

Authors

Donald Green
Columbia University

Jasper Cooper
University of California, San Diego

Anna Wilke
Columbia University

Study Status

Results



Article

Countering Violence Against Women by Encouraging Disclosure: A Mass Media Experiment in Rural Uganda

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Donald P. Green¹, Anna M. Wilke¹,
and Jasper Cooper²

Abstract

Violence against women (VAW) is widespread in East Africa, with almost half of married women experiencing physical abuse. Those seeking to address this issue confront two challenges: some forms of domestic violence are widely condoned and it is the norm for witnesses to not report incidents. Building on a growing literature showing that education-entertainment can change norms and behaviors, we present experimental evidence from a media campaign attended by more than 10,000 Ugandans in 112 rural villages. In randomly assigned villages, video dramatizations discouraged VAW and encouraged reporting. Results from interviews conducted several months after the intervention show no change in attitudes condoning VAW yet a substantial increase in willingness to report to authorities, especially among women, and a decline in the share of women who experienced violence. The theoretical implication is that interventions that affect disclosure norms may reduce socially harmful behavior even if they do not reduce its acceptability.

¹Columbia University, New York, NY, USA

²University of California San Diego, La Jolla, CA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Donald P. Green, Columbia University, 420 West 118th Street, 712 International Affairs
Building, New York, NY 10027, USA
Email: dpg2110@columbia.edu

Academic Paper

Countering violence against women at scale: A mass media experiment in rural Uganda

Violence against women (VAW) is widespread in East Africa, with almost half of married women experiencing physical abuse. Those seeking to address this policy issue confront two challenges. First, some forms of domestic violence are widely condoned; majorities of men and women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife in a variety of scenarios.

Second, victims and bystanders are often reluctant to report incidents to authorities. Building on a growing literature showing that education-entertainment can change norms and behaviors, we present experimental evidence from a media campaign attended by over 10,000 Ugandans in 112 villages. In randomly assigned villages, video dramatizations discouraged VAW and encouraged reporting. Results from interviews conducted several months after the intervention show no change in attitudes condoning VAW yet a substantial increase in willingness to report to authorities, especially among women, and a decline in the share of women who experienced violence.

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