Domestic Violence and Women’s Economic Empowerment: Lessons Learned from Studies that Analyze the Relationship

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THE CORNELL CENTER FOR WOMEN AND JUSTICE
ORRICK, HERRINGTON & SUTCLIFFE LLP
SENeca WOMEN
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Executive Summary

Women are a vital force in world development—and a necessary one if communities and countries are to progress socially and economically. Nevertheless, domestic violence (DV) continues to impede women’s social, political and economic advancement and violates their human rights.

This report poses the question: Is there a relationship between domestic violence and economic empowerment? Does moving women up the economic ladder lessen domestic violence or increase it? To find out, the authors analyzed research from around the world on the link between DV and economic empowerment programs that address four different factors: women’s ownership of property and land; women’s participation in microfinance programs; subsidies and conditional cash transfers to women; and women’s wage employment.

The answers are as varied as the factors. In some situations, economic empowerment may lessen domestic violence. In others, it may increase the likelihood of DV. And in a few situations there is no discernable impact. Whether there is an increase or decrease can depend on the specific cultural context, the country where the program takes place and the type of empowerment program utilized.

Nevertheless, because in many instances there is a relationship between domestic violence and economic empowerment, we believe that DV is one of the elements policymakers should take into account when designing women’s economic empowerment programs. Doing so could help lessen DV, or at least avoid unintentionally exacerbating the occurrence of DV.

With that in mind, this report offers considerations and lessons learned, a roadmap in effect, that looks at empowerment programs through the lens of a broader cultural framework, derived from reviewing over 50 studies.

LESSONS LEARNED

Following are the top-line lessons learned from analyzing numerous studies. Full recommendations follow at the end of the report.

Lesson 1: Remember That Culture Counts
Policymakers and program designers should strive to understand their participants’ culture and community, including experiences with domestic violence.

During the design phase of an economic empowerment program, designers should administer surveys and conduct baseline risk assessments to gauge the potential impact of the program on the occurrence of DV. Programs should include strategies to minimize the risk of domestic violence based on demographic, cultural and experiential profiles of program participants and their household members.

Lesson 2: Emphasize Gender Equality
Economic empowerment programs should help promote gender equality, human rights and nonviolent conflict resolution.

Violence against women is prevalent worldwide, and this may be particularly true in areas with traditional gender norms. But program designers and policymakers can help foster a culture of gender equality, human rights and nonviolent conflict resolution among program participants and their family members, especially by engaging the women’s partners as allies in preventing gender-based violence.

Lesson 3: Engage the Community
Economic empowerment programs should help promote a culture of nonviolence.

Economic empowerment programs should gain buy-in from key stakeholders such as community leaders, chiefs and elders. These stakeholders can help ensure that community reception is positive and defuse any disputes that arise throughout the program.

Lesson 4: Monitor—and Be Flexible
Program designers should track and study a program’s impact on domestic violence and make adjustments as needed.

Economic empowerment programs should monitor their effect on levels of DV and respond as necessary. If programs are either increasing or having no effect on the occurrence of DV, they should be reformulated to engage the community’s men or organizations and/or better meet the needs of households. Future research should monitor and evaluate the integration of economic empowerment programs and anti-domestic violence initiatives to understand good practices for program design and implementation.
I. Overview

Women are a vital force in community, country and world development. Increasingly, governments, multilateral organizations and civil society are recognizing that women’s empowerment and, in particular, economic empowerment, is critical not only for gender equality, but also for sustainable growth and social and economic progress around the world.

Nevertheless, domestic violence continues to impede women’s social, political and economic advancement, and violates their human right to live a life free from violence. Indeed, a survey of research studies from around the world shows that women’s economic empowerment and the occurrence of domestic violence can be intimately linked. Although providing economic opportunities to women is a critical element of driving gender equality and concurrent social and economic progress, these studies show that economic empowerment programs must be approached in a holistic manner and carefully framed and designed to take account of socio-cultural contexts. Doing so and providing appropriate wrap-around services and building supportive systems can lead to effective programs that increase women’s economic power and reduce the risk of domestic violence. As such, policymakers must consider myriad factors in designing holistic economic empowerment programs that economically empower women as well as safeguard them from any increased risk of domestic violence, while also tackling the root causes of gender inequality and violence against women.

