Working with communities to promote gender inequality and address Gender-based violence: Lessons from The IMAGE Programme

Julia Kim
Cluster Leader Universal Access and MDGs, UNDP

IOM Workshop
on Preventing Violence Against Women and Children
Jan 27-28th, 2011
Washington D.C.
Overview

1. The IMAGE Programme:
   • Using microfinance to address linkages between poverty, gender inequalities, GBV and HIV

2. Why tackle these together?
   • Programme impacts
   • The value of combining microfinance & gender/HIV training

3. Lessons & Implications for Programs/Policy
   • Scaling up, policy implications, sharing lessons
Microfinance, women’s empowerment and GBV: Important questions

- Does MF empower women?
  - “double burden”, no guarantee of control over loan use

- Can MF reduce risk of GBV?
  - Mixed findings in different settings

- Is MF alone enough?
  - Need for additional training inputs “MF-plus”?
  - Adding gender sensitization, involving broader community?

- Challenges to previous evaluations:
  - Lack of control groups
  - Cross-sectional, retrospective
The IMAGE Study: Addressing HIV & IPV by economically empowering women

Poverty & economic inequalities

Gender violence
HIV infection

Mobility and migration

Gender Inequalities

Small Enterprise Foundation

IMAGE

Sisters for Life Gender training
The IMAGE Intervention: Microfinance + Gender/HIV Training

- **Microfinance**: SEF - Groups of 5 women guarantee each others’ loans

- **Training**: 1-hr participatory session integrated into loan centre meetings every 2 weeks
  - Gender roles, domestic violence, sexuality
  - 6 month **structured** curriculum
  - 6 month **community mobilization** phase: Develop Village Action Plans around GBV and HIV
Evaluation: Cluster Randomized trial
( LSHTM, University of the Witwatersrand)

- 8 villages in rural Limpopo province (pop 64,000)
- Prospective
  - No previous microfinance or HIV/GBV interventions
- Villages pair-matched on size and accessibility
  - One from each pair receives the intervention
    - Control groups received the intervention at end of trial
    - Adjusted for baseline differences & village level clustering
- Within villages:
  - Intervention + matched control groups
    - Followed women participants (n=860)
    - 14-35 year old household members (n=1455)
    - 14-35 year olds selected at random in the wider community (n=2858)
- Followed 5000 individuals over 2-3 years
- Qualitative research: 3 full-time anthropologists
  - non-participant observation, interviews, focus groups
Impacts on economic well-being: Access to MF loans was important

- “Before SEF, when I had family problems I would go all over the village asking for help and be the laughing stock of the whole village. With SEF I am now able to support my family, and for me those are good changes.”

- “Since I joined SEF, life at home has changed....also with my neighbours, they are looking at me differently than before.”
Yet women’s empowerment: About more than money...

“matla a hlabulogo” = “the power to do better, “be enlightened”

“You can have money and still not be empowered”

“Empowerment is when you are able to use your mind and use your money well”
Empowerment: Collective as well as individual

“I do not think we would have made it working as individuals.”

“If one member has a problem, the sun will never go down without us knowing it”
Results: Impacts on Poverty & Women’s Empowerment
- Kim et al. AJPH 97 (10), Oct 2007

Poverty:
- High loan repayment (99%)
- Increased food security, expenditures, household assets

Women’s empowerment:
- Greater self confidence, autonomy, challenging gender norms, social capital, collective action:
  - 5 public marches
  - 40 village workshops
  - 16 meetings with local leaders
  - 2 new village committees target Crime and Rape
Intimate partner violence

- After 2 years, risk of physical & sexual intimate partner violence reduced by 55% (aRR 0.45 95% CI 0.23-0.91)

HIV Risk (Pronyk et al. AIDS 22, 2008)

Among young IMAGE participants (age<35):

- Increased communication about HIV: aRR=1.46 (1.01 – 2.12)
- Increased VCT: aRR=1.64 (1.06 – 2.56)
- Reduced unprotected sex aRR = 0.76 (0.60 – 0.96)
How was violence reduced?
Within own relationships...

- Shifts in attitudes towards violence

- Income earning status & negotiating power

- Confidence to leave abusive relationships

- Reduced conflicts over finances

- Better communication & conflict resolution

“Now that we have money we are able to say how we feel without fearing that your husband will stop supporting you.”

“You can buy him cigarettes from your profit. Because of SEF’s money we are experiencing fewer problems in our households.”
How was violence reduced?
Within loan centres...

- Speaking openly in centre meetings about abuse
- Confronting members who are contributing to other women’s abuse
- Solidarity and support when women leave violent relationships

“*We are able to overcome abuse when we are in SEF because we get support from the women in the groups. When you engage yourself with other women and listen to their problems that will help you to cope.*”
And intervening in communities...

- Intervening individually when witnessing abuse
- Approached by others for advice & help
- Sharing resources with abused women
- Engaging young men (men’s workshops)
- Raising community awareness
Question: Would microfinance *without* training have been as effective?

Study compared 3 groups:
- IMAGE
- Controls
- MF alone (without training)

- Cross-sectional analysis of data collected 2 years post-intervention
- Analyzed at cluster level (village as unit of analysis)
- Adjusted RRs (controlling for individual level measures of age, marital status, gender of household head, number of children, education)

(Kim et al, WHO Bulletin 2009)
Results: Microfinance alone...

- Only economic impacts
- Poverty
  - Household assets
  - Food security
- Empowerment
  - No impacts
- HIV Risk
  - No impacts
IMAGE: Evidence of synergy

**Multiple Impacts**

- **Poverty**
  - Household assets
  - Food security

- **Empowerment**
  - Self confidence
  - Autonomy
  - 50% reduction in IPV

- **HIV Risk**
  - Communication
  - VCT
  - Condom use

---

**Microfinance** + **Gender/HIV training**
IMAGE Expansion Phase

• Successful transition:
  – From research-focused pilot project to large-scale, sustainable intervention programme
  – Reached 12,000 women and benefited over 60,000 households in 160 villages

• Plans to develop IMAGE as best practice learning site:
  – Response to requests from MFIs and GBV/HIV NGOs to replicate model
  – Support South-South learning & exchange across different settings

• Building networks
  – Linking with programs working with men/boys (e.g. Sonke Gender Justice)

Pilot Study:
Additional cost = US $43/client

Scale-up:
Additional cost = US $13/client
Summary

1. Addressing complex issues such as poverty, gender inequalities & GBV possible in programmatic time frames

2. IMAGE feasible to deliver, can be successfully scaled up at reasonable additional cost

3. Consistent effects on poverty, women’s empowerment and rates of intimate partner violence

4. Strong evidence of shifts in HIV risk behaviour among younger ‘at-risk’ intervention participants

5. Study of “MF alone”: importance of gender/HIV training for broader health and empowerment benefits
   • Synergy = loans + challenging gender norms, community mobilization

6. Microfinance an entry point for addressing broader health and social issues
   • Need to explore other promising economic empowerment vehicles
Emerging lessons for prevention of GBV

- **Empowering women = working with communities**
  - Microfinance – importance of addressing basic needs through proven systems and networks
  - Entry point for sustained contact with gender/HIV intervention
  - Economic dimensions alone may not be enough: gender norms, social mobilization
  - Not a panacea - context matters!

- **How to work across sectors & disciplines**
  - Working outside comfort zones - host of new challenges
  - Pick strong partners – stick to what you know well....be careful changing target groups (e.g. SHAZ, TRY)

- **Can work ‘indirectly’ to affect most vulnerable groups:**
  - **Empowerment**: working across *generations*, challenging gender norms - older women as “cultural gatekeepers”; breaking inter-generational risk of IPV
  - **Poverty** - Worked to improve *household* economic well-being vs. giving loans directly to young women (vs. SHAZ, TRY)
  - **Men** – empowering *women* to find creative ways of *engaging with men* (Chiefs and local leaders, police, school principles)
Policy Implications:
Scaling up “principles” as well as programs

Microfinance is a “foothold”
but not the whole ladder...

Not just about scaling up programs
but impetus for wider policy change

At country level:
National AIDS plans,
Poverty reduction/development plans
• Rural economic development
• Girls’ education: school fees, school uniforms
• Domestic violence legislation
• Women’s property & inheritance rights
Acknowledgements

- Small Enterprise Foundation
- LSHTM
- School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand