

Twubakane Season 2 Evaluation

Executive summary

NOVAH (No Violence At Home) is an international non-profit that uses mass media to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV), with current operations in Rwanda. This report presents the results of NOVAH's mixed-methods evaluation of Season 2 of the Twubakane radio drama, a twelve-episode series designed to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV) in Rwanda through entertainment-education. To change IPV behaviors, the drama focused on i) promoting shared decision-making through healthy communication, ii) reducing alcohol consumption, and iii) seeking help early in case of IPV. Data from 60 married individuals were collected through observations, surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

The drama was successful in engaging listeners. Participants consistently listened to and understood the drama. Storylines were perceived as realistic and relatable, closely mirroring everyday family dynamics. The drama was described as highly entertaining, emotional, and educational, with sustained attention across episodes and strong recall of plotlines.

i) Outcomes regarding shared decision-making through healthy communication were positive (++). Participants reported learning that women's ideas are valuable and that joint decision-making improves outcomes and happiness. Many – especially men – reported behavioral changes, including consulting their spouses before decisions, greater transparency, and more frequent communication. Women remained more hesitant to raise personal problems.

ii) Outcomes alcohol consumption were moderately positive (+). Participants recognized the negative effects of alcohol on household finances, health, children's wellbeing, and social respect. Several men reported reducing alcohol consumption, spending less time at the bar, or quitting altogether. However, reported reductions in spouses' alcohol consumption were modest, and participants rarely reported encouraging others to reduce drinking.

iii) Outcomes regarding early help-seeking were mixed (o). Participants viewed help-seeking as positive and supported the graduated pathway promoted in the drama, which starts with friends, family, or community mediators before involving authorities. However, a minority, particularly women, highlighted patience and enduring harm as a solution to IPV. Some participants showed limited awareness that even a single incident of violence is unacceptable, or were hesitant to involve authorities, showing that the drama was not entirely successful in changing existing beliefs about IPV and help-seeking.

Three key risks emerged. (1) Women sometimes picked up 'being patient' as a correct response to violence, potentially delaying help-seeking; (2) some responses framed IPV around fault, risking normalization of violence; (3) a few participants misread shared decision-making as women's obedience. Less frequent risks included emotional triggering and misinterpretation of scenes.

To address these risks, seven targeted script adaptations were made prior to airing, to include clearer messaging on these specific points.

Table 1. Summary of changes

	Message 1: Shared decision-making through healthy communication	Message 2: Reducing alcohol consumption	Message 3: Seeking help early
Summary	(++) Strong shifts towards joint decision-making and improved communication.	(+) Some reports of reduced drinking, acknowledgment of harms due to alcohol.	(o) Participants endorsed help-seeking, yet some normalized enduring violence.
Think	(++) Many participants articulated a cognitive shift: recognizing that women's ideas matter (3 men), joint decisions lead to better outcomes (5+ men/women), and calm discussion prevents conflict (4 men/women).	(++) Almost all participants note the negative impact of alcohol use on finances, nutrition and children. Respect for men is associated with fulfilling household responsibilities, drinking in moderation is praised.	(o/-) Help-seeking is seen as appropriate, ideally before violence happens. A few (3) women show limited awareness that even one incident of violence is not OK, patience/endurance are highlighted as positive.
Feel	(+) Several participants (3+ men) explicitly link joint decision-making to increased happiness and reduced conflict. Women seem more hesitant in communicating with their spouses about problems.	(+) Participants report associating excessive alcoholism with losing respect (4 men/4 women), feeling ashamed for spending too much time at the bar (1 man), and feeling confident about reducing alcohol consumption (1 man).	(+/o) Through the drama, a few (2) women feel encouraged to seek help, and 2 men feel capable to advise others. Most participants agree that help-seeking can lead to positive outcomes, however, at least 2 participants would encourage enduring violence.
Do	(++) Most men & women report behavioral changes after listening, including consulting their spouses before decisions (7 men), discussing finances jointly (3 women/2 men), communicating plans transparently, and communicating more frequently.	(+) A few (3) men explicitly report cutting back on their alcohol consumption. However, without being prompted, none report encouraging/supporting others in cutting back their alcohol or computing expenses due to alcohol.	(+/o) Some men (4) & women (4) report advising others to seek help/ communicate more (1 man has adverse reflection in doing so). Some men (3) & women (4) say they would seek help from community mediators before authorities. No behavioral data.

Note. (++) 3+ mentions, (+) 1-2 mentions, (o) 0 mentions, (-) 1-2 mentions of adverse thinking, (--) 3+ mentions of adverse thinking, across interviews/focus groups.¹

¹ These symbols are entry points, not substitutes, for qualitative interpretation. Because participants were not explicitly prompted on all messages, whether a message appears at all in interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) is meaningful. Spontaneous or semi-spontaneous mentions indicate that a message was: noticed, cognitively or emotionally processed, and considered salient enough to verbalize.

"We learned many lessons, and they will help transform Rwandan families."

- Female participant

"Before, I would have taken the decision to say, 'I will hit my wife,' but now I would [...] say, 'Fighting is not the solution.'"

- Male participant

"They should add more so we can keep listening. I was so happy, I can't even describe it."

- Female participant

"This drama really challenged us deeply, and there is no part that did not touch someone's heart."

- Male participant

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Abbreviations

- FGD: Focus Group Discussion
- GBV: Gender-Based Violence
- IDI: Individual In-depth Interview
- IPV: Intimate Partner Violence
- IZUs: Inshuti z'Umuryango, literally “friends of families”, they act as community mediators (see [dedicated box](#)).
- RIB: Rwanda Investigation Bureau, a national law enforcement agency.

1. Context, objectives, and methods

1.1 About NOVAH and this project

[NOVAH \(No Violence At Home\)](#) is an international non-profit that uses mass media to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV), with current operations in Rwanda.

Following the [successful airing of Season 1](#) in January 2025, NOVAH produced Season 2 of “Twubakane” (“Let’s build together”), a twelve-episode radio drama, from June to September 2025. The radio drama was produced in partnership with RWAMREC (a Rwandan NGO specializing in gender equality) and with Urunana Development Communication (for writing and production).

[The drama is planned to](#) air on a regional radio station in early 2026, RC Nyagatare, as part of a randomized controlled trial and on national radio later in 2026.

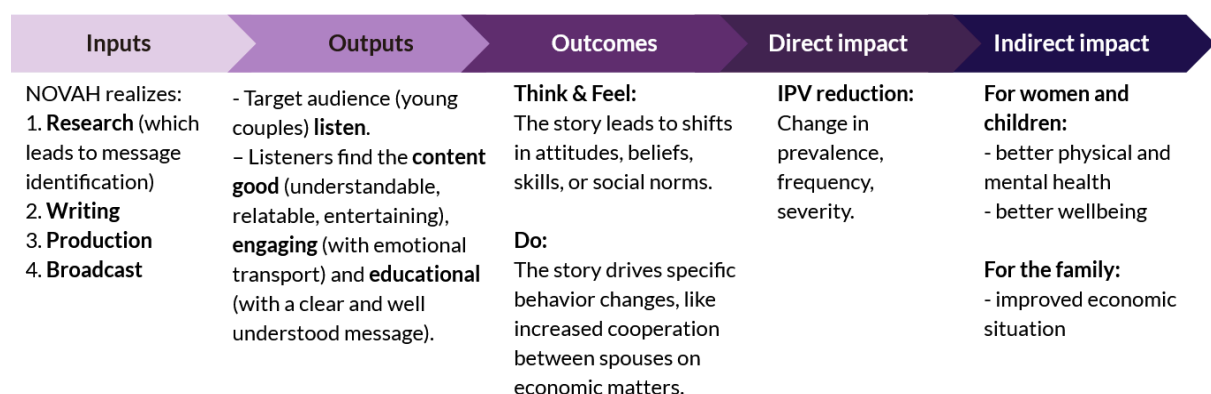
In November 2025, NOVAH conducted a mixed-methods, in-person evaluation of the drama with ~80 participants. This document presents the results of this evaluation. It was written in January 2026.

