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  - • Designing and evaluating faith-based interventions in culture-sensitive ways: Insights from the international evidence and practical lessons from project dldl/ድልድል

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# The international evidence on faith-based interventions

- A common reference for the scholarship that looks at faith-based interventions involving clergy is the understanding that religious personnel, the discourses they use and their responses to communities can both contribute to the continuation of the problem of domestic violence and serve as a positive influence in efforts to address the problem.
- While the literature on domestic violence interventions involving clergy is extensive, crossing the disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology and the sectors of public health and international development, the evidence on what works and reviews on assessment methods are visibly more limited.
- A systematic review identified at least 13 papers that discussed domestic violence interventions involving clergy across the world, some of which assessed effectiveness and/or impact using qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods approaches.

# The systematic review

- The most relevant studies presented specific faith-based programmes or interventions involving clergy and their congregations (Bernardi & Steyn, 2020; Choi et al., 2017, 2019; Danielson et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2020; Drumm et al., 2018; Fisher-Townsend et al., 2009; Hancock et al., 2014; Kim & Menzie, 2015; Stennis et al., 2015), examined impediments and resourcefulness in faith-secular collaborative approaches (DD, 2010; Yoder, 2017) and looked at how theological language and teachings could become useful or might need to be specifically addressed/challenged in DV interventions (Jankowski et al., 2018; Westenberg, 2017).
- Examples of programmes reviewed: Set Free Ministries (Chicago, US), RAVE programme (Canada), Shimtuh (US), S.T.A.R.T.© Education and Intervention Model (US), Korean Clergy for Healthy Families (US), The Men's Group at St Pius Church (Chicago, US), Koinonia and SADD (Brazil), SAFFI VAW programme (South Africa) and other programmes that did not have a specific name or brand.

# Evaluation methodologies & gaps

- The studies came from a diversity of disciplines and sectors and presented differences in intervention design, context and methodology.
- Most assessments of such programmes were qualitative, with a visible dearth of studies that evaluated programme effectiveness using quantitative methodologies.
- The studies used pre- or/and post-test surveys, post-programme focus group discussions, one-year follow up questionnaires, direct testimonials and feedback, project reports and archived material, interviews with programme administrators and other. One only study conducted a Randomised Controlled Trial (Korean Clergy for Healthy Families programme).
- The diversity in the programmes' design and methodologies made it difficult to compare results across contexts and generalise findings or conduct a meta-analysis, pointing to the need for context-specific approaches to evaluating impact.

# Effectiveness factors: Overall insights

- The common thread of the reviewed interventions seemed to be the importance of cultural sensitivity in these programmes to ensure that these were relevant and impactful with those they aimed to support.
- This cultural sensitivity was equally relevant to those working in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and those supporting migrant populations in western industrialised societies, with the important insight that religious understandings among migrant communities could reflect newly acquired theological influences encountered in the host society and not solely or necessarily beliefs upheld in the home country.
- Interventions involving clergy evidenced numerous commonalities across geographies, but also some differential needs given the context in which they operated.
  - Evidence from the US and other western contexts pointed to an increased awareness amongst clergy of domestic violence in their communities, a lack of trauma-centred training and the need for continuous support from religious institutions to address the problem adequately;
  - Studies in tradition-oriented or LMIC contexts focussed on the central role of the clergy in addressing marital problems and in mediating domestic violence situations and how best to leverage on this role. In such context it was understood that religious traditions were pervasive and that religious tenets were been indistinguishable from cultural practice, reinforcing rigid interpretations amongst the clergy and the community. On the other hand, the influence of the clergy in collective and individual life has placed the clergy in a key position to influence collective attitudes and human behaviour.
- Regardless of geography, it seemed to be agreed that clergy-centred interventions could be more effective if a) clergy were better equipped with theological / exegetical knowledge to respond to distorted deployments of religious language in the community, b) were willing to address the topic of domestic violence in public sermons, c) understood how to respond to domestic violence victims and perpetrators with consideration of their psychological states and the likely safeguarding risks involved, and d) were integrated more substantively with secular referral systems responding to domestic violence.