This report is based on a review of selected studies and seeks to provide some recommendations on how women’s economic empowerment programs should be designed to have a positive impact on reducing the occurrence of domestic violence. In particular, this report uses insights from select research findings from across the world on how the occurrence of domestic violence is impacted by women’s ownership of property and land, and women’s participation in microfinance, subsidy and conditional cash transfer programs, or wage employment. The report is a collection of “lessons learned” and recommendations for policymakers and others involved in developing economic empowerment programs to take under consideration in order to design programs that are effective in enhancing women’s economic self-determination as well as reducing domestic violence.
II. Introduction

A. SCOPE AND AIM OF THE REPORT

This report seeks to provide “lessons learned” that can help to build effective women’s economic empowerment programs in the context of the global prevalence of domestic violence based on insights gained from studies that examine the impact of women’s economic empowerment on the occurrence of domestic violence. To achieve this goal, the report focuses on four forms of economic empowerment: property and land ownership; microfinance; asset transfers; and wage employment. For each form of economic empowerment, this report includes insights and recommendations based on academic studies studying the interplay between each type of economic empowerment program and domestic violence. This report only seeks to present insights on these four subject areas. Further studies into other forms of economic empowerment, such as direct selling, and their interplay with domestic violence would be useful in providing a complete landscape of the issue. Finally, this report also provides human rights-based recommendations on the issues that policymakers and program designers must consider in conceptualizing, designing and implementing economic empowerment programs to decrease domestic or intimate partner violence.

B. WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AS TRANSFORMATIVE FOR WOMEN AND SOCIETY

Women are increasingly understood as a growing, powerful and influential economic demographic. For countries, investing in women can lead to the “multiplier effect” of increased GDP, greater stability, lowered social ills like maternal mortality and increased social goods like child nutrition. For companies, investing in women leads to creating shared value and can mean tapping into new markets, fostering the talents of innovative employees and driving the top and bottom lines while contributing to the communities in which they work. For women, breaking barriers to economic participation allows them to live their lives fully and independently, with increased access to health care, education and social, political and economic advancement.

The international community has agreed that increasing women’s empowerment is necessary to promote all forms of development. To that end, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—a set of interdependent objectives agreed upon by U.N. member states in 2015—call on states to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, including by eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres. The SDGs further provide that states should undertake reforms to give women “equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.” Although failure to meet the goals of the SDGs does not result in formal sanctions for states, the SDGs’ goals, targets and indicators reflect states’ understanding that remedying discrimination against women in all its forms is necessary for a state’s and the world’s social and economic development.

Violence against women as an inhibitor of women’s economic empowerment

Despite the growing recognition of the “multiplier effect” of women’s participation in the economy, at present women are not reaching their economic potential because of a number of factors, including unequal responsibility for care work, lack of access to education and healthcare and subjugation to violence. More than one-third of women worldwide have experienced sexual and physical violence, most at the hands of an intimate partner such as a boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse, while many more have experienced other forms of violence, including psychological or emotional violence. Worldwide, almost half of all women victims of homicide are killed by intimate partners or family members. Even when countries adopt laws to address these forms of domestic or intimate partner violence, those laws are not adequately enforced or may not create the societal changes necessary to ensure an end to this violence.

