Engaging couples to empower women: Experimental evidence from Uganda

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Sugarcane in Uganda
What did we test?

GIL-IFPRI partnership with one of East Africa’s largest sugar producers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cane-producing households</td>
<td>(2,370)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Workshop</td>
<td>(1,180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Vision Workshop</td>
<td>(1,190)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Only</td>
<td>(594)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract Offer Only</td>
<td>(591)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop + Contract Offer</td>
<td>(596)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure Control</td>
<td>(589)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Economic intervention: Cane contract registration with women

**Take-up:**
- 78% of HHs agreed; 71% completed all steps
Behavior change intervention: “Family Vision” couples’ workshops

Take-up:
- 66% of HHs w/perfect attendance; 75% attended 2 of 3 days
- Increased take-up of economic intervention by 7ppts
What we mean by “empowerment”

Key domains of empowerment (Kabeer 1999)

**Resources**  Favorable conditions for empowerment  
- e.g. human capital, economic capital, social support networks

**Agency**  Ability to identify goals and act upon them  
- e.g. decision-making, free movement, impact of views/voice

**Achievements**  Realization of goals  
- e.g. nutrition, education, mental health, life satisfaction
- Contract intervention increased women’s resources and agency.
- Workshop increased women’s agency and achievements.
- Combining the two did not yield any larger gains.
Mechanisms for impact

- **Contract intervention** 🆕 women’s sugarcane ownership & mgmt., financial inclusion, gender norms, & marital quality
- **Workshop** 🆕 marital quality & gender norms (plus small gains in cane ownership)
Possible unintended consequences?

- Contract intervention did not adversely affect women’s time on other activities (including leisure)
- No evidence of adverse consequences from these interventions, including a drop in cane production or increases in GBV
Husbands report higher life satisfaction and better household work distribution from contract intervention
Workshop improved all aspects of husband’s reported life satisfaction
Tying it all together

- Value of targeting couples for women’s empowerment
- Low-cost approaches: Transfers do not need to be extra-household to impact women’s resources and agency
- Economic intervention: access to resources and agency
- Behavior change: personal welfare
- Appropriate intervention depends on project’s aims

Source: Oxfam Uganda
Thank you!

Interested in reading the paper?

https://bit.ly/3zbBm7I

Interested in learning more about Africa GIL?

www.worldbank.org/africa/gil

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