of men's program participation, although they vary substantially from viewing a 6-minute video to participating in a 1-day workshop. These interventions are programmatically less intensive as they rely on a one-off interaction with participants, except for the Burkina Faso Trickle Up Plus and Vietnam Get Ahead interventions, which involve respectively 5 and 9 monthly interactions with participants but for short periods of time (about 45 minutes), totaling less than 10 hours of engagement.

OUTCOMES OF INTEREST

In Figure 1, we have summarized the impact of each program on four categories of outcomes. Each of the categories is represented by a color. Purple is for impact on women’s labor market outcomes, including the extent of women’s labor force participation, as well as their individual income, savings, and asset ownership. Orange shapes indicate impact on intrahousehold dynamics. The most common measures in this category are questions about women’s level of participation in important decision-making for their lives. Also included are measures of household relationship quality and composite measures of women’s agency. The green shows impact on psychosocial dimensions of empowerment, including socioemotional skills, self-confidence, and gender attitudes. Finally, pink indicates impact on intimate partner violence. The columns indicate whether outcomes, decreased, experienced no change, or increased. For intimate partner violence, an increase means that violence actually decreased (an improvement for women). If a color is missing for a particular study, impact on those outcomes was not reported. To the extent possible, the indicators in the framework reflect the way that study authors themselves summarized the impact on these broad domains.

FIGURE 1: TYPOLOGY OF PROGRAMS AND SUMMARY OF IMPACT



SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE BY PROGRAM TYPE



Support for women's individual economic activities

The majority of studies of engaging men programs fall into this category. These engaging men activities are generally designed with the idea that interventions to bolster women's individual economic activities will be more effective if those women have supportive environments in their homes and communities. There is wide variation in the types of engaging men interventions included in this category and mixed results regarding their impact, as summarized in Table 1.

Four studies tested informational nudges provided to men to encourage women's employment within contexts of relatively low women's labor force participation. Three studies in India tested light-touch methods of engaging women's family members to increase employment in nearby job opportunities. Screening a 6-minute promotional video on job opportunities for family members had a positive impact on women's employment in the short term, but the effect had disappeared one year later.¹² The other two light-touch interventions, which provided information about job opportunities or facilitated conversation about opportunities, did not significantly impact women's employment. In fact, the studies show suggestive evidence that encouraging discussion about employment opportunities between women and their family members might discourage women from working outside the home.¹³ In contrast, in Saudi Arabia, men were given information on the social acceptability of women working outside the home, which was much higher than those same men had anticipated. This led to an increase in men's take-up of an offer for job search assistance for their wives and women's increased likelihood of taking a temporary job outside their home a few months later.¹⁴

Three of the studies in this category sought to increase intrahousehold transparency and support for women's economic activities by inviting men to participate alongside their wives in business-focused training. Two of these interventions—in Vietnam and Mexico—suffer from low take-up rates.¹⁵ In the study in Mexico, low take-up was attributed to women's fear of a loss of autonomy if they invited their husbands to join their microfinance group. Neither of these studies document significant impacts of this type of intervention. In Tunisia,

however, take-up rates were high when women were offered the opportunity to bring their spouse along to a 1-day training on financial planning, savings, and debt management. The training was paired with a relatively large cash grant. In this context of extremely low female labor force participation, when men were included in the training, women were less likely to have an income-generating activity than those whose spouses were not engaged.¹⁶ These results suggest that there is a risk of capture of resources when inviting men to participate in training alongside their wives without any additional programming.