According to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee), “gender-based violence against women is the fundamental social, political and economic mechanism by which the subordinate position of women with respect to men and their stereotyped roles are perpetuated.” Rashida Manjoo, the former U.N.
Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, further explains that women experience both interpersonal and structural/institutional violence simultaneously.\textsuperscript{11} Interpersonal violence refers to threats or abuse of a physical, psychological, sexual or economic nature.\textsuperscript{12} Structural or institutional violence refers to discrimination that “maintains a woman in a subordinate position, whether physical or ideological, to other people within her family, household or community.”\textsuperscript{13} Structural inequality can condition men to believe they have the right to physically assault a woman.\textsuperscript{14} Because intimate partner violence is often the result of an imbalance in power, particularly between men and women, and a desire for control, women’s unequal access to and control over resources can increase a woman’s vulnerability to violence and leave her unable to escape from violent conditions within her own home.\textsuperscript{15} This is why properly designed economic empowerment programs can be critical to empowering women socially and addressing domestic violence as well.

International human rights law and standards have also recognized a link between women’s economic situation and domestic or intimate partner violence.\textsuperscript{16} The Beijing Platform for Action, for instance, outlines that the “low social and economic status of women can be both a cause and a consequence of violence against women.”\textsuperscript{17} The CEDAW Committee has further recognized that “[l]ack of economic independence forces many women to stay in violent relationships,”\textsuperscript{18} while violence at home impairs women’s ability to contribute to family and public life, a matter of global concern and a violation of the human right to a “standard of living adequate for the health and well-being” of a woman and her family.\textsuperscript{19}

In addition to experiencing domestic violence at high rates, women are also disproportionately affected by poverty.\textsuperscript{20} Women are less likely to participate in the formal labor market and are more likely than men to do work without pay, while women’s entrepreneurship varies significantly across countries and contexts.\textsuperscript{21} As such, women in many parts of the world are economically dependent on their spouses or families.\textsuperscript{22} Women’s economic empowerment programs therefore have immense potential to shift power dynamics within homes and families in a way that can increase women’s autonomy and decision-making authority and decrease instances of violence in the long term. Although women’s economic empowerment programs may not typically be designed with the specific intention of addressing domestic or intimate partner violence, programs should be designed with cognizance of the link between domestic violence and women’s economic empowerment. This can be critical in avoiding any unintentional increase in domestic violence as a result of economic empowerment programs and may indeed have a wider beneficial effect on the women and communities these programs seek to empower.
III. Methodology

A. COLLECTION OF STUDIES

To identify the forms of economic empowerment that have been previously studied, the team first searched broadly for any studies, compilations of studies or grey literature that linked domestic violence and economic empowerment. From that initial broad search, the teams decided to focus on four main categories of economic empowerment: wage employment; microfinance; conditional cash or asset transfers/subsidies; and property/inheritance. It must be noted that this Roadmap is not a comprehensive survey of all possible economic empowerment studies and their interplay with domestic violence. Rather, it is a preliminary effort to understand how certain types of women’s economic empowerment programs can be structured and built to maximize positive impact on the occurrence of domestic violence. It is the recommendation of the researchers that further study be undertaken into other forms of economic empowerment, such as direct selling-based models of employment, and their interplay with domestic violence.

Next, the teams searched for studies in English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Russian and Spanish for each category that linked domestic violence and economic empowerment, relying on databases and library resources. The studies consulted are housed in the Cornell Center for Women and Justice’s Women and Justice Collection along with other gender justice-related legal resources. The teams found further studies from sources referenced in relevant studies. The teams used straightforward and idiomatic search terms—especially in languages other than English—to ensure that the search was as comprehensive as possible.

B. REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF STUDIES

The research team created a “literature review template” for researchers to input comparable information on each study collected in order to systematically analyze studies spanning different forms of economic empowerment. After the team completed a literature review template for each study or study compilation, the team eliminated general studies about women’s economic empowerment that did not examine the links between economic empowerment and domestic violence and studies that included child or familial abuse in the definition of domestic violence. The template allowed the team to categorize and compare the studies, or identify where comparison or grouping would not be possible.