1.2 Theory of change, and Twubakane’s objectives and synopsis

NOVAH uses edutainment, or entertainment-education, [as a way to reduce IPV](#). NOVAH’s theory of change is based on edutainment’s [theory standards](#) (a relatable story, with positive, negative, and transitional characters and repeated educational messages.) as well as on the [scientific literature](#) on IPV reduction.

A simplified version of this theory of change is described in Fig. 1, and the current evaluation assesses the drama based on these criteria:

Figure 1. NOVAH’s theory of change (simplified version)



For the drama Twubakane, the key behaviors promoted, developed through [several phases](#) of research, can be summarized as follows:

- **Shared decision making through healthy communication:** “Decisions should be made conjointly, in particular financial decisions. This benefits everyone (men, women, children, the community). Practicing healthy communication (e.g., choose quiet times to talk, be transparent and communicate more, listen respectfully) helps make this

possible.”

- **Decreasing alcohol consumption:** “Drinking more than one or two drinks a week can harm you and your family, as it can cause conflict, poverty, and poor health. Encourage others to drink less and don’t mock others if they want to stop drinking.”
- **Seeking help early:** “Seeking help early and through appropriate channels can prevent escalation and promote safer resolutions in cases of intimate partner violence.”

Drama synopsis ([more detailed version here](#))

Season 2 has 12 episodes, each ca. 15-20 minutes long. The second season builds upon the messages of shared decision-making and help-seeking from Season 1, exploring healthy communication in greater depth and incorporating the additional message of reducing alcohol consumption. Season 2 is narratively independent from Season 1.

The story follows three couples – Munyanziza & Iribagiza, Karinda & Mbabazi, and Hakiza & Mwamini – as well as Dorosera, a single-parenting widow, through their daily lives and relationships.

- **Munyanziza’s & Iribagiza’s relationship is plagued by financial issues.** Munyanziza runs a bicycle workshop but spends all his earnings at the bar, leaving little for household needs. Eventually, Munyanziza’s & Iribagiza’s conflicts escalate into **a physical violence incident**, and Iribagiza, after consultation with Mbabazi, seeks help at community mediators, the [IZUs](#).
- **Karinda & Mbabazi struggle with healthy communication and shared decision-making.** Karinda uses household funds to get his motorcycle license. He fails to pass on the first attempt, but does not tell his wife and, ashamed, stops almost all communication and starts to drink more.
- **Hakiza & Mwamini serve as role models in the radio drama.** They make financial decisions together, support each other, and communicate openly. Hakiza only goes to the bar once a week, and even then, only has one bottle of beer. Together, they give Karinda & Mbabazi advice on how to improve their relationship, which transforms them into a healthier, happier household.
- Throughout the drama, **Dorosera** gradually finds strength through the support of other women. They encourage her to **stop drinking** and help her cope with the pain of losing her husband by inviting her to join a savings group.

Who are IZUs?

IZUs (Inshuti z’Umuryango, literally “friend of families”) are community volunteers who assist families in resolving issues. Acting as mediators, and trained in conflict resolution, they provide initial support and can suggest legal action if necessary. They aren’t formal authorities (they’re rather similar to community health volunteers) and are elected in each village. They play an important role in Rwanda, by providing a step before legal action, which could otherwise lead to short-term imprisonment and potential negative consequences for households.

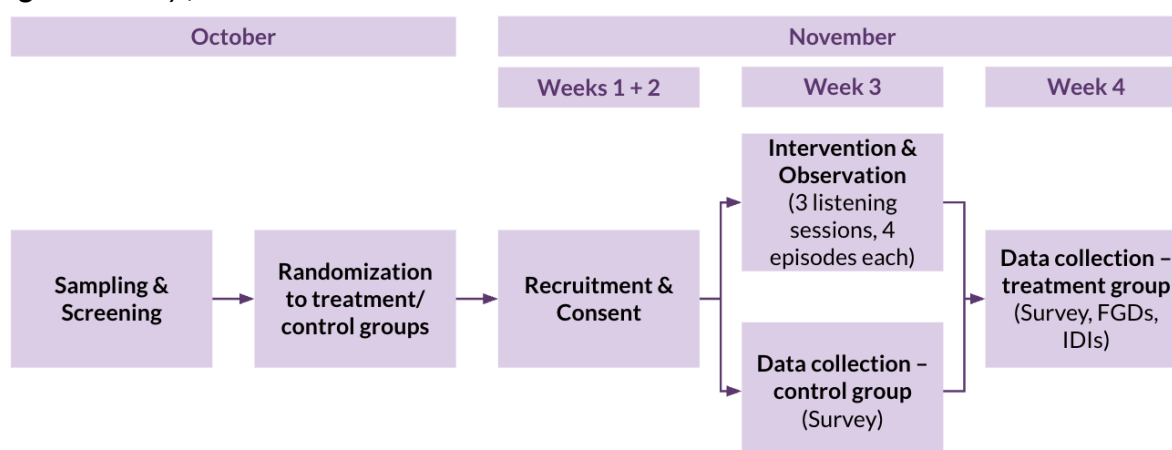
1.3 Methods and ethics

Data Collection

Data was collected in Kinyarwanda over a two-week period using four methods:

1. **Observation:** During three daily listening sessions separated by gender, each comprising four episodes, one observer completed an observation form, while the other observer annotated the script to record the listeners' emotional reactions and engagement.
2. **Short Quantitative Survey:** The survey served to understand attitudes, beliefs, skills, norms, and behaviors across treatment and control groups. It was delivered through a face-to-face interview, conducted by local enumerators using KoboToolbox.
3. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Four FGDs (two with five male participants and two FGDs with five female participants each) allowed us to dive deeper into the output and outcome dimensions of the theory of change.
4. **In-depth Individual interviews (IDIs):** 16 IDIs (8 with female participants and 8 with male participants) were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the output and outcome dimensions of the theory of change. The survey was integrated into the IDI, with follow-up questions.

Figure 2. Study flow



Participant Recruitment and Sampling

The study was conducted with participants in the Murama sector, Ngoma District. Participants were recruited through phone calls, in collaboration with local authorities. The recruitment criteria were as follows:

- Being aged 18-35
- Being of average socio-economic status
- Being married or cohabiting with their partner
- Not having participated in an intense gender-transformative program before
- Not having participated in previous research for this project
- Not being a village leader, or working for the cell, or the sector, or a friend of the family.

40 couples were selected to participate in the study². Of those 40 couples, 24 were randomly assigned to listen to the drama (the treatment group). From the other 16 couples, only one partner per couple (16 individuals in total) was selected to participate in the quantitative survey (control group).

Table 2. *Participants in the data collection activities*

	Treatment group (listeners)			Control group (non-listeners)	
	4 FGDs	16 IDIs (incl. survey)	Survey (partly overlaps with IDIs)	Survey	Total
Men	10 (2x5)	8	12	8	30
Women	10 (2x5)	8	12	8	30
Subtotal	20	16	24	16	60
Total	44 (from 24 couples) ³			16 (from 16 couples)	60 (from 40 couples)

The 64 participants were randomly distributed across several data collection methods. In the treatment group (48 individuals), both spouses listened, but for ethical reasons, spouses did not participate in the same data collection method (i.e., if one spouse participated in an interview, their partner could only participate in a focus group discussion).¹

No one refused to participate. The retention rate between listening sessions and interviews, focus groups, and surveys was 100%.

Ethical Considerations

All usual ethical precautions in IPV studies were taken, following a [do-no-harm approach](#). Notably, participants provided their full informed consent, could interrupt their participation at any time, and at any phase of the research. Referral pathways cards were given to all participants, enumerators were experienced in IPV research and specifically trained, and one of them was a psychologist. Participants received a compensation for their time.