The other studies in this category are of engaging men interventions that aim to directly shift intrahousehold dynamics and address gender inequality within the household. Three of these studies examine the addition of an engaging men component on top of core programs that offer comprehensive economic support packages to women experiencing extreme poverty and insecurity. All of the three core programs have strong positive impacts on women's economic outcomes. Two of the programs test the addition of relatively light-touch engaging men interventions. The Burkina Faso TrickleUp Plus intervention evaluated the addition of 5 monthly in-home family coaching sessions about child protection, gender norms, family violence, and women's role in decision-making. Study results show that the addition of this family coaching component, on top of a comprehensive package of economic support, led to even stronger positive impacts on economic outcomes for participating women and their households than the economic support alone, although there was no impact on gender attitudes, women's decision-making authority over household resources, or rates of physical intimate partner violence.¹⁷ The Uganda WINGS+ study tested a program variant where female participants were asked to bring a household member to a 4-day business skills training, and the training was expanded to include one additional day on normative barriers to women's entrepreneurship, communication, and joint problem-solving. The addition of the engaging men component did not lead to more economic success for women or less intimate partner violence, but it did cause improvements in the quality of women's relationships with their partners.¹⁸ Finally, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, researchers tested the addition of a more intensive intervention. The Male Engagement Program (MEP) included 16-weekly discussion groups for male partners of women in the core program, facilitated by

trained male community leaders, as well as one two-hour couples dialogue session for couples identified as high-risk for disputes. The MEP program had no additional impact on any of the key outcomes.¹⁹

The final two programs in this category were intensive interventions designed primarily as intimate partner violence prevention programs. The programs were delivered to households who were participating in a village savings and loans program. The theories of change hypothesized that improvements in intrahousehold relationships and reductions in violence would allow women to benefit more from the economic inclusion program. The programs included 21-22 weekly facilitated dialogue sessions for couples, focusing on building relationship skills and transforming attitudes, norms and practices that contribute to intimate partner violence. They had opposite results on rates of intimate partner violence. Also, the more successful of the two programs had suggestive evidence of improvements in women's earnings and household economic status, while the other program had no impact on those outcomes.²⁰ The impact of these two programs on rates of intimate partner violence should be examined alongside evaluations of other prevention programs that are not included here because they do not measure economic outcomes. When interpreting the impact of these two programs on economic outcomes, it is important to remember that these were not the primary goals of the interventions.

Overall, available evidence is mixed on the impact of engaging men in programs that provide support to women's individual economic activities. The results suggest that interventions designed to increase transparency within the household or men's access to information about women's opportunities and/or their businesses are not promising. These studies highlight the risk that this type of intervention could result in a reduction in women's autonomy. There are encouraging results from the study of an intervention that sought to shift perceived norms among men about the acceptability of women's work. Additional research is needed to examine whether a similar intervention would have equally positive impacts in a context of higher levels of women's labor force participation. There are inconclusive results from studies that test interventions that directly address gender inequality in the household through coaching, training, or discussion groups.

Two of these five programs had a positive impact on women's economic outcomes and two had a positive impact on intrahousehold dynamics. More intensive versions of these types of engaging men programs do not produce more reliably positive results. Priority should be given to additional research to test potentially promising light-touch interventions that engage men and address gender inequality within the household on top of comprehensive packages of economic support.



TABLE 1. IMPACT OF ENGAGING MEN INTERVENTIONS INCORPORATED INTO SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Country	Intervention	Women's economic outcomes	Intrahousehold dynamics	Psycho-social outcomes	Intimate partner violence
India ²¹	Short video promoting women's employment shown to women's families	(+) in short-term; no impact in long term	+	No impact	X
India ²²	Discussion sessions for working women and family about benefits/ challenges women face when working	No impact	No impact	X	X
India ²³	Information about women's job opportunity given to male household members	No impact	X	X	X
India ²⁴	Conversation between spouses about job opportunity for the wife	-	X	X	X
Saudi Arabia ²⁵	Information provided to correct men's beliefs about social acceptability of women's labor force participation	+	X	+	X
Vietnam ²⁶	Husbands invited to gender-sensitive entrepreneurship training for women	No impact	No impact	No impact	No impact
Mexico ²⁷	Husbands invited to attend women-only microfinance borrowing group	No impact	X	X	X
Tunisia ²⁸	Husbands invited to 1-day training on financial management for entrepreneurship	-	No impact	No impact	X
Burkina Faso ²⁹	5 monthly in-home family coaching sessions (3-4 hours in total)	+	No impact	No impact	No impact
Uganda ³⁰	Household member invited to women's 4-day business skills training, plus 1-day training on gender norms and communication	No impact	+	No impact	No impact
Democratic Republic of Congo ³¹	16 weekly discussion groups on gender issues for male partners	No impact	No impact	No impact	No impact
Rwanda ³²	21 weekly facilitated dialogue sessions for couples to shift gender norms and prevent IPV	+	+	+	+
Rwanda ³³	22 weekly facilitated dialogue sessions for couples to shift gender norms and prevent IPV	No impact	No impact	+	-