C. LIMITATIONS OF THE REPORT

This report is limited in several respects. Most importantly, the report does not attempt to independently evaluate the methodological integrity of each of the studies surveyed. And, because of the studies’ differing methodologies—including differing definitions of domestic violence; widely varying sample sizes; differing program design; and differing use of controls for myriad factors influencing rates of domestic violence, including culture and variance of culture with geographic regions, socioeconomic level and pre-existing dynamics and rates of violence—it is difficult and undesirable to draw broad generalizations from the studies. Moreover, it must be noted that most of the studies cited in this report focus on physical or sexual forms of violence, to the exclusion of other forms of domestic or intimate partner violence such as emotional, economic or psychological abuse.

Some of the studies in this report are secondary research studies—such as a literature review or meta-analysis—which collate, summarize, and analyze existing research, while other studies attempt to conduct research without baseline assessments of the prevalence of domestic violence before the implementation of the women’s empowerment programs. Without baseline assessments, the research is not sufficiently able to distinguish between the existence of domestic violence before the introduction of an economic empowerment program and after commencement or conclusion of the program. Other studies draw on a very small sample size and thus may need to be replicated before fully adopting their conclusions. Furthermore, many of the studies, such as those conducted in India and Bangladesh, rely on data from a general health study with added violence modules, rather than a dedicated violence-specific study. These surveys may be susceptible to a greater risk of underreporting and therefore may result in an underestimation of the incidence of intimate partner violence against women. 23
Nevertheless, useful conclusions and lessons can still be drawn from the literature. Rather than draw broad generalizations, the research team aimed to identify types of economic empowerment that studies have deemed successful, or unsuccessful, at reducing intimate partner violence and examine why this is the case. From the insights gained from these studies, this report provides recommendations that policymakers and program creators should bear in mind when creating or evaluating programs to economically empower women in the prevailing global context of domestic violence.

### IV. Lessons Learned

#### A. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS TARGETING PROPERTY OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

Property ownership can empower women in dynamic and complementary ways. According to economics professors Bina Agarwal and Pradeep Panda, immovable property “provides a woman economic and physical security, enhances her self-esteem, and visibly signals the strength of her fall-back position and tangible exit option [from abusive relationships].”\(^{24}\) Noting the potential for property ownership to empower women, several studies from around the world, including India, China, Nicaragua, Tanzania and Sri Lanka, have analyzed the effect of property ownership—primarily ownership of land and/or a house—on the occurrence of domestic violence.

**Insights:**

Owning immovable property, such as land or a house can serve as a deterrent or as an exit option against domestic violence and can reduce women’s risk of both long-term and current physical, sexual or psychological violence.

“...women’s ownership of property increases a woman’s economic security, reduces her willingness to tolerate violence and by providing a credible exit option works towards deterring spousal violence.”\(^{25}\)

Collectively, “findings suggest that when women own land, they gain power within their relationships and are less likely to experience violence.”\(^{26}\)

**Recommendations:**

- House ownership can have a greater positive impact in reducing the occurrence of domestic violence than land ownership.\(^{27}\) Programs targeting property ownership should therefore consider prioritizing and devoting more resources to enhancing home ownership rather than land ownership.
• The involvement of women’s organizations in facilitating women’s land ownership through, for example, land-titling programs, may be especially important in the effectiveness of programs targeting property ownership and control. Programs targeting property ownership should therefore seek to engage local women’s organizations as program partners.

• Avenues for further research: Many of the studies did not discuss how to increase women’s ownership of property, instead focusing on linkages when women already owned or lost land or a home. In countries around the world, customary norms and inheritance laws impede women’s right to own property. These barriers in statutory and customary laws need to be addressed to ensure that women have equal access and rights to property, which can lead to a decreased risk of intimate partner violence.

B. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS BASED ON EXTENDING MICROCREDIT

Microfinance programs have been hailed as effective economic empowerment programs for women at the bottom of the pyramid. However, these programs must be properly structured and designed to have a positive impact on domestic violence, particularly because they are typically geared towards women who have few resources and are therefore especially vulnerable to violence.