# The experience of project dldl/ድልድል: Designing and evaluating a clergy-centred intervention

- The intervention comprises of a series of 10 dialogical workshops with Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo clergy working in partnership with EOC DICAC and local diocese offices.
- The design of the workshop series was based on year-long anthropological research in rural communities that sought to understand accurately the conditions, role and influence of the clergy in the experience of domestic violence.
- The design of the workshop was culture-sensitive and faith-specific. Each workshop is comprised of three units, an ethnographic discussion of domestic violence, theological training and safeguarding/legal material on domestic violence in the country.
- The workshops aim to improve the clergy's preparedness to respond to victims and perpetrators with sensitivity to the risks involved and with a refined understanding of their psychological states, as well as to integrate the clergy in new referral systems currently being developed in the country.



# Identifying an evaluation strategy

- A tentative evaluation strategy was identified at the stage of designing the intervention. This was enhanced and finalised in consultation with the partner.
- The initial plan was to use pre-workshop questionnaires to assess participants' previous exposure to such training, post-workshop assessment questionnaires and, in the longer-term, focus group discussions with randomly selected participants from the 10 workshops.
- Consultations with the partner led to the integration of an additional technique, namely the use of a report card handed down to participants to document the impact of the workshop in the three months following their participation in the workshop.

# Key insights from mid-term assessment/report

- From the observations of the delivery team, the workshops were generally effective in engaging the participants and all sections proved relevant to them.
- The exercises and group activities that were incorporated in each unit acted as one of the most effective elements of the workshops because they created an environment and 'safe space' for the participants to engage with each other, reflect on their own situations, apply a comparative lens to the research findings and their own context and work together to prepare an answer for presentation to the rest of the participants.
- In general, participants felt that the workshop helped to change their perception of their role in addressing societal problems, to realise the importance of being a good example in their personal marriages, and to recognise the need to advise spiritual children carefully and to take the necessary time to help them address their marital problems and not to rush them into quick decisions.
- Many also stated their renewed commitment to teaching their communities the Bible's contents on marriage and to serve the communities as the apostles did, without the fear of the unknown and without coiling to the challenges of modernity.



Evaluation  
approaches in the  
NGO sector: The  
experience of EOC  
DICAC



# EOC DICAC: Background and GBV work experience

EOC-DICAC is a local Faith-based Organisation (non-governmental organisation) that uses the Church structure from the patriarchate office (Holy Synod) to the level of the parish church to address societal problems in the intervention areas it works in.

The Church is comprised of parish churches, clergy, and Sunday schools that are well-respected, trusted and listened to by the community. They can serve as effective community change agents.

EOC-DICAC has extensive experience in coordinating different projects in the North Shewa region working through the North Shewa Diocese coordination office.

Gender related programmes are the focus areas of EOC-DICAC and are usually implemented in integration with other development organisations or projects (existing projects cover gender and reproductive health, Gender-Based Violence and domestic violence).

# Monitoring and evaluation approaches

- Monitoring and Evaluation is mainly focused on domestic violence prevention programmes to ensure that the planned objectives of the project are attained.
- Within each project, the assigned focal point is tasked with providing technical assistance to trainees and volunteers on how to submit their regular reports to the project office in charge.
- The project focal person conducts monitoring on a quarterly basis and submits a report to the EOC-DICAC Head Office, which is reviewed by the relevant body.
- In addition to the regular reporting, the Head Office may conduct purposive studies on specific interventions, such as beneficiary contact monitoring. This helps to substantiate monthly reports and to assess project progress and correct gaps.

# Lessons learned so far

Previous projects have brought encouraging results in raising knowledge, improving attitudes and practices on gender-related issues (responding to GBV, addressing gender inequality, promoting gender mainstreaming, improving reproductive health awareness, etc.)

Working with priests, deacons, the school community and school clubs has been found to be an important entry point to engage with the communities and for the communities to respond positively.

We have learned that it is important to work with the clergy to address GBV in the Orthodox Christian communities. GBV is not a women's issue only but concerns the entire community and clergy are directly involved with the community.

Emphasis is placed on working through consensus with the community to proceed with relevant interventions.

# How project dldl/ድልድል is different

We have benefited from the funding received from project dldl, which has enabled us to expand into work on domestic violence.

We have learned from the project's implementation approach, which is different from other GBV projects we support or are involved with.

Project dldl is more practical instead of theoretical. It applies evidence from research in Ethiopia to respond to domestic violence in the community. Our staff and colleagues have found the evidence very relevant, accurate and helpful. Other projects often employ theoretical frameworks that are international and do not immediately apply to Ethiopian realities.

We have learned from the assessment practices of the project and have found it useful to combine approaches we use (e.g. report cards) with research-intensive approaches to better assess our projects.

The mid-term report and the planned final report on the assessment of the workshop series provide/will provide important guidance for us for future practice.