Negative Impact

Positive Impact

X = Outcome was not measured



Support for household consumption/production

Studies in several countries, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa, have tested workshops for couples designed to increase joint planning and economic cooperation. These are offered as a complement to programs that aim to improve the economic status of the whole household, such as assistance provided through agricultural extension or producer associations. All of these programs provide support to rural agricultural households. In addition, some ongoing studies test the addition of similar engaging men programs as a complement to social protection assistance, although those are not included in this review because results are not yet available. Rather than seeking to increase support for women's individual economic activities, the add-on interventions in this category generally encourage cooperative management of household resources so that men and women may contribute and benefit equally. Furthermore, these programs are distinct from the interventions in the previous category because instead of adding men to interventions that primarily target women, they are more about engaging men to include women in spaces and conversations previously dominated by men. The impacts found in these studies are summarized in Table 2.

The Cote d'Ivoire PSAC program offered support to smallholder rubber producers. To address gender inequality in the household, the program tested the inclusion of women and men together in a 3-day agricultural training (which was otherwise attended only by men), plus the development of joint household action plans. The intervention resulted in women playing a greater role in the management of rubber production, greater agricultural labor supply from both men and women in the household, greater use of other agricultural inputs, and overall higher levels of production. The results suggest that the intervention improved communication and cooperative management within the household, and this had positive impact on measures of household economic well-being. There is no evidence, however, that the intervention changed gender dynamics within the household or improved women's individual economic empowerment.³⁴

The Tanzania and Uganda interventions for households participating in coffee producer organizations included both light-touch and more intensive interventions. The

light-touch intervention consisted of a half-day workshop for couples who were guided through activities to examine the division of roles, responsibilities, decision-making authority, and access to resources within their households. The more intensive intervention built on the half-day workshop and included an additional one-day workshop on inclusive intrahousehold planning and the creation of a joint plan, a private household visit from a gender officer who offered family coaching, a leadership training for women, and small group reflection workshops. In both countries, the light-touch couples seminars led to women's greater involvement in decisions regarding farm management. The addition of intensive coaching led only to a marginally significant improvement in women's shared access to household income from coffee in Uganda. In Tanzania, this improvement was significant and was accompanied by greater reported transparency regarding coffee income. In both countries, the interventions failed to increase women's personal income or assets.³⁵



The Bangladesh ANGeL study evaluated the most intensive intervention in this category. The study examined whether there were additional impacts on women's empowerment of adding 8 gender sensitization training sessions for couples in addition to 36 sessions for those couples on agriculture and nutrition. The study found strong impacts of the agriculture and nutrition training on women's empowerment both with and without the gender sensitization training. The additional

gender-focused workshops had no marginal impact on any of the main outcomes.³⁶ The study authors hypothesize, but cannot test, that the positive impact of all the treatment arms stems from the inclusion of men and women together in training activities. Their hypothesis is supported by accompanying qualitative research, which indicated that joint training facilitated greater joint decision-making. This hypothesis is likewise supported by a study in Uganda of information communications technology (ICT) tools for agricultural extension, which found that including women as information recipients in agricultural extension increased women's role in decision-making for agricultural production.³⁷

Collectively, these studies suggest that complementing agricultural extension with workshops that encourage reflection on the division of roles and responsibilities within the household and/or encourage more cooperative planning and management can increase women's participation in decision-making and farm management. So far, the results do not suggest that this type of intervention is likely to strongly increase women's personal control over income. Additional research is needed to compare the impact on joint decision-making of engaging men and women together in add-on gender sensitization workshops versus simply engaging couples jointly in agricultural extension and other types of program outreach.

TABLE 2. IMPACT OF ENGAGING MEN INTERVENTIONS INCORPORATED INTO SUPPORT FOR HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION AND/OR CONSUMPTION

Country	Intervention	Women's economic outcomes	Intrahousehold dynamics	Psycho-social outcomes	Intimate partner violence
Côte d'Ivoire ³⁸	Participation of couples in 3-day agricultural training plus development of joint household action plans	+	No impact	No impact	X
Tanzania ³⁹	Half-day gender awareness raising couples' seminars	No impact	+	X	X
Tanzania ⁴⁰	Half-day couples' seminars + 1-day workshop on joint planning + household visit + women's leadership training + small group workshop	No impact	+	X	X
Uganda ⁴¹	Half-day gender awareness raising couples' seminars	No impact	+	X	X
Uganda ⁴²	Half-day couples' seminars + 1-day workshop on joint planning + household visit + women's leadership training + small group workshop	No impact	No impact	X	X
Bangladesh ⁴³	8 gender sensitization training sessions for couples	No impact	No impact	No impact	No impact

Negative Impact

Positive Impact

X = Outcome was not measured



Promotion of women's asset ownership

Engaging men interventions in this category test various ways of encouraging men to recognize or enhance their wives' rights to ownership of important assets. So far, available evidence on this type of intervention comes from two studies in Uganda, although more studies are ongoing (see Table 3).

The Uganda Farm Family Balance project sought to increase women's control over important assets by encouraging households to register a sugarcane outgrower contract in the wife's name, essentially giving the wife control over the inputs and earnings from that sugarcane contract. The project conducted household visits and offered small gifts as incentives to register a contract in the name of the wife. In addition to the invitation and small nudges, they tested the impact of a 3-day participatory couples workshop focused on equitable management of household resources. Encouraging households to register a contract in the name of the wife led to improvements in women's economic outcomes and participation in decision-making.⁴⁴ The participatory workshop improved psychosocial outcomes, notably self-esteem and self-confidence in interpersonal interactions. When conducted before the offer for a sugarcane contract, the workshop also increased the proportion of households who opted to register the contract in the

name of the wife, although this effect was insufficient to lead to additional improvements in women's economic outcomes.⁴⁵

A land formalization program in Uganda tested the impact of three programmatic variants to increase the inclusion of women's names on land titles: ensuring the presence of both spouses at the time of the title offer, financial incentives, and a short video clip providing information on the benefits of joint land titling. In the short term, all three program adaptations led to substantial increases in the take-up of joint titles and thereby an increase in women's asset ownership.⁴⁶ Longer-term follow-up surveys will determine whether these effects translate into additional advances in women's economic empowerment.

Overall, these studies suggest that encouragement through the provision of nudges, information, financial incentives, or participatory workshops can improve women's documented asset ownership. The direct impact of these interventions on ownership of targeted assets is very large. Future research will examine whether those changes in asset ownership lead to additional positive impacts on women's economic status or agency. Equally, it is important that these types of interventions be tested in other contexts, including contexts with varying pre-existing normative support for women's control over assets.

TABLE 3. IMPACT OF ENGAGING MEN TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S ASSET OWNERSHIP

Country	Intervention	Women's economic outcomes	Intrahousehold dynamics	Psycho-social outcomes	Intimate partner violence
Uganda ⁴⁷	Household visits to encourage registration of agricultural contract in wife's name	+	+	No impact	X
Uganda ⁴⁸	Household visits to encourage registration of contract in wife's name + 3-day couples' workshop about household resource management	+	+	+	X
Uganda ⁴⁹	Three programmatic variants to increase the inclusion of women's names on land titles	+	X	X	X

Negative Impact

Positive Impact

X = Outcome was not measured

CONCLUSIONS

This brief sets out to review rigorous evidence on the impacts of programs engaging men and couples on women's economic empowerment. Because of the emphasis on economic empowerment, to be included, studies had to contain some measure of women's labor market outcomes. However, in most cases, the scope of these studies is broader than just labor market outcomes, allowing us to also summarize impacts on intrahousehold dynamics, women's psychosocial outcomes, and intimate partner violence. Reviews of engaging men interventions that focus on other outcomes are listed in the box on page 4. There are several important take-aways from this overview.