Insights:

Women who have control over their microcredit or who take part in support groups may experience decreased rates of physical and sexual domestic violence. Microfinance can empower women to be independent, in the public sphere, and can protect women from domestic violence.

“Microfinance reduces women’s vulnerability to men’s violence overall by strengthening their economic roles and making their lives more public.”

Recommendations:

• Providing women with credit alone may be insufficient to improve their status in the household and society. It is therefore critical for programs that provide microcredit to provide other supportive services as well. One example may be to create peer support groups for women receiving microcredit to ensure a support system. In addition, initiatives to enhance women’s confidence in using credit and training on investment strategies may promote their control over microfinance resources and thus lead to a decrease in violence. Programs should seek to incorporate investment, technical and vocational training into microcredit programs to enhance women’s consciousness of gender and power relations and to give women the confidence to use credit efficiently without the help of their male spouses or other family members.

• Microcredit programs must study and understand the context of the domestic violence in the communities they seek to impact. Where violence is related to poverty, credit can play a mitigating role by improving a woman’s fall-back position as well as making women’s contributions to the household more visible.

• Where possible, microfinance programs should consider supporting changes in customary law, which in turn can reduce some of the risk factors for domestic violence.

• Programs should seek to engage and reward men to act as change agents to prevent domestic violence. For example, incorporating male-only workshops to help men understand that domestic violence is unacceptable and women’s entrepreneurial activities contribute to the family may be effective in engaging men and creating a supportive community.

• Programs should integrate strategies to address domestic violence at multiple levels in communities, including at a policy level, through local institutions and at the community level with key leaders and groups.
• Programs should integrate strategies to prevent violence against women and girls taking into account the particular social, cultural, political and legal context. Strategies may include, for example: supporting policy reform to support women’s economic rights; encouraging private sector initiatives to prevent violence against women; including and engaging women’s networks and associations; incorporating trainings on violence prevention and conflict resolution; creating grievance mechanisms for women beneficiaries of microcredit programs; training program staff on violence against women issues; providing safe avenues for transfer of payments such as options to be paid directly through bank deposits, and other such strategies.

C. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS BASED ON SUBSIDIES/CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFERS

Cash transfers can decrease conflicts within the family by bolstering the family’s economic resources, reducing conflicts over meeting daily food needs and increasing a sense of wellbeing and happiness. The financial security that cash transfers provide can also increase women’s confidence, authority and autonomy.\(^{38}\)

Insights:

Linking transfer of assets programs to complementary programs and services aimed at empowering women can create a positive impact on reducing domestic violence.

Peru’s *Juntos* program, which provides complementary services to support women receiving cash transfers, “brought about some changes in family dynamics, including improved bargaining power of women within the household due to less economic dependence and a reduction in familial violence, as well as greater involvement of some men in domestic activities and childcare, especially when women are occupied with the demands of the programme.”\(^{39}\) Interviewees “reported a reduction in domestic violence, related in part to less daily survival pressures and greater negotiation capacity and economic autonomy of women, but also due to specific interventions [outside the program] in the region.”\(^{40}\)

Cash “transfers in certain settings may work to equalize power dynamics in households with high levels of initial inequity.”\(^{41}\)

Recommendations:

• Programs that use cash transfers or subsidies to economically empower women should provide complementary programs and supportive services to create a positive impact on reducing violence.

• Cash transfer programs should consider framing and promoting the programs as an economic benefit for the entire family, rather than just the woman so as to engage the support of male spouses and family members.

• When cash transfer programs end, this can prompt the return of financial stress related to meeting the basic needs of the family as well as the conflict and violence this can engender. In order to prevent the loss of any positive impacts of cash transfers, programs should seek to become sustainable or provide some guidance for a path forward after the end of the program.

• Subsidies provided to abuse victims in particular must be carefully and thoughtfully designed to avoid creating opportunities for the abuser to exert control and further abuse the victims.

D. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS BASED ON WAGE EMPLOYMENT

Earning a wage can reduce the risk of domestic violence by increasing women’s economic and social power.\(^{42}\) However, wage employment programs must account for the shift in the power dynamics that occurs when a woman works outside the home or out-earns her male partner in order to prevent any increase in domestic
violence associated with the wage employment. Employment alone is not enough to combat domestic violence, and indeed, may even lead to increased violence if not accompanied by supportive services.

**Insights:**

Higher levels of education, employment for men, addressing pre-existing gender attitudes and closing the gender wage gap can mitigate the risk of increased domestic violence associated with wage employment for women.

**Recommendations:**

- As wage employment alone can sometimes lead to increases in the incidence of domestic violence, programs should seek to integrate supportive programs and services such as awareness campaigns and support for victims of domestic violence.

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**V. Conclusions**

From collating studies spanning the world, it is clear that issues of domestic violence and economic empowerment are intimately linked. Domestic violence is fundamentally based on unequal gender power dynamics, and economic empowerment programs can alter such dynamics at the household and community-wide level. The studies reviewed for this report show that economic empowerment programs must be carefully framed and designed such that they have a positive impact on reducing domestic violence. Whether economic empowerment programs are correlated with increased or decreased rates of domestic violence may be determined by the context in which these programs are implemented, and it appears that providing supportive services, such as cultural interventions and education for male partners may be critical in ensuring the success of economic empowerment programs and their ability to reduce the incidence of domestic violence. As such, policymakers must consider myriad factors in designing holistic economic empowerment programs that economically empower women and provide the support systems necessary to reduce domestic violence, while also tackling the root causes of gender inequality and violence against women.

Echoing themes of research summarized in this report, Hughes et al. has identified four key factors that influence the effects of economic empowerment programs on domestic violence.

- **Sociocultural contexts of households:** Sociocultural context is the level of community acceptance of the gender dynamics of patriarchy and domestic violence; the higher the level of acceptance the more likely an economic empowerment program may result in increased violence.

- **Characteristics of households:** Relevant household characteristics include the relative status of women and men in households in terms of power and resources, as demonstrated through decision-making, employment, income generation and education. If women have significantly less decision-making power than men prior to participation in an economic empowerment program, then such a program may be more likely to be correlated with increased domestic violence.
• **Characteristics of individuals:** On an individual level, characteristics of women—including nonindigenous cultural identity, higher age at marriage, previous cash-paying jobs, fewer children, strong social networks and control over earnings—tend to be correlated with lower incidence or risk of domestic violence for women participating in economic empowerment programs.\(^{50}\)

• **Particularities of economic empowerment programs themselves:** Finally, economic empowerment program characteristics are relevant, as some program strategies, such as domestic violence awareness raising and skills training, may have a protective effect for women, and long-term programs that address gender dynamics and violence against women may cause men to be more accepting of women’s increased market activity and independence.\(^{51}\)

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**VI. Recommendations for Policymakers and Program Designers**

The following recommendations are extrapolated from the studies reviewed for this report. The recommendations aim to guide policymakers and economic empowerment program makers when designing and implementing economic empowerment programs to prevent domestic violence and lessen the risk of increased domestic violence through their interventions.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Understand Program Participants’ Culture and Community, Including Previous Experience with Violence, and Design Interventions and Programs to Address Potential Concerns.**

The economic empowerment program design phase should include information gathering to inform program design and implementation. In particular, program designers should:

• **Administer surveys:** Confidential surveys with program participants, their partners and other household family members (if applicable) should seek to understand cultural norms, gender dynamics and decision-making in households, education, employment, social networks and other relevant demographic data.

