

What the I-VAWA Will Do: Address Violence Against Women and Girls by Increasing Women’s Economic and Educational Opportunities

One of the greatest barriers to women’s economic advancement and the success of broader poverty reduction efforts is the violence that women face routinely. Not only does such violence impede women’s ability to live full and productive lives, it also hampers their contributions to family, society and economic development. Violence prevents women from going to work, engaging in their communities, and accessing educational opportunities to create better lives for themselves and their children.

The I-VAWA focuses on preventing violence against women and girls and reducing women’s vulnerability to violence by improving women and girls’ economic status, economic security, and educational opportunity. Programs will increase women’s access to skills and job training, help start and grow businesses, and work with women to gain housing and property rights. Programs will also target efforts to improve educational opportunities for women and girls by providing resources to address violence against women and girls in school settings and by ensuring the safety of girls on school grounds and during commutes to school.

Key Statistics

- Asset control can give women greater bargaining power within households and help protect against the risk of domestic violence. Research conducted in Kerala, India by the International Center for Research on Women found that, of 502 women interviewed, only seven percent of women who owned both land and house reported experiencing physical violence, compared to seven times that (49 percent) of women with no property.ⁱ
- In Managua, Nicaragua, women who reported abuse earned 46 percent less than women who did not, after taking into account other factors that could affect earnings.ⁱⁱ
- In a study of sexual violence in Botswana’s schools, 560 students were surveyed and 67 percent of the girls reported sexual harassment by teachers.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Recent studies in Africa report that between 16 and 47% of girls in primary or secondary school report sexual abuse or harassment by male teachers or classmates.^{iv}

Model Programs

Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equality (IMAGE) Study – South Africa

The Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equality (IMAGE) study in South Africa demonstrated the connection between microfinance programs and a substantial reduction in intimate partner violence (IPV) against women. A South African NGO, the Small Enterprises Foundation (SEF), implemented the microfinance portion of the IMAGE study using their pre-existing loan criteria, but added an educational component that built HIV awareness and interpersonal skills.^v Two years after joining the program, female participants’ risk of physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner was reduced by 55 percent, relative to a matched control group who did not participate in the intervention.^{vi} Women participating in the IMAGE intervention reported greater household communication and collective action, mobilizing their villages around a range of issues, including violence and HIV. There is evidence to suggest that these benefits also reached young people in their households, resulting in greater openness and communication around HIV.^{vii} In addition, the loan repayment rate for the microfinance program was 99.7 percent.^{viii} From these findings, it is clear that addressing poverty and gender inequality may reduce intimate partner violence.^{ix}

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) Findings – South Asia

Studies conducted by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), found that increased levels of property ownership by women were correlated with substantially lower risks of domestic abuse and violence. The ICRW studies report that up to 85 percent of women felt that property ownership increased their status within their family.^x Furthermore, the ICRW studies found that property ownership among women empowered a larger number of women to negotiate or leave abusive marriages.^{xi} In one case study, it was found that 51 percent of propertied women were able to leave a violent home and never return, while only six percent of non-propertied women were able to leave a violent home and never return.^{xii}

Participants' responses also showed an increased feeling of self-determination and confidence associated with property ownership.^{xiii} Similarly, other participants reported that property might allow women to better support themselves and their children in times of crisis.^{xiv} Additionally, the ICRW studies found that propertied women were less likely to tolerate violence from their husbands if he were to become violent.^{xv}

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Safe Schools Program – Malawi and Ghana

USAID currently supports a Safe Schools Pilot Program that has been implemented in 60 communities in both Ghana and Malawi. This program educates and trains schools and communities on the topics of school-violence prevention and classroom power dynamics. The program also provides instruction for administering psychosocial support for victims of violence.^{xvi} The Safe Schools Program addresses violence against women and girls by including both female and male students, teachers, administrators, and community members.^{xvii}

In Malawi and Ghana combined, approximately 30,000 students, 800 teachers, and 240 community counselors have been trained through the Safe Schools Program. After only one month of the program in Ghana, the percentage of students who believe they have the right to say "no" to unwanted touching increased from 66 percent to 72 percent. Similarly, the percentage of students who reported being the victim of violence or abuse at or on the way to school decreased from 43 percent to 39 percent in just the first month of the program. Both Ghana's and Malawi's Ministries of Education have agreed to revise their Teacher's Code of Conduct to address school-related gender-based violence. The Government of Malawi currently wishes to scale up the program and possibly include the Safe Schools Life Skills and Training manuals in teacher training colleges for pre-service training.^{xviii}

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- ^{vi} JC Kim, C Watts, JR Hargreaves, LX Ndhlovu, Phetla G, LA Morison, J Busza, JDH Porter, PM Pronyk, *Understanding the impact of a microfinance-based intervention on women's empowerment and the reduction of intimate partner violence in the IMAGE Study, South Africa* (American Journal of Public Health, 2007) 2.
- ^{vii} Pronyk, Paul M., James R. Hargreaves, Julia C. Kim, et al. Effect of a structural intervention for the prevention of intimate partner violence and HIV in rural South Africa: results of a cluster randomized trial. Acornhoek, South Africa: Rural AIDS & Development Action Research Programme (RADAR), School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand. *The Lancet*, Vol. 368, 1973-1983, 2006. Published online 30 November 2006.
- ^{viii} James R Hargreaves, Julia C Kim, Mzamani Benjamin Makhubele, Godfrey Phetla, Linda A Morison, John D H Porter, Charlotte Watts, Paul Pronyk, *The intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity Study (IMAGE Study): an integrated community-randomised trial of a structural intervention to prevent HIV and gender-based violence in South Africa* (The Lancet Protocol Reviews, 2004) 6.
- ^{ix} JC Kim, C Watts, JR Hargreaves, LX Ndhlovu, Phetla G, LA Morison, J Busza, JDH Porter, PM Pronyk, *Understanding the impact of a microfinance-based intervention on women's empowerment and the reduction of intimate partner violence in the IMAGE Study, South Africa* (American Journal of Public Health, 2007) 3.
- ^x International Center for Research on Women, *Property Ownership and Inheritance Rights of Women for Social Protection – The South Asian Experience* (International Center for Research on Women, 2006) 59
- ^{xi} International Center for Research on Women, *Property Ownership and Inheritance Rights of Women for Social Protection – The South Asian Experience* (International Center for Research on Women, 2006) 62.
- ^{xii} International Center for Research on Women, *Property Ownership and Inheritance Rights of Women for Social Protection – The South Asian Experience* (International Center for Research on Women, 2006) 22.
- ^{xiii} International Center for Research on Women, *Property Ownership and Inheritance Rights of Women for Social Protection – The South Asian Experience* (International Center for Research on Women, 2006) 10.
- ^{xiv} International Center for Research on Women, *Property Ownership and Inheritance Rights of Women for Social Protection – The South Asian Experience* (International Center for Research on Women, 2006) 18-19.
- ^{xv} International Center for Research on Women, *Property Ownership and Inheritance Rights of Women for Social Protection – The South Asian Experience* (International Center for Research on Women, 2006) 21.
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- ^{xviii} Global AIDS Alliance, *Call to Action: Violence Free Zone: End School Related Violence, Prevent HIV/AIDS* (Global AIDS Alliance, Sept 2007) 11-12