First, this is a nascent field of research and there is much more work to be done to identify promising ways of engaging men to promote women's economic empowerment. Thus far, the bulk of the research has focused on the effectiveness of adding engaging men components to programs that offer support to women's individual economic activities. There have been fewer evaluations of engaging men interventions in the context of other types of economic support, such as asset transfer, household production and consumption, or social protection programs. In addition, there is little research isolating the effects of engaging men other than male spouses. More research is needed on programs that engage fathers, brothers, and male peers of adolescent girls to support their human capital accumulation and life course trajectories that lead toward economic empowerment. Also, adding community-level engaging men interventions to encourage support for women's economic activities should be tested as a potentially more cost-effective option than household-level approaches.

In a newer line of inquiry, greater attention must be devoted to reallocating and reducing the burden of domestic and care work in ways that expand women's economic opportunities. Studies of gender transformative programs have demonstrated that it is possible to increase the amount of time that men spend on domestic work, although the interventions did not result in a reduction in women's time devoted to those tasks.⁵⁰ More research is needed in these areas and several ongoing studies conducted by the Africa Gender Innovation Lab will contribute to filling these evidence gaps.

Second, more intensive interventions are not necessarily more successful than light-touch ones. Some of the less costly interventions led to measurable improvements

in women's economic outcomes. These successful interventions include small incentives and encouragement to transfer an important asset to the wife's name in Uganda or providing information on the higher-than-expected level of support for women's labor market participation in Saudi Arabia. Importantly, there is substantial variation in the design of the successful light-touch interventions, suggesting the need to appropriately tailor the intervention to the context. Relatedly, there is variation in the degree to which the interventions explicitly attempt to shift expectations about the roles and responsibilities of men and women. Successful interventions do not systematically take that type of 'gender transformative' approach, which generally requires skilled facilitation.

Finally, about half of the engaging men interventions led to improvements in women's economic outcomes and/or intrahousehold dynamics, such as women's decision-making authority. With this type of mixed record, it is clear that these interventions do not offer guaranteed success, but they are worthy of additional adaptation and research. As suggested by the negative impacts documented by some studies, those adaptations of engaging men interventions must be careful not to undermine women's agency or decision-making autonomy.

This evidence overview has identified several priority areas for future research. First, given that they can be effective, and for reasons related to cost and scalability, it is a priority to test the addition of light-touch engaging men interventions to programs that provide economic support to individual women or their households. Light-touch interventions are unlikely to dramatically alter gender roles and responsibilities, so they must be designed to encourage behaviors that do not directly contravene existing norms yet still strengthen women's economic empowerment. Second, the research on engaging men in programs that support household production or consumption suggests that engaging couples together in the core programming may effectively promote women's empowerment within the household. This finding is echoed in other research that tests the inclusion of both men and women in agricultural extension.⁵¹ Research is needed to compare these simple programmatic adaptations versus the inclusion of add-on engaging men interventions. Last, studies from Uganda indicate that with some encouragement, men are willing to act to increase their wives' asset ownership. Additional research must test both whether and how these interventions work in other contexts, as well as whether the immediate impact leads to further improvements in both women's economic status and agency.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See, e.g.: Kerr-Wilson, A.; Gibbs, A.; McAslan Fraser E.; Ramsoomar, L.; Parke, A.; Khuwaja, HMA.; and Rachel Jewkes 2020. "A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls." *What Works to prevent violence among women and girls global Programme*, Pretoria, South Africa.; Barker, G., C. Ricardo, M. Nascimento, A. Olukoya, and C. Santos. 2010. "Questioning gender norms with men to improve health outcomes: Evidence of impact." *Global Public Health*, 5(5):539-553.
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GENDER INNOVATION LAB

The Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) conducts impact evaluations of development interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa, seeking to generate evidence on how to close gender gaps in earnings, productivity, assets, and agency. The GIL team is currently working on over 80 impact evaluations in more than 30 countries with the aim of building an evidence base with lessons for the region.

The impact objective of GIL is increasing take-up of effective policies by governments, development organizations, and the private sector to address the underlying causes of gender inequality in Africa, particularly in terms of women's economic and social empowerment. The Lab aims to do this by producing and delivering a new body of evidence and developing a compelling narrative, geared towards policymakers, on what works and what does not work in promoting gender equality.

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