• **Conduct baseline risk assessments:** Gather information from program participants, their families and their partners about pre-existing domestic violence prevalence in the household.\(^{52}\)

Confidential surveys and risk assessments should be administered in a culturally competent fashion, including with consideration of matching the gender of the program worker with the program participant or family member as appropriate. Surveys and risk assessments should also be completed and triangulated with existing data, if any, on domestic violence in the community to better understand the extent to which the program participant population is representative of the broader community and the broader cultural context of program participants and their household members.\(^{53}\)
Based upon baseline surveys and risk assessments, economic empowerment programs should be designed to include program strategies to minimize the risk of domestic violence based upon demographic, cultural and experiential profiles of program participants and their household members.  

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Use Economic Empowerment Programs to Establish and Formalize a Culture of Gender Equality, Human Rights and Nonviolent Conflict Resolution Among Program Participants and Their Families.**

Program designers and policymakers should establish and formalize a culture of gender equality, human rights and nonviolent conflict resolution among program participants and their family members, with the goal of helping this culture to become widespread and intergenerational. Violence against women is prevalent worldwide, and this may be particularly true in areas with traditional gender norms where some economic empowerment programs are likely to be implemented. With the goal of decreasing incidents of domestic violence, program designers should take the following steps:

- **Include both women and their partners as formal program participants:** In particular, men are key allies in preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Formalizing men’s participation in economic empowerment programs recognizes that, even though women may be the primary participants, male spouses are program partners and beneficiaries and, as such, are accountable for abiding by program principles and requirements, including gender equality and nonviolence in the household. Doing so also recognizes that women’s economic empowerment is critical not only for women, but for their families and communities as well.

- **Adopt program values that promote gender equality, human rights and nonviolence:** At the program implementation stage, principles of gender equality, human rights and nonviolent conflict resolution should be codified in a statement of values and communicated as a foundation of economic empowerment programs. Once introduced to the values of the program, women and their partners should sign an agreement formalizing their commitment to these values, to receiving education related to gender equality and nonviolent conflict resolution and to upholding and communicating these principles in their households and communities.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Engage and Educate the Community, Including Men, to Promote a Culture of Nonviolence.**

Communities must have a consciousness of domestic violence and unite to remove it from society to have a real impact on the prevalence of such violence. With this goal in mind, economic empowerment programs should be designed to:

- **Engage key stakeholders:** Economic empowerment programs should gain buy in from key stakeholders such as community leaders, chiefs and elders. These stakeholders, who help to define and shape community culture, can help to ensure that community reception of the economic empowerment program is positive. These stakeholders may also provide information to program makers on how the program is perceived in the community and may be able to defuse disputes that arise throughout the program.

- **Provide trainings to men and women about conflict resolution, gender equality, human rights and meeting basic needs:** Economic empowerment programs should provide women, their male spouses, key community leaders and diverse community representatives of all ages, male and female, with culturally competent education on traditional gender dynamics, domestic violence and the benefits of gender equality for relationships, families and social development. Such education should also include skills development for women and men in non-violent conflict resolution and dealing with incidences of domestic violence, including education on supportive community resources. Finally, these trainings may include specialized knowledge that men and women can bring to their households to help ease conflict resulting from the burden of meeting basic needs, such as education on clean water or nutrition.
• **Create and leverage community partnerships to support a culture of nonviolence:** Economic empowerment programs should be designed to leverage the capacity and resources of local community organizations that specialize in addressing violence against women. While these programs should seek to disrupt cycles of violence through education and transforming traditional gender dynamics, such programs must have the ability to also respond to and support women and men when they experience and/or perpetrate domestic violence, including with provision of safe spaces for victims and referrals to services for victims and perpetrators. To this end, economic empowerment programs and violence against women organizations should create formal partnerships so that staff can provide domestic violence awareness and mitigation training and resources to support domestic violence interventions. If possible, staff should co-locate or otherwise have a visible, physical presence as an integrated part of economic empowerment programs to promote access to resources for program participants, as well as open dialogue, collaboration and information sharing.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** Monitor and Study the Effects of Economic Empowerment Programs on Domestic Violence, and Make Adjustments as Needed.