1.4 Limitations of the analysis

This analysis is mostly qualitative and doesn't claim to achieve full scientific accuracy and replicability. Limitations include:

² We initially requested a recruitment list of 64 couples to avoid selection bias through the village leaders, and then conducted a random selection.

³ 4 individuals participated in the listening sessions with their partners but did not participate in data collection due to ethical considerations (it's a best practice in GBV prevention research to avoid individually interviewing both partners of the same couple).

1. **Authenticity of responses:** The outcomes are based on what participants shared, which may be influenced by social desirability bias and other biases (such as declaration bias), as well as by the way questions were asked. Furthermore, participants did not fill out the survey questionnaire themselves. Thus, survey data represent the enumerators' interpretation of participants' responses.
2. **Sustainability of changes:** The evaluation was conducted one week after the listening sessions. It is unclear how sustainable the reported changes are over time.
3. **Limited sample size:** The sample size was limited, although the repetition of answers suggested that no major insights were missing.
4. **Research design effect:** The research design itself may have affected respondents' behavior, rather than the drama (e.g., a man can change if he knows he or his wife will be interviewed in a week).
5. **No causal evidence:** Although we are using the terms "treatment" and "control" group, the randomization is imperfect.⁴ Furthermore, the sample size is small, and we are not controlling for confounding variables (such as different interviewers and different points in time when the interview was conducted). The informative value of the results is also limited by the fact that the evaluation was not designed with a pre- and post-test; but only a post-test, where measured changes are based on self-reports.
6. **Language barrier:** The data collection took place in Kinyarwanda, and was afterwards directly translated to and analyzed in English. There is no transcript of the data available in Kinyarwanda available, however, the translators are experienced.
7. **Missing data:** For some participants in in-depth interviews, data was missing because questions were not asked by enumerators. Additionally, for two women, parts of the interview recordings were missing. Throughout the report, we try to be transparent about missing data.
8. **Ethical concerns around exclusion:** Selective participation led to questions from other community members, creating potential for resentment or misunderstanding.
"They asked, 'Why didn't you tell us so we could go with you?'" (IDI 6, Woman)

Also, note that a non-successful outcome (i.e., no observed change) can occur for various reasons:

1. the desired behavior change was not achieved,
2. the desired behavior was already being practiced or
3. there was no data or a clear response to the question.

Finally, these results may not generalize to an uncontrolled broadcast setting. In this study's controlled setting, participants were known to have listened to the program in structured sessions of four episodes each.

⁴ Because the initial sampling frame of participants was chosen through convenience sampling from three villages.

2. Program outputs

2.1 The drama is clear and easy to understand

Participants of the evaluation listened to the story. Although some forgot a few characters' names, participants are able to recall the story and specific scenes and details. Some women were unable to always listen closely because they had to take care of their children during the listening sessions, even though observational data indicate that women were generally focused. One woman did not notice the occurrence of violence in the drama.

The different storylines were understood as participants discussed characters in detail. In observational data for men's and women's listening sessions, no instances of a significant part of the group (25% or more) looking confused were noted. Some participants answered as if they understood [IZUs \(of which the literal meaning in Kinyarwanda is "family friends"\)](#) as being actual family members rather than community volunteers, but others clearly shared they understood who they were and what their roles are ([see the script adaptations](#) that were made to prevent any confusion).

Initial reactions to the drama revolved around the following themes:

- It's an educational drama, with lessons, that teaches something (5 women, 12 men). It mostly centers around how to avoid conflicts and fight violence, the importance of supporting each other, sharing decisions, and the importance of good communication.
- Listening to the show brought positive change for me or at home (6 women, 4 men)
- This story is 'a tale of different families', about married life (3 women, 3 men)
- It makes someone reflect (3 men and 1 woman).
- It's a good, interesting drama (1 woman, 1 man)

"For me, the Twubakane drama was like a book. Mwamini taught me how I should live with my wife." (FGD 1, Men)

2.2 The drama is relatable

Relatability is central in edutainment's theory of change. Both women and men perceived the story as relatable and realistic, closely reflecting everyday family life and common relationship dynamics in their communities. They report that stories are grounded in real family experiences, and the diversity of couples represents the different types of families they know in their communities:

"Everything they discussed really happens in families, many families are facing different issues. Some are like Mbabazi's family, others like Munyanziza's. It's all real." (FGD 1, Women)

"In the villages we live in, many people live [...] those three kinds of lives – just as the drama portrayed three kinds of lives and different situations, including friends who are a bad influence. We live that life." (FGD 1, Men)

Several women (3) emphasized the realism of Munyanziza's negative portrayal, explaining that his behavior mirrored that of many men in their own communities.

"[...] there are many men like that, like Munyanziza, [...] [w]here we live." (FGD 2, Women)

Munyanziza's behavior also strongly resonated with men, especially around alcohol consumption and unilateral decision making:

"What I often see happening, again and again, is like Munyanziza – making decisions alone, saying 'I am the man here, I am the authority; you should not question the decisions I've made.'" (FGD 1, Men)

There was light skepticism about the realism of positive role models Hakiza and Mwamini. One man questioned their ability to buy a cow by only selling milk, but someone else in the focus groups reminded him that they also used savings. One woman was wondering whether these positive role models really exist in Rwanda:

"The part I heard that surprised and shocked me is the one of Hakiza, the way they acted it, you say: 'Do these things really happen? Even here in Rwanda, is there really a husband and wife who live like this [?]'" (FGD 2, Women)

2.3 The drama is entertaining

The drama was widely perceived as engaging throughout, with no parts described as boring. Both women and men emphasized sustained interest across episodes, driven by curiosity and the presence of meaningful lessons, rather than momentary entertainment.

"None of the parts were boring... each part had lessons. You were always curious about where it would start and where it would finish." (FGD 1, Men)

The observation forms indicate that both women and men laughed and smiled regularly during the listening sessions. Enumerators noted 121 instances of laughing or smiling across the entire 12 episodes for women (min per episode = 5, max per episode = 18), and 129 instances of laughing or smiling for men (min per episode = 4, max per episode = 19).

For women, entertainment was primarily linked to positive character change and improved marital relationships. Women highlighted satisfaction in seeing harmful behavior corrected over time, especially when men adopted kinder actions toward their wives and household dynamics improved.

"Those who were behaving badly eventually changed... even surprising their wives with kind gestures that made them happy." (FGD 1, Women)

For men, the most entertaining elements were examples of harmonious relationships and joint decision-making. In particular, Hakiza and Mwamini's relationship was seen as enjoyable because it modeled communication, shared planning, and visible progress.

"They discussed what they were going to do and how they would use their money... it led them to progress, and it made others learn from them." (FGD 1, Men)

The radio drama received a very high grade from both men (4.87 out of 5) and women

(4.75 out of 5).

Among women, high ratings were largely justified by the lessons conveyed in the drama. One woman who rated it a 4 criticized that the story should also depict women who fail to meet family responsibilities. Additionally, one woman explicitly expressed dislike of Munyanziza's wasteful use of household resources.

Among men, high ratings were primarily attributed to the drama's lessons, its relevance to participants' own lives, and its ability to prompt reflection or behavioral change. The participant who rated it a 4 did not provide a specific justification.

Both men and women, when explicitly asked, unanimously say they would want to continue to listen to new episodes or seasons. This is due to the lessons the drama contains that build them up and allow them to change. Two women explicitly mention they would want to know if Munyanziza would change and one woman mentions being interested in the rest of the storyline of Dorosera and Karinda.

"I'm really interested in that drama. Honestly, based on what I felt in my heart and what I saw at home, especially on my husband's side and also on my side, that drama caught my attention. I want to keep listening to it because it builds us. I feel like it can build a true family. For those who haven't listened yet, they will definitely hear it someday. It can change something here in our society; it can change us. So, I'm excited for more parts to come." (IDI 4, Woman)

"Because it helps. It really helps. Anything that teaches you is not something you ignore. The challenge is that we face many problems, and we do not have enough places where we can hear such guidance." (IDI 8, Man)

2.4 The drama is engaging

The drama was described as emotionally transporting. Women reported feelings of happiness during the uplifting parts of the story, feelings of sadness during parts that made them reflect or made them angry, and feelings of hope as the drama could help their husbands, who also listened, change.

"Sometimes I remembered experiences that had angered me before, and when it reached Munyanziza's part, I immediately remembered the picture of my husband and how he treated me, and I told myself, 'These are the things that used to happen at my home,' and that made me angry. But I was happy because it ended with him changing, and that also matches with home, because mine also changed and stopped drinking alcohol." (FGD 2, Women)

The majority of men reported they felt the drama was explicitly talking to them, touched their heart, made them reflect and motivated them to change.

"It made me happy and gave me a lot of knowledge and reflection. I even went home and discussed it with my wife, and she said, 'That drama taught me this and that.' We talked about it and felt it was good. I told her that as I listened, I felt happy and well because it was guiding us in a good direction" (FGD 2, Men)

One man reported feeling ashamed because of the drama. One man responded affirmatively when asked if he felt uncomfortable about the drama.

"I felt like I would still come back. But because of the things I did, when they talked about them, I felt uncomfortable in my life and asked myself why I had done such things." (IDI 3, Man)

One man cried during episode 9, when Mbabazi shared with Mwamini that her husband Karinda did not talk to her anymore. While we elaborate on the risks of triggering content in [section 4.4](#), this also shows that men identified with and cared for the transitioning couple.

The drama hooked both women and men: they felt curious to come back to the listening sessions. Women were mostly curious about the ending of the story of Muyanziza, Iribagiza, Karinda, and Dorosera. Men mentioned being interested to know if Karinda got the permit, if Muyanziza would change, how it would end with the stolen goat, if the bicycle would be fixed and where the money went and how Dorosera would change.

"I came very eagerly. You saw that sometimes we would even wake up early, saying we must go there and learn something we could apply ourselves." (IDI 7, Man)

One week later, women and men unanimously reported that they kept thinking about the drama. Six men stated they reflected on the drama's lessons and advice.

"I kept thinking about Munyanziza's family and Iribagiza, and I would also think about Hakiza and Mwamini's family." (IDI 2, Woman)

"Something else I keep thinking about is that there are many possible paths when you talk with people at home, and [when] you think clearly, many things become possible" (IDI 4, man)

Many discussed the drama with others (6 women, 5 men).

6 women stated they talked with others about the drama and 2 advised others based on the drama. They mostly talked about it with neighbors, as some were curious where they were going when they left for the listening sessions, and described the characters and lessons from the drama.

"I won't lie—there is a woman we live with at home, and I always tell her about it. I tell her: "We heard a drama in that training, it's very good, someone who wants to change... if people want to change, that drama can change them." Many times, I give her a summary of what I heard, telling her that a person who wants to listen would really learn from that drama" (IDI 5, Woman)

5 men discussed the drama with fellow participants after the listening sessions to reflect on what they heard.

"Most of us connected around how one household fell apart and was rebuilt again— I mean Karinda's home. That is what we all related to. [...] I don't know how to say it exactly, but we discussed it and all felt it was something that uplifted us. I felt that for all of us who listened, it was like the drama was repairing us." (IDI 1, Man)

4 men discussed the drama with non-participants, such as neighbours. They talked about the different lessons in the drama such as drinking less and the importance of agreeing with your wife.

"Some of my friends came to visit, and I explained to them how it is. I told them that it is important to agree with your wife, arguing doesn't help, and that agreeing with your wife makes what seemed impossible, possible." (IDI 3, Man)

One man explicitly said it is difficult to talk about the drama or its lessons with others who have not listened because people are busy and may think you are wasting their time.

2.5 The drama is educational

As already evoked above, different lessons were perceived by participants. The first two messages were picked up by at least some participants ((i) shared decision making through healthier communication (ii) less alcohol consumption). Only one woman spontaneously shared about (iii) seeking help earlier as a key lesson from the drama, in the form of feeling confident to ask for support from neighbours. But when explicitly prompted, it's clear for almost all participants that Iribagiza had to seek help earlier. In the following section, we will elaborate in more detail on the effectiveness of each of the three key messages of the drama.

3. Program outcomes: Key messages

Message #1: Shared decision-making through healthy communication

Shared decision-making through healthy communication supports IPV prevention by promoting open dialogue and joint problem-solving. This can reduce unequal power dynamics and help couples manage disagreements in ways that are less likely to turn into violence.

Table 3. Summary of results for message 1

Dimension	Messages in the drama	Results
Summary	(++) Participants reported learning that women's ideas are valuable and that joint decision-making improves outcomes and happiness. Many – especially men – reported behavioral changes, including consulting their spouses before decisions, greater transparency, and more frequent communication. Women remained more hesitant to raise personal problems.	
Think	(++) Many participants articulated a cognitive shift: recognizing that women's ideas matter (3 men), joint decisions lead to better outcomes (5+ men/women), and calm discussion prevents conflict (4 men/women).	
	Women's ideas are valuable for good decisions.	(++) 3 men explicitly mention that, through the drama, they recognized the value of their spouses' opinions.
	Shared decision-making benefits everyone, including men.	(++) 5+ participants highlight how shared decision-making leads to household development.
	Talking calmly helps avoid unnecessary fights.	(++) At least 2 men and 2 women highlight the benefits of talking calmly.
	Reflect: Why did I get so angry? What usually works to calm me down?	(+) When prompted, all participants mention multiple factors that enable calm conversations, but discuss them in reference to other people.
Feel	(+) Several participants (3+ men) explicitly link joint decision-making to increased happiness and reduced conflict. Women seem more hesitant in communicating with their spouses about problems.	
	Be confident that peaceful and honest dialogue builds a strong and united family.	(++) 3+ men associate frequent communication (exemplified by Hakiza & Mwamini) with harmony.
	Be confident that I can be honest	(+) Most participants report being more

	and trustful with my partner, as they will do the same in return.	transparent, although women generally seem more hesitant to bring up problems with their spouses.
	Be hopeful that problems can be solved without shouting or anger & proud when that happens.	(+) Men report greater ease in discussing problems with their partners than women.
Do	(++) Most men & women report behavioral changes after listening, including consulting their spouses before decisions (7 men), discussing finances jointly (3 women/2 men), communicating plans transparently, and communicating more frequently.	
	Choose quiet times to talk (after dinner, before bed). Communicate more and spend more quality time.	(++) 2 men and 1 woman mention choosing calm times to talk as beneficial. 2 men report coming home earlier to spend more time with their spouses.
	Be transparent & ask for your partner's opinion before deciding.	(++) 7 men reported now making decisions with their wives, and 6 women noted improved transparency and efforts from their husbands to involve them in decisions.
	Practice joint decisions on money, farming, and children.	(++) 3 women and 2 men report joint financial decision-making, 1 man reports discussing livestock keeping with his wife.
	Encourage women to speak up, and listen respectfully.	(++) 2 women report their partners initiating discussions, and at least one man reports that he and his wife listen to each other.

3.1.1 Message perception

Overall key message elements were successfully perceived.

Shared decision-making

Sustained shared decision-making is linked to peace, development, and social influence:

In focus groups, participants emphasized that by listening to one another and taking each other's ideas seriously, Hakiza & Mwamini were able to prioritize productive investments, such as livestock. Their cooperation was described as benefiting not only their household but also their social surroundings.

"Before making any decision, they would first talk and advise each other... They concluded both ideas were good but chose one together. This shows that discussion within the family, like in the home of Mwamina and Hakiza, builds a strong society." (FGD 1, Men)

"What's good about them is that they come together and have discussions... Their decisions are very good, very peaceful, and well thought out. The result is always for the benefit of the family." (FGD 1, Women)

Conversely, unilateral decision-making, and partial collaboration without communication, are understood as blocking progress:

Participants noted that Munyanziza & Iribagiza could not make progress because they did not make shared decisions. Instead, Munyanziza devalued his spouse's inputs.

Similarly, Mbabazi & Karinda, although initially perceived as making joint decisions, cannot reach development because Karinda starts making decisions on his own, stops sharing important information with his wife, and turns to alcohol.

"I noticed they don't work as a team. Munyanziza prefers to be advised by others, but when his wife makes a suggestion and maybe even makes a mistake, he belittles her ideas and disregards them, treating her like she has no value." (FGD 1, Women)

"The way they make decisions there sets the home's development backwards. Karinda should have first sat down and talked with his wife, and looked at where the money for the license would come from. They should have planned it together." (FGD 2, Men)

The advice to make decisions together as a couple is perceived as credible because it reflects how Hakiza and Mwamini actually live and leads to visible results.

"What they say is what they themselves do, and what they do brings them development... So, I would also follow that same advice." (FGD 2, Men)

Healthy communication

Male and female participants recognized the usefulness of frequent communication and planning time as a couple to talk things through in order to live peacefully:

"The way I understood that advice is that communication between spouses helps resolve many issues in the family. [...] The more they talk about their problems, the more those problems are solved, and they live in harmony, avoiding violence and preventing misuse of

household resources.” (FGD 1, Men)

Effective communication is described as proactive, regular, and oriented toward both planning and follow-through: Hakiza and Mwamini were consistently used to exemplify this model. They planned together and translated into concrete action, with communication strengthening over time and supporting steady household development:

“[T]heir communication was good, but as days passed, it became even better. Because they had a starting point and they had a goal.” (FGD 2, Women)

“In Hakiza and Mwamina’s home, they discussed and carried out what they agreed on.” (FGD 1, Men)

Ineffective communication is framed in two main ways:

First, as largely absent or avoidant, characterized by walking away, conflict, and unilateral action, as illustrated by Munyanziza and Iribagiza early in the drama.

“At Munyanziza’s home, they had no conversation at all... Instead of talking, the husband would just walk away.” (FGD 2, Women)

Second, as intermittent and reactive – where couples do talk, but mainly after problems have emerged and without translating discussion into joint action.

“They understood each other, but Karinda did not put their discussions into practice.” (FGD 1, Men)

Communication can be learned and strengthened: Participants tracked change over time, describing how both Munyanziza and Karinda evolved as communication increased and external advice was taken seriously. These trajectories reinforced participants’ understanding that communication is not fixed, but something that can be learned and strengthened.

“Munyanziza and Karinda started with bad habits, but in the middle, those habits began to fade. [...] But in the end, he was advised and changed.” (FGD 2, Men)

“But because of the good advisors they [Munyanziza and Iribagiza] had, the conversations they had together increased. They reached a point where they discussed what had happened. He even apologized for selling the goat [...]” (FGD 2, Women)

3.1.2 Changes in attitudes & beliefs⁵

Shared decision-making

The survey and in-depth interview data suggest that Twubakane Season 2 is effective in promoting shared decision-making.

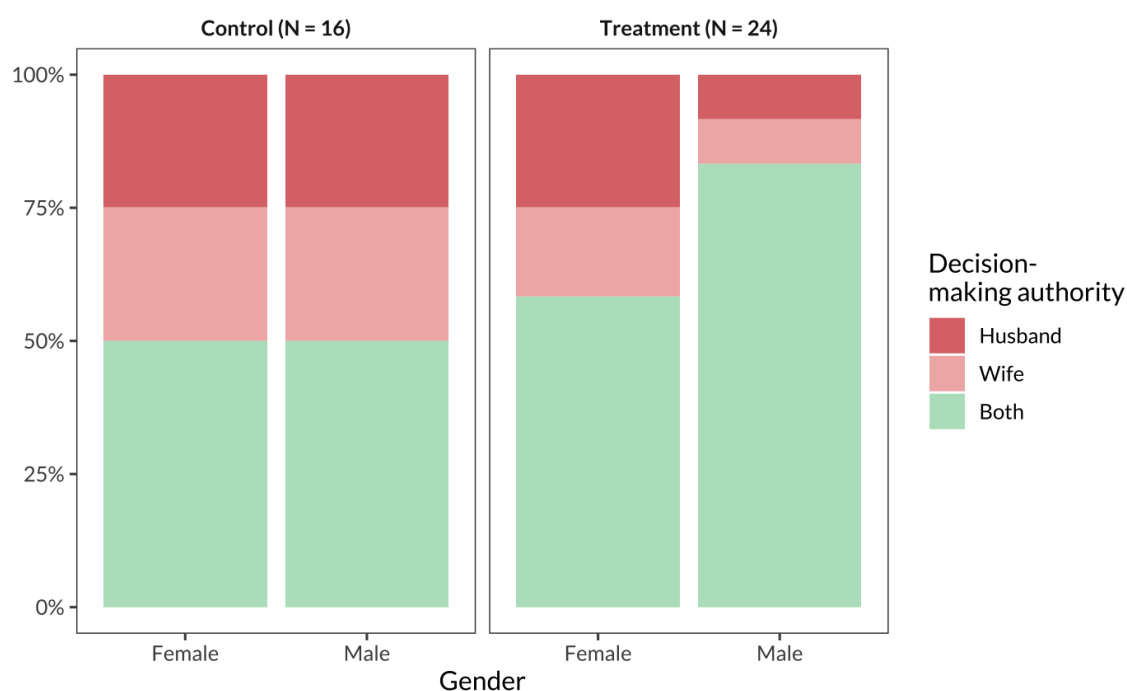
When presented with a fictional scenario where a husband and a wife disagree on a decision, a higher proportion of respondents in the treatment group think the decision should be made jointly (14 female respondents/58%, and 20 male respondents/83%, see Fig. 3) compared to the control group. **Within the treatment group, comparatively fewer women than men responded that both husband and wife should make the decision** (see our insights on this in the [discussion section](#)).

⁵ For these changes and all changes described below, we cannot claim that the drama played a causal role, see section [1.4 Limitations](#).

Participants asserted that they would follow the advice from the drama to make decisions jointly, and formulated concrete steps for action in their own relationships.

“What I understood from those people you mentioned is that when a couple agrees on something before taking action, it means the household is peaceful. So, from what I’ve heard, if I apply that in my own family, it could help build and improve it.” (FGD 1, Women)

Figure 3. Decision-Maker Responses by Treatment Status and Gender



Note. Distribution of responses to the question “Imagine a couple who live together in a nearby village, Umutoni and Ntare. One evening, Ntare brings home his earnings from work. They disagree on whether to spend it to buy fertilizer for their farm or school supplies for their children. Who do you think should make the decision?”, by treatment status and gender. Bars show proportions within each group. As a reminder (see [participant recruitment](#)), although all participants are married and, in the treatment group, their spouses also listened to the drama, the women interviewed in the survey are not the wives of the men interviewed. They come from different couples for ethical reasons.

For men, the most apparent rationales in favor of joint decision-making are peace & minimizing the potential for future complaints/conflict (4 mentions) and home development and progress (2 mentions).

Specifically, seeing that making decisions jointly leads to development in Hakiza & Mwamini’s household seemed to have led to participants’ realization of the importance of shared decision-making:

“[...] when they got money, the husband suggested buying crops for storage, but the wife suggested buying a cow instead since the amount was small. They agreed together and bought a cow, which later produced benefits. So, I realized that consulting in the home is very important.” (IDI 2, Man)

Women primarily justified joint decision-making through relational and inclusion-based

logics. Among the rationales mentioned by women are shared ownership of the household & considering everyone's needs (3 mentions), strengthening the relationship & stability (2 mentions), and better outcomes through shared decisions (1 mention).

One woman specifically reported no change in attitudes. She shared that she already held the attitudes on shared decision-making that the drama conveyed before listening to it.

Healthy communication

The data suggest that listening to the radio drama is associated with improved communication quality, i.e., calmer communication and greater ease of discussing problems.

i) Perceived communication quality

Figure 4. *Communication Quality Responses by Treatment Status and Gender*



Note. Distribution of responses to the question “Imagine a conversation with your partner about money, chores, or household plans. How do you think this conversation would go?”, by treatment status and gender. Bars show proportions within each group.

As Fig. 4 shows, treatment is associated with calmer communication overall. Here again, within the treatment group, men tend to report their relationship dynamics more positively than women and perceive their communication to be calmer, which coincides with findings from the interviews (see [Discussion](#)).

7 out of 8 interviewed men, when explicitly prompted, say that a conversation about money, chores or household plans would go calmly. The factors that enable calm conversations mentioned by participants mostly reflect the messages present in the drama.⁶ They justify

⁶ Choosing quiet times to talk, e.g. after dinner, before bed), communicating more and spending more quality time, being transparent and asking for the partner's opinion before deciding, talking calmly to avoid unnecessary fights, encouraging women to speak up, and listening respectfully.

this with listening attentively, bringing the issue up when the time has come, or discussing it after a meal.

"It would be very calm. [...] Because both of us have curiosity about what the other is going to say, and we both feel that what the other says is meaningful, so we listen attentively." (IDI 1, Man)

Among them, one man mentioned the drama particularly instrumental in promoting calm conversations:

"Very calm because we were able to gain benefits and move forward since we started listening to that drama." (IDI 4, Man)

Only one interviewed man reports those conversations to be a heated sometimes:

"For me, usually, conversations feel somewhat heated, like a little conflict, but conflicts differ in intensity. [...] Usually, when I talk to my wife, I speak little on my side." (IDI 8, Man)

However, one man who described these conversations as "calm" articulated a more gendered understanding of calm communication. While presenting himself as remaining composed, he framed his calmness as a response to women's presumed emotionality, rather than as a mutually shared norm in his relationship.

"Most of the time, it is the women who raise their voices. [...] When she raises her voice, and you also raise yours, you find that things get very bad at home. [...] But when you discuss, and one raises their voice while the other lowers theirs, you eventually meet in ideas and agree." (IDI 6, Man)

Women are more likely to report conversations about money, chores, and household plans get heated. 4 out of 8 interviewed women mention that such conversations at least sometimes get heated.

"[...] sometimes arguments appear, and you see we have a bit of quarrels." (IDI 5, Woman)

Only two women report that those conversations are calm.

"We talk calmly in the morning" (IDI 6, Woman)

Similarly to the man above, another woman who described these conversations as "calm" articulated calmness as a strategic response to male authority, rather than as a shared norm in the relationship:

"You see, when there is money, he might say we should buy roofing sheets or livestock. If you bring noise into money discussions, you end up not talking about anything and no decision is made. Some people even get angry and throw the money at you saying 'you handle it.'" (IDI 1, Woman)

For the remaining woman, there was no data available.

ii) Ease of discussing problems

Being in the treatment group of the survey is not clearly associated with greater ease of discussing problems (see Fig. 5).

Men consistently report greater ease of discussing problems with their partner in both treatment and control groups. This aligns with findings from the in-depth interviews, see [our discussion section on this](#).

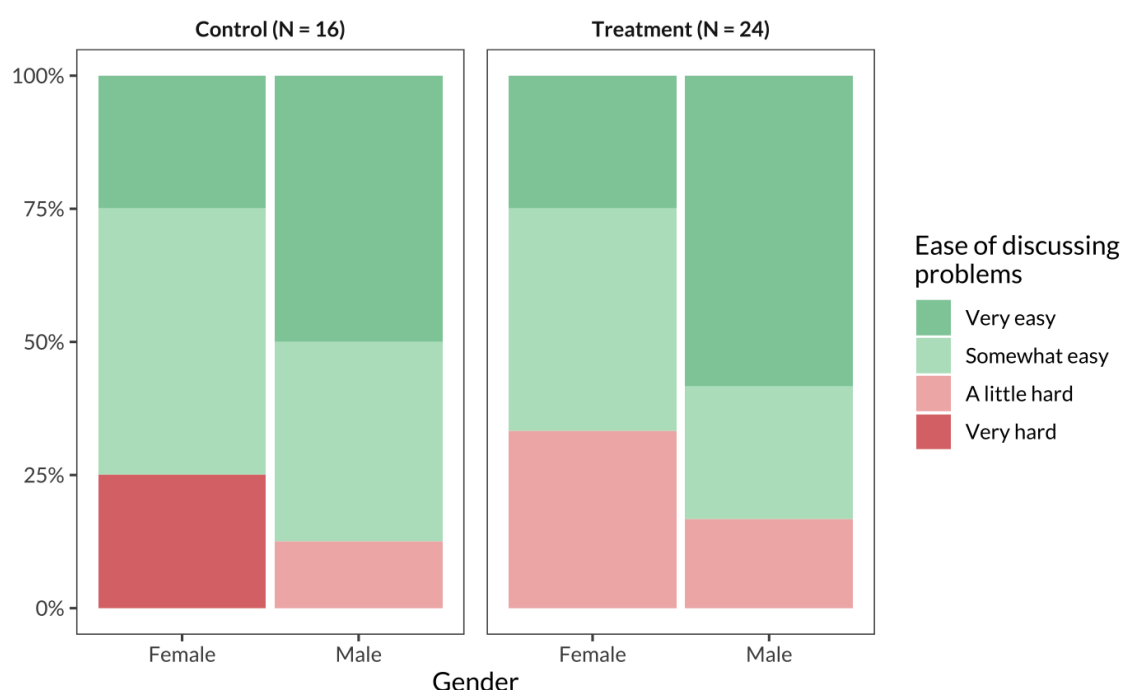
“Very easy, because we understand each other. When a problem comes, we are able to solve it because of the discussions we have had – when it comes, we are prepared for it.” (IDI 5, Man)

Women’s reported ease of discussing problems with their husbands varied and was conditioned on communication style, timing, and perceptions of respect.

“If I come when he returns from work and I immediately tell him the problem, he will not receive it well... you welcome him, give him water or food, then after finishing you tell him, ‘Here is the issue,’ and you talk to him calmly” (IDI 3, Woman)

“It’s a bit difficult because I see my husband really wants a lot of respect. So, I need to think carefully before I start talking about the problem.” (IDI 4, Woman)

Figure 5. Ease of Discussing Problems with Partner.



Note. Distribution of responses to the question “When you face a problem, how easy or hard is it for you to talk to your partner about it?”, by treatment status and gender. Bars show proportions within each group.

iii) Reported factors that enable calm conversations

Again, the factors that enable calm conversations mentioned by participants mostly reflect the messages present in the drama.⁷

Men mention calmness (both having a calm personality, and choosing calm situations to talk; 4 mentions), listening to each other (1 mention), talking about everything that happens in the home (1 mention), happiness (1 mention), and “observing neighbours who live peacefully and solve issues calmly” (1 mention).

Women’s responses point to calm communication as depending on mutual understanding (1

⁷ Choosing quiet times to talk, e.g. after dinner, before bed), communicating more and spending more quality time, being transparent and asking for the partner’s opinion before deciding, talking calmly to avoid unnecessary fights, encouraging women to speak up, and listening respectfully.

mention), respect for women (1 mention), economic stability (1 mention), appropriate timing (1 mention), and affection (1 mention). For 2 women, there was no data available.

"[...] in the morning, when someone wakes up, they are calm, not tired, and feel fine [...] We talk calmly in the morning." (IDI 6, Woman)

"The main issue is that they disrespect us. It would help if women were taken seriously and not seen as people who don't know how to manage money." (IDI 4, Woman)

Additionally, one woman mentioned God as helping to have calm conversations. One woman showed signs of adverse reflection and emphasized obedience as a way to avoid conflict (see the [Risks](#) section).

iv) Role of the drama in changing beliefs

For most of the above-mentioned factors, it remains unclear whether these factors reflected pre-existing beliefs or were introduced through the drama.

However, some participants explicitly referred to the drama as changing their beliefs.

One woman mentioned "the theatres we listen to" as beneficial for calm communication, and one man mentions learning calmness from the drama:

"When you are calm, everything is possible. You also understand that you have faults. Many people, as we saw in the drama, learned that being calm is important." (IDI 8, Man)

Furthermore, 3 men mentioned learning from the drama that women's contributions are valuable, which one of them directly relates to calmer conversations:

"[...] Before, we used to think that I, as a man, was the only one who had to think about this and that. When the woman gave an idea, [...] no one would listen to what she was saying. I believe it is now calm because she can bring up an idea, and we both talk about it and follow the same direction" (IDI 4, Man)

In the next section, we will discuss actual changes in participants' relationships in more detail. However, in focus groups, participants asserted that they would follow Hakiza & Mwamini's advice to communicate more frequently. This seems to be motivated, amongst other things, by the negative outcome observed in the negative role model Munyanziza.

"From what I understood in the drama, I would follow that advice one hundred percent. [...] Because failing to follow my partner's advice might cause me to end up like Munyanziza." (FGD 1, Men, Participant 2)

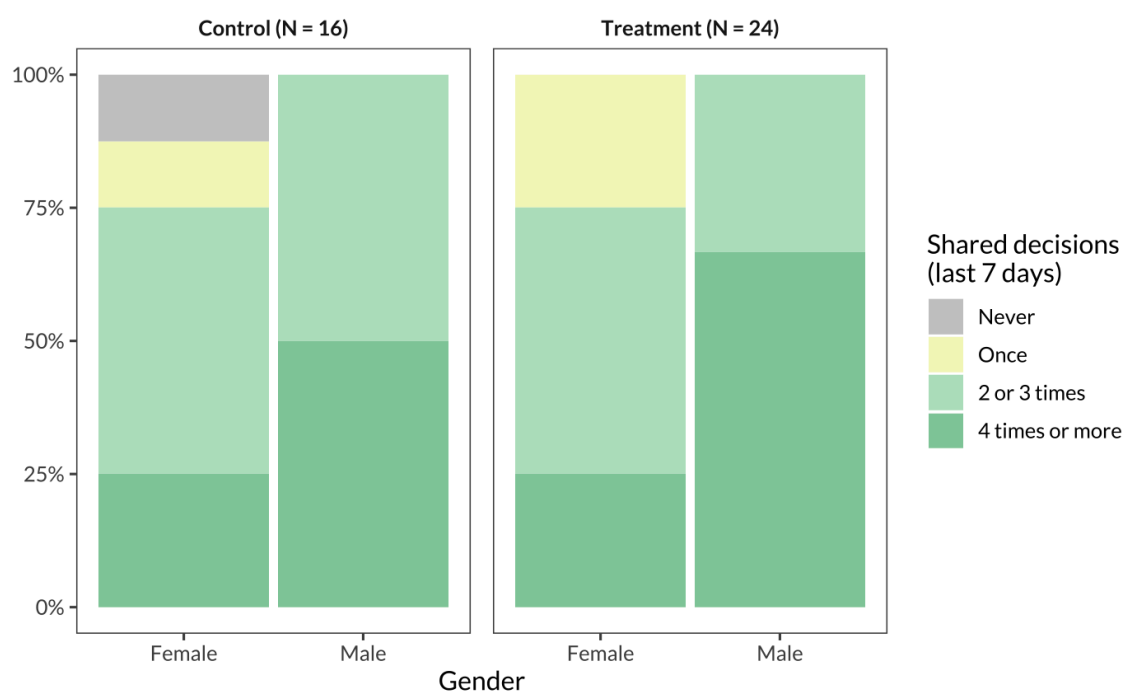
3.1.3 Changes in behaviors

The survey (weakly) and in-depth interviews (more strongly) suggest a positive effect on couples' decision-making and communication behaviors.

In the survey, the reported frequency of shared decisions differs only slightly between control and treatment groups (Fig. 6). However, in interviews, 7 out of 8 men and 6 out of 6 women reported a positive change in their relationships related to shared decision-making, suggesting that the survey might understate the effects of the drama. The gap between survey and interview results could be due to differences in magnitude of effect sizes, where,

even though some level of shared decision-making had already existed in their relationships, they still noticed improvements after listening. Another possible explanation for this is social desirability bias, which may have prompted participants in both treatment and control groups to portray their relationships more positively.

Figure 6. Shared decision-making by treatment status and gender



Note. Distribution of responses to the question “In the past week, how often did you and a partner make a decision together?”, by treatment status and gender.

7 out of 8 men, when explicitly prompted, report positive changes in either i) shared decision-making or ii) healthy communication. Of those 7,

- 2 men explicitly relate this to shared financial decision-making.
- 2 other men note that after listening to the drama, they shifted from leaving the house without informing their wives to now telling their wives about their whereabouts.
- One man shares that he and his wife now discuss their days retrospectively.
- Another man reports now discussing livestock keeping with his wife.
- One man spontaneously shares a consequence of asking for advice before making decisions and discussing decisions are trust & happiness in the relationship

Generally, the effect size (magnitude of change) seems to be large, with most men reporting changing from not making decisions with their wives at all to ‘consulting’ them often now.

“Before, I was not someone who did things in agreement with my wife. But after I started listening to that drama, I decided to start doing things in agreement with my wife.” (IDI 3, Man)

The remaining man, when prompted to say what changed through the drama regarding decision-making, shared that his wife *“learned from the drama that women can work hard and can help me.” (IDI 8, Man)*. While this reflects increased acceptance of women’s work,

empowerment is framed as supporting the husband rather than as shared decision-making authority.

6 out of 6 women report a positive change in their relationships related to shared decision-making and communication (no available data for the remaining 2 women). More specifically,

- **4 women report new communication practices after the drama:** 2 women report that their husbands now initiate discussions and that they understand that their wives also have a say in decision-making, one woman noted improved communication about her husband's travel plans, and another described revisiting a specific household decision after listening to the drama.
- **3 women report changes in financial decision-making:** 2 of them report now planned market purchases together with their husbands. One woman described a shift in her husband's behavior from spending income on alcohol to initiating financial discussions.
- **One woman reports that her husband has softened** and has put down his pride, which in the past had prevented him from **accepting her suggestions**.

Overall, as for previous topics, women seem less satisfied with decision-making in their homes than men do ([see Discussion](#)). As Fig. 6 shows, men consistently report more shared decisions than women. This aligns with findings from interviews, where only 2 out of 6 women say the way decisions are made in their homes is good/appropriate (no available data for the remaining 2 women) whereas 7 out of 8 men say that they feel good about the decision-making in their homes. This may seem contradictory to the positive relative changes mentioned above, but may be explained through the fact that on an absolute scale, women are still not satisfied with decision-making in their homes.

Men (3 mentions) and women (2 mentions) generally feel positive about how decision-making in their homes will develop in the future.

"It will change because, as I told you, the drama has brought benefits and blessings to the home. Things will change because people will start to notice and give us space, and they will realize that we have value." (IDI 4, Woman)

"If in just one week we can already agree on how to use our resources, that is a good sign, and it will only get better" (IDI 2, Man)

One woman reported advising another woman to communicate with her husband about her personal plans.

The following change mechanisms were identified:

(i) Inspiration from the drama's role models, specifically, Hakiza & Mwamini (see above section on [Changes in attitudes & beliefs](#)).

"For example, Hakiza, I heard that he is a husband who communicates with his wife through discussion. I saw that as a very good thing, and I also follow that example." (IDI 3, Man)

(ii) The drama conveys communication abilities (skills):

"We think things will become better because we have gained abilities we did not have before, which came from how we communicate." (IDI 4, Man)

(iii) The drama stimulates conversation at home. The drama prompted new interactions.

Participants use characters to articulate their struggles and wishes to their partners.

Furthermore, they use the drama to discuss shared decision-making as a concept.

- **3 women reported talking about the drama with their husbands.** One husband explicitly said he was going to change after the drama. The other two women talked more generally about the lessons in the drama.

"We talked about those families that were not getting along but eventually united." (IDI 8, Woman)

- **3 men reported discussing the drama with their wives.** One discussed the possibility of getting a license/motorcycle, and 2 discussed the importance of shared decision making.

"We discuss it a lot. I ask her, "When you hear Mwamini sit down and discuss things with her husband, what do you think about that?" Then we also sit down and discuss what is possible and what we should do." (IDI 8, Man)

Message #2: Reducing alcohol consumption

Evidence suggests a strong association between alcohol and increased levels and risk of IPV occurrence (Gibbs et al., 2020; Heise, 2011; Jewkes, 2002; Prevention Collaborative, 2024; World Health Organization, 2024). Hypothesized mechanisms include alcohol's diversion of household time and financial resources, which intensifies economic stress and conflict, as well as its cognitive and emotional effects, which impair judgment and self-regulation and increase the likelihood that disagreements escalate into violence (Gibbs et al., 2020).

Table 4. *Summary of Results for Message 2*

Dimension	Messages in the drama	Results
Summary	Participants recognized the negative effects of alcohol on household finances, health, children's wellbeing, and social respect. Several men reported reducing alcohol consumption, spending less time at the bar, or quitting altogether. However, reported reductions in spouses' alcohol consumption were modest, and participants rarely reported encouraging others to reduce drinking.	
Think	(++) Almost all participants note the negative impact of alcohol use on finances, nutrition and children. Respect for men is associated with fulfilling household responsibilities, drinking in moderation is praised.	
	Spending less on alcohol means more savings for food, school, and farming. The money for alcohol is not mine only, it belongs to the household.	(++) 8+ participants mentioned financial loss, poor nutrition, and less money for school as negative consequences of alcohol consumption. At least one man mentions that resources that are earned together must be shared.
	One or two bottles is enough – drinking more causes conflict, poverty, and poor health.	(++) 7 men and 5 women emphasize the importance of drinking in moderation.
	“Strong, respected men” can also be those who drink little or not at all.	(++) When explicitly prompted, participants emphasize that they associate respect for men with fulfilling household responsibilities rather than alcohol consumption (11 mentions among men, 9 mentions among women).
	I don't always have to follow my friends at the bar – my family matters too.	(++) 2 men report now coming back home earlier, 1 man reports recognizing that time at the bar is wasted, 1 man notes the influence his bar friends had on him and quitting drinking.

Feel	(+) Participants report associating excessive alcoholism with losing respect (4 men/4 women), feeling ashamed for spending too much time at the bar (1 man), and feeling confident about reducing alcohol consumption (1 man).	
	There is an “easy” way to help things at home (financially, family development).	(+) 1 man reports his realization that his alcohol consumption had led to economic losses.
	Drinking a lot is socially unacceptable.	(++) 4 men and 4 women explicitly associate the loss of social respect with excessive alcohol consumption.
	Time spent at home with my wife is also a good time; she’s a friend too.	(+) 3 men report the importance of coming back home early to spend time with their wives. 1 man reports cutting back time at the bar, 1 man reports feeling ashamed for spending too much time at the bar.
	Encouraged to change, knowing others have done it too.	(+) 1 man explicitly reports feeling confident that he could reduce his alcohol consumption.
Do	(+) A few (3) men explicitly report cutting back on their alcohol consumption. However, without being prompted, none report encouraging/supporting others in cutting back their alcohol computing expenses due to alcohol.	
	Reduce alcohol consumption.	(++) 3 men explicitly report cutting back on their alcohol consumption.
	Compute how much money is spent every week on alcohol.	(o) Not mentioned by participants.
	Encourage others to drink less and don’t mock others when they want to stop drinking.	(o) Not mentioned by participants.
	Support friends who want to cut back.	(o) Not mentioned by participants.

3.2.1 Message perception

Participants clearly understood the messaging of the drama, however, social desirability bias may have shaped their responses.

On the recommendation to reduce alcohol consumption

Both male and female participants picked up reducing alcohol consumption as a practical recommendation:

"The advice that was given was to encourage Mbabazi's husband to reduce his drinking so that he can achieve his goals." (FGD 1, Women)

"The practical advice is that we should stop drinking, for those who drink. Alcohol is not good – it destroys families. [...] The advice I remember is that Karinda was advised to reduce drinking and take care of his household responsibilities" (FGD 1, Men)

Participants connected the advice on alcohol consumption with other lessons from the drama, such as shared decision-making and communication:

"As for things related to alcohol, it is possible that even I might feel like drinking sometimes, but I must only use money that remains after the home's issues have been discussed and solved with my wife, if there is any leftover. And, indeed, it reminded me that drinking alcohol is not good because it uses the family's resources on unplanned things." (FGD 2, Men)

Participants called out advice that was given by the negative role models, such as Munyanziza's advice to use alcohol to combat stress:

"Munyanziza then advised him to go drink alcohol so that it would remove his stress – he told him that alcohol would solve all his problems. [...] I completely disagree with that advice because alcohol does not solve problems. " (FGD 1, Men)

No participants recall any benefits in alcohol consumption. Instead, when prompted in focus groups, participants mentioned multiple negative consequences of alcohol consumption, including

- poverty/financial loss (1 woman, 3 men),
- children not being able to attend school (1 woman, 2 men) & other negative consequences for the children (1 man, "The children also grow up with a bad view of their father and with problems"),
- stress/conflicts/tensions (1 woman, 2 men),
- no development of the family/forgetting about responsibilities at home (1 woman, 2 men),
- lost trust/respect from partner & community (1 woman, 1 man),
- poor nutrition (1 man).

Overall, when prompted in interviews, 8 out of 8 men and 4 out of 4 women say it would be a good thing if a man stopped going to the bar completely.

On the relationship between masculinity/respect and alcohol consumption:

Participants generally did not associate respect for a man with alcohol consumption. To earn respect, what matters is whether a man fulfills his responsibilities in the home: Respect is not

symbolic, it is practical and domestic (mentioned by about 9 female and 11 male respondents)

"A man, whether he drinks or not, if he fulfills his responsibilities at home – no conflicts, no hunger, children with school materials on time – that man is respected. A man is not respected for being known in bars like Munyanziza, claiming that buying drinks for everyone gives him honor. But if your children are suffering from malnutrition, will they respect you? There is no honor in that!" (FGD 1, Men)

Drinking and social respect are not seen as mutually exclusive. Drinking alcohol does not automatically remove respect – lack of self-control does (about 5 mentions by women, 7 mentions by men in focus groups).

"I don't believe that a man who drinks alcohol should automatically be seen as irresponsible." (FGD 1, Women)

"If you drink in moderation, then your ideas remain clear, and you can achieve what you are aiming for." (FGD 2, Men)

However, both genders strongly reject the idea that buying drinks in a bar creates "real" respect. 'Bar-based respect' is described as short-lived and transactional, often masking failure at home. Many explicitly contrast *bar respect* with *home respect*.

"In the bar, he has respect... but in his home, he has no respect at all." (FGD 2, Women)

"The respect they give you lasts only while you're with them in the bar... There is no true respect that comes from buying rounds in a bar." (FGD 1, Men)

3.2.2 Changes in attitudes & beliefs

The data suggest that listening to the radio drama is associated with a change in attitudes regarding alcohol consumption.

As Fig. 7 shows, the perceived acceptable alcohol consumption in the treatment group is lower than in the control group. This corroborates findings from interviews and focus group discussions, in which 3 men explicitly reported a change in attitudes related to alcohol consumption.

