



# Household gender roles: rethinking what works in preventing intimate partner violence

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# Overview

- Growing consensus around addressing core drivers of VAW, less agreement re: what works
- Aims of presentation:
  - Discuss how *SASA!* reduced IPV risk in Kampala, Uganda
  - Share learnings from *SASA!*'s initial focus on promoting more balanced household roles (and an alternative strategy)
- Analysis ongoing, draws heavily on program-based learning; informed by quantitative & qualitative findings from *SASA!* RCT (led by LSHTM)



# What works to prevent VAW?

- Currently *lots* of effort to answer this question
- *SASA!* RCT in Kampala found *community-level* impacts on:
  - **Attitudes: less acceptance of IPV in various situations**
  - **Behaviors:**
    - 52% ↓ in physical IPV, all women (*\*not statistically significant*)
    - 54% ↓ in physical IPV, women with history of IPV (*\*statistically significant*)
    - 42% ↓ in sexual concurrency among men (*\*statistically significant*)
- Other studies have shown similar results – growing our confidence that *VAW is preventable* (e.g., SHARE – Uganda; IMAGE – South Africa; Tostan – Senegal)

# SASA!'s approach

- Community mobilization approach; 3 critical components:
  - Process (community led, phased approach)
  - Reach (multiple strategies for intense, repeated exposure)
  - Content (language of power; benefits based)
- Developed by Raising Voices and implemented in Kampala, Uganda by the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP)
- Comprehensive monitoring & feedback strategy



# SASA!'s core levers of change (to reduce IPV)

- Evaluation revealed pathways across social ecology:
- *Community level:*
  - ↓ acceptability of violence (strongest mediator)
- *Relationship level:*
  - ↓ suspicion (by men about their wives)
  - ↑ communication
  - ↑ joint decision-making/collaboration
- *Individual level:*
  - ↑ conflict mediation skills
  - ↓ acceptability of violence (men's attitudes stronger mediator)
- Suggests some softening of gender roles but no overt rejection of gendered division of labor in the household

*\*Mediation analysis: Abramsky et al forthcoming; Qualitative pathways of change analysis: Kyegombe et al 2014, Starmann 2015*

# How did *SASA!* achieve this?

- Context in Kampala – strong norms dictating acceptable/expected behaviors for W & M in marriage
- Initially *SASA!* attempted to directly challenge this normative structure (*promoting equality in the HH*)

Approach didn't work for 3 main reasons:

1. Triggered resistance
2. Increased tensions/adversarial relationships at home
3. Hijacked deeper conversations and unpacking of power



# Triggering resistance

- Shared HH roles considered against “tradition” and felt imposed from the outside. Both men *and* women resisted:
  - Women: Will I become value-less? Will he leave?
  - Men: Will my wife look for someone else to provide? What will neighbors think/say: Witchcraft? Not man enough (*sekkibote*)?
- Ignored deeper emotional needs that many women perceived as more pressing (e.g., feeling valued and respected)

*In Buganda culture work is divided into two, there are things done by men and those done by women ... so we were fighting with culture and remember that these beliefs have been put in people's minds right from childhood.... They told us that we were bringing things which would result into family breakdown. (Male community activist)*

# Increasing tensions within the household

- Instigating adversarial dynamics (tit-for-tat mentality); competition rather than collaboration.
- Logistical challenges
- Led to demand (from some men) for women to contribute financially to the HH

*... I used to see some men who would come out and boast saying, 'Look, my relationship is okay because I help out'—and so men felt like now they are role modeling [good behavior], much as there were other things their wives were still uncomfortable with. And even then, men's support was very conditional—'if I wash the dishes, she must pay half of the school fees.' It was like a give and take thing...' (CEDOVIP staff)*



# Limiting deeper analysis of power

- Hijacked conversations; prevented a deeper unpacking of power as people became stuck in tense conversations about dishes, etc.
- Didn't necessarily balance power (women's work valued less than men's); men's involvement considered "helping"/ act of benevolence (could exonerate other behaviors or justify expectations).

*The thing with discussing household gender roles ... at some point we realized that we were missing out on the content of power, because the conversations were getting so petty. It was about, 'you sweep, I clean.' And the issue of control and power was getting lost ... (CEDOVIP staff)*

# SASA!'s response: core relationship values

- Monitoring and frequent observation/feedback led to new focus: *core relationship values*: love, respect, trust, shared decision making, and safety
- Over time, experienced positive response:
  - Minimized resistance (compared to discussing gender roles)
  - Led to more ownership, conviction and credibility among CAs (more able to personalize values and apply in their own lives)
  - Opened space for broader discussions about power (beyond shared housework—e.g., respecting partner's work, communicating honestly; collaborating to pursue joint-aspirations, etc)
  - Created a positive vision for change, reinforced as couples experienced tangible benefits in their own relationships

# Evidence of effectiveness?

- Evaluation indicates *SASA!* improved relationship dynamics in fundamental ways; couples in *SASA!* communities statistically significantly more likely to have:
  - discussed “worries” with their partners
  - discussed what both enjoyed during sex
  - appreciated partners work around the house
  - Engaged in joint-decision making
- Similar trends observed in qualitative findings: *SASA!* improved trust, collaboration and communication

*She listens to me, and I also listen to her... The communication is also good, she can tell me that this is not good and I also tell her that I have not liked this. You solve the issue peacefully, without a tug of war.*

(Male community member)

# Re-thinking household gender roles

- In KLA, promoting more equal HH roles was not effective as an entry point. However some softening/blurring of normative expectations *did* occur in *SASA!* communities as couples experimented with ways to demonstrate their core relationship values. But:
  - Emerged organically
  - Motivation: genuine desire to support one another and strengthen the partnership
  - Promoted a feeling of collaboration (rather than competition)

*... where people can understand each other, where there is respect, love and joint decision making, then the gender roles will automatically be addressed. (CEDOVIP staff)*

# Emerging implications...

- *SASA!* effectively reduced IPV and acceptability of violence, without fundamentally dismantling household gender roles. Experience demonstrates the salience of core relationship values within violence prevention efforts
- Implications for programmers?
  - Find an entry point that connects and inspires
  - Re-orient programming towards “softer”/ messier relationship qualities like love, trust, and respect
  - Listen & be flexible!
- For researchers?
  - Innovate with methods: Experiment with indicators of relationship dynamics (love, intimacy, emotional attunement, collaboration, etc.)

*~Invitation to embrace this domain of core relationship values/emotional needs in our work to change gender norms and prevent IPV.*



Thank you!  
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