• **Monitor and respond:** Programs should include a regularly scheduled contact point for program staff and program families to confidentially discuss incidents of domestic violence. Program staff can thereafter follow up with safety plans and domestic violence services referrals as necessary. If programs are increasing or having no effect on domestic violence, program designers and managers should reform those programs as described above to increase the participation and engagement of men and other key community stakeholders, engage with community organizations working on the issue of violence against women and/or better meet the needs of households.

• **Engage in future research:** Future research should monitor and evaluate the integration of economic empowerment programs and anti-domestic violence initiatives to understand good practices for program design and implementation, using the surveys and baseline risk assessments conducted at the beginning of economic empowerment programs.
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We are grateful to the researchers and authors whose insights we discuss in the report, and hope that this report may be helpful to the countless groups and individuals working to empower women and end domestic violence.
Endnotes


8 Id.

9 See Id.


16 More generally, women’s rights to economic resources and to be free from violence are recognized in various forms in several other international and regional human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (art. 7), the Protocol of the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) (arts. 3–4, 12–13), the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) (arts. 2, 4), and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belem do Para Convention) (arts. 3,6).

17 Beijing Platform for Action, para. 112.


23 In a 2001 study that compared two violence-specific surveys with a general health survey in Nicaragua, the authors concluded that women who were currently experiencing violence were less likely to report it in the general household survey: “Our findings indicate that the study of prevalence of violence [through generalized surveys] is highly sensitive to a number of methodological factors and that underreporting is a major threat to validity. Focused studies are more likely to yield more accurate prevalence estimates of violence than are surveys designed primarily for other purposes. The qualitative data suggest that the most important factors in influencing disclosure are adequate training and support of interviewers that include such safety measures as guaranteed privacy during interviews.” Mary Ellsberg et al., Researching Domestic Violence
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Microfinance and Domestic Violence: A Regression Discontinuity

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select English; search for “Grameen Bank”; follow "Norads
direkter gratulerer fredsprisvinnerne” hyperlink; follow "Last
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N. Kabeer’s 1998 study “Money Can’t Buy Me Love? Re-
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Akhter “Credit Programs, Patriarchy and Men’s Violence against
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Shana Hofstetter, The Interaction of Customary Law and
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Id.

38 D.O. Gillian et al., Expanding lessons from a randomised
impact evaluation of cash and food transfers in Ecuador and
Uganda, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (51)

39 Nicola Jones et al., CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFERS IN PERU: TACKLING

40 Id. at 11.

41 D.O. Gillian et al., supra note 39 at 8.

42 See e.g. Christine Hughes, Mara Bolis, Rebecca Fries &
Stephanie Finigan (Oxfam 2015); Women’s economic inequality
and domestic violence: exploring the links and empowering

43 See Christine Hughes, et al., Women’s economic inequality
and domestic violence: exploring the links and empowering
women, Gender & Development, Vol. 23, No. 2, 279, 283

44 See Id.

50 Id.

52 See id. at 289.

53 Oxfam and Value for Women have developed a toolkit that
provides guidance for economic empowerment programs on
local resource mapping, domestic violence risk assessment and
risk reduction planning. Id. at 290, citing Rebecca Fries and
Stephanie Finigan (2014), “Women’s economic leadership pin
LAC, book 3: prevent of violence against women in the context
of programmes” available at http://policy-
practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/womens-economic-
leadership-in-lac-book-3-prevention-of-violence-against-
women-i-344039.

54 See id.

55 See, e.g., Aminur Rahman, Women and microcredit in rural
Bangladesh: anthropological study of the rhetoric and realities
of Grameen Bank lending 120 (1999).

56 Alys M. Willman and Crystal Corman, Sexual and Gender-
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We Learned? A Strategic Review, Social Development, 39
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57 See Christine Hughes, et al., Women’s economic inequality
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58 See id.

59 Id. at 289.

60 See Id.
See id.

See id. at 290.