



MAISHA – set to reduce violence against women in Tanzania

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What is the issue?

The association between intimate partner violence (IPV) and increased risk of HIV infection in women is now well established. In sub-Saharan Africa, gender inequalities and high rates of violence form a backdrop to the HIV epidemic. Entrenched gender inequalities, including economic vulnerability and dependence on men, increase women's vulnerability to HIV, for example by limiting their ability to negotiate use of condoms, to discuss fidelity with their partners, or to leave risky relationships.

At baseline, the MAISHA study confirmed that rates of IPV and other abuses (emotional abuse, economic abuse, and controlling behaviour by a partner) are high in Tanzania. At the start of the MAISHA study, almost a third of women taking part reported experiencing physical and/or sexual IPV in the previous year. Reports of other abuses were even higher, with 63% of women reporting controlling behaviour, 36% emotional abuse and 34% economic abuse by a partner in the previous year. These findings reinforce the urgent need for effective interventions to prevent IPV against women.

Summary

The MAISHA study has raised interest among communities in Mwanza, where the study was conducted, and more widely across Tanzania. Over the course of the study process, the MAISHA team from the Mwanza Intervention Trials Unit (MITU) and the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) have achieved three key aspects of impact:

1. A local non-governmental organisation (NGO) is working with the MAISHA team to roll out the intervention to the groups in the control arm, and is keen to adopt the programme in future.
2. At least three other NGOs/funders have requested programme materials with a view to implementing or adapting MAISHA more widely.
3. Members of the MAISHA team are co-leading a new national network of researchers investigating all forms of gender-based violence.

Intervention

Women in established microfinance loan groups participated in a 10-session empowerment programme over a 20-week period. Two trained female facilitators led the sessions following a curriculum entitled *Wanawake na Maisha* (meaning "women and life" in Kiswahili), which was developed by EngenderHealth in collaboration with the study team. Designed to be participatory and reflective, the process aims to empower women, prevent IPV and promote healthy intimate relationships, by:

- increasing knowledge and awareness (for example, of the consequences of normative attitudes to gender and IPV),
- developing relationship skills (for example, in communication and conflict resolution),
- empowering change (for example, to safely challenge violence and provide support to victims of violence in their communities), and
- improving group dynamics and stability (for example, through increased peer support and social capital).

What did the MAISHA study find?

Researchers used a randomised controlled trial study design to evaluate the MAISHA intervention, supported by longitudinal qualitative research. They found that:

- the MAISHA intervention is feasible to deliver and acceptable to women,
- over a two-year period, the intervention reduced the risk of physical and/or sexual IPV by a quarter among women who participated in the intervention compared with women who did not,
- the effect was strongest for physical IPV, which was reduced by one third,
- women in the intervention arm were less likely to report attitudes that are accepting and/or tolerant of IPV,
- women who participated in the MAISHA intervention revealed a positive response to the intervention and greater self-confidence in challenging gender norms of male authority.

Overall, the study concluded that IPV is preventable in settings such as Tanzania where IPV is a major problem. An intervention such as MAISHA has the potential to have a substantial impact within a manageable, programmatic timeframe. This has important implications for the HIV epidemic set against a backdrop of gender inequalities and high rates of violence.

Impact

Even before the findings have been published, the MAISHA study has achieved impact on both research into violence against women and action to reduce it. MAISHA presents an excellent example of addressing a significant structural driver of HIV at the same time as making progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Target 2 of Goal 5, to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and all forms of exploitation.

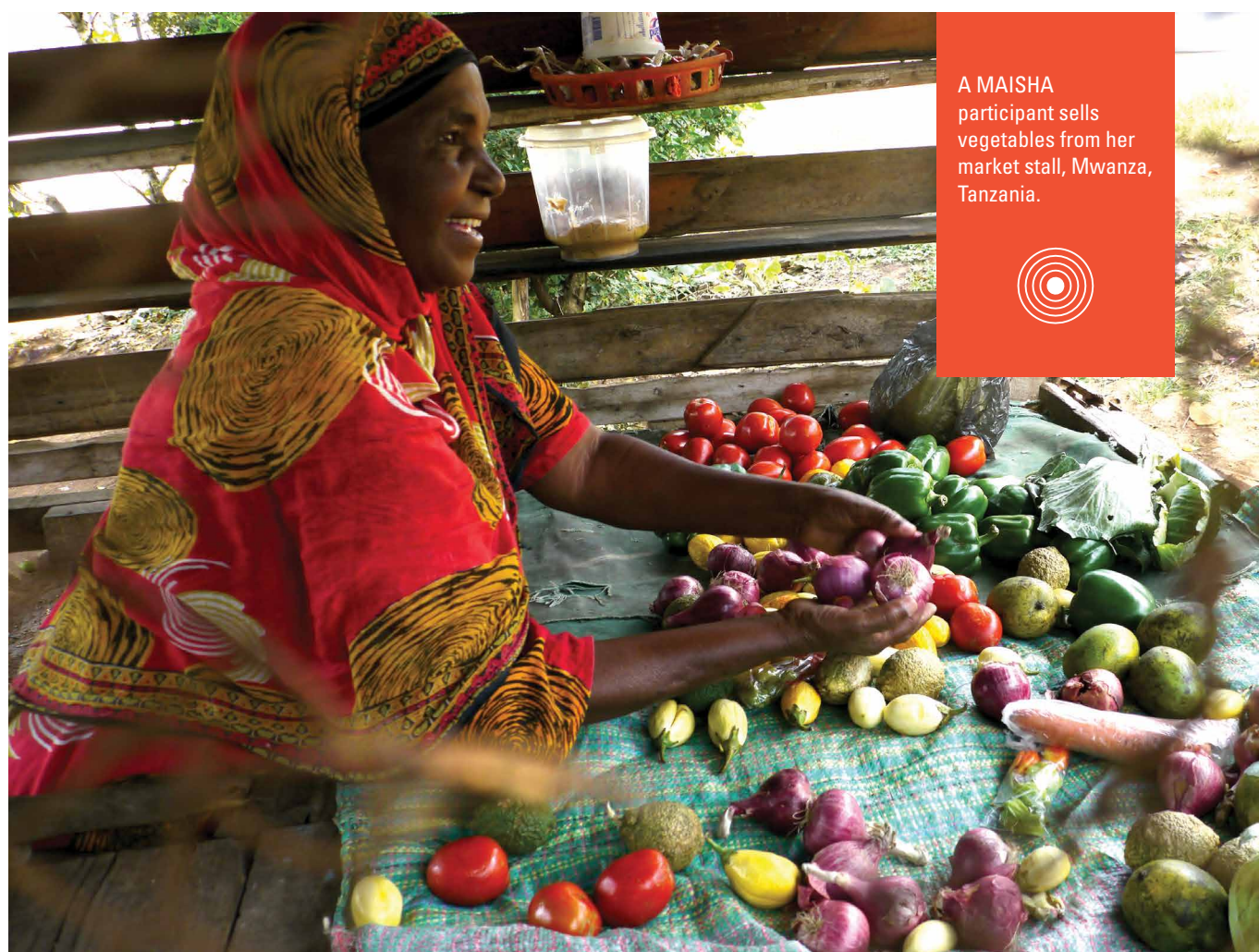
Impact is evident in three specific instances.

- Kivulini – a women’s NGO tackling violence against women and advancing women’s empowerment – is working with the MAISHA team to roll out the intervention to the groups in

the control arm, and is keen to adopt the MAISHA programme in the future. www.wikigender.org/wiki/kivulini-womens-rights-association/

- At least three other organisations – NGOs and funders – have requested programme materials with a view to implementing or adapting MAISHA more widely.
- Members of the MAISHA team are co-leading a national network of researchers investigating all forms of gender-based violence.

The first meeting of the network was held at the NIMR/MITU campus in Mwanza on the 14 March 2019. The event brought together researchers from different institutions across Tanzania to discuss and refine the aims and purpose of the network, and to identify its main purpose for the coming years, especially in light of the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children in Tanzania, and the World Health Organization’s INSPIRE framework for ending violence against children. It also provided a platform for researchers to identify past and current research on gender-based violence in Tanzania, and to explore opportunities for shared learning and networking. The meeting was organised and led by researchers from MITU, NIMR, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, the University of Dodoma and LSHTM.



A MAISHA participant sells vegetables from her market stall, Mwanza, Tanzania.



How did STRIVE partners achieve impact?

Researchers from the MAISHA team began laying the groundwork for uptake of the programme from early in the life of the study: combining extensive community-level engagement with meetings with key stakeholders in the HIV and violence fields in Tanzania.

In 2016, the MAISHA team was invited to participate as a member of a technical working group (TWG) organised by the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children through its Reproductive and Child Health Section (RCHS) in Dar es Salaam. This serves as part of a strategy for policy engagement and identifying key opportunities for research uptake. The TWG is a forum for the different stakeholders to engage and advise national plans and policies.

Next steps

The MAISHA study coincided with a period of increased focus on gender-based violence in the country. At the end of 2016, the Tanzanian government approved the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children in Tanzania (2017/18 – 2021/22). By 2021/22, the national plan aims to reduce:

- violence against women overall by 50%,
- physical violence from 39% to 10%,
- sexual violence from 17% to 8% against women aged 15–49.

The dissemination of the MAISHA results, building on MITU and NIMR's ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, is intended to contribute to the national plan and ensure effective uptake of the MAISHA programme.

More information: <http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/projects/maisha-microfinance-and-gender-training-reduce-violence-against-women>

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JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Kapiga S, Harvey S, Muhammad A K, Stöckl H, Mshana G, Hashim R, Hansen C, Lees S and Watts C, **Prevalence of intimate partner violence and abuse and associated factors among women enrolled into a cluster randomised trial in northwestern Tanzania**, *BMC Public Health*, 2017.
- Kapiga S*, Harvey S*, Mshana G, Hansen C, Mtolela GJ, Madaha F, Hashim R, Kapiga I, Masha N, Abramsky T, Lees S, Watts C (*joint first authors). **The impact of an intervention to prevent intimate partner violence against women in Tanzania: findings from the MAISHA cluster randomised controlled trial**. Submitted.
- Shelley Lees, Mark Marchant, Veronica Selestine, Sheila Harvey. **Ninajiamini (I have confidence): Understanding the transformative effects of a participatory intervention in the Maisha Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Trial in Tanzania**. In progress.



Stills from a video outlining the MAISHA programme, showing a gender training session and images from photovoice activities.

<http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/resources/maisha-life>



STRIVE research consortium

A DFID-funded research programme consortium, STRIVE is led by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, with six key research partners in Tanzania, South Africa, India and the USA. STRIVE provides new insights and evidence into how different structural factors – including gender inequality and violence, poor livelihood options, stigma, and heavy alcohol use – influence HIV vulnerability and undermine the effectiveness of the HIV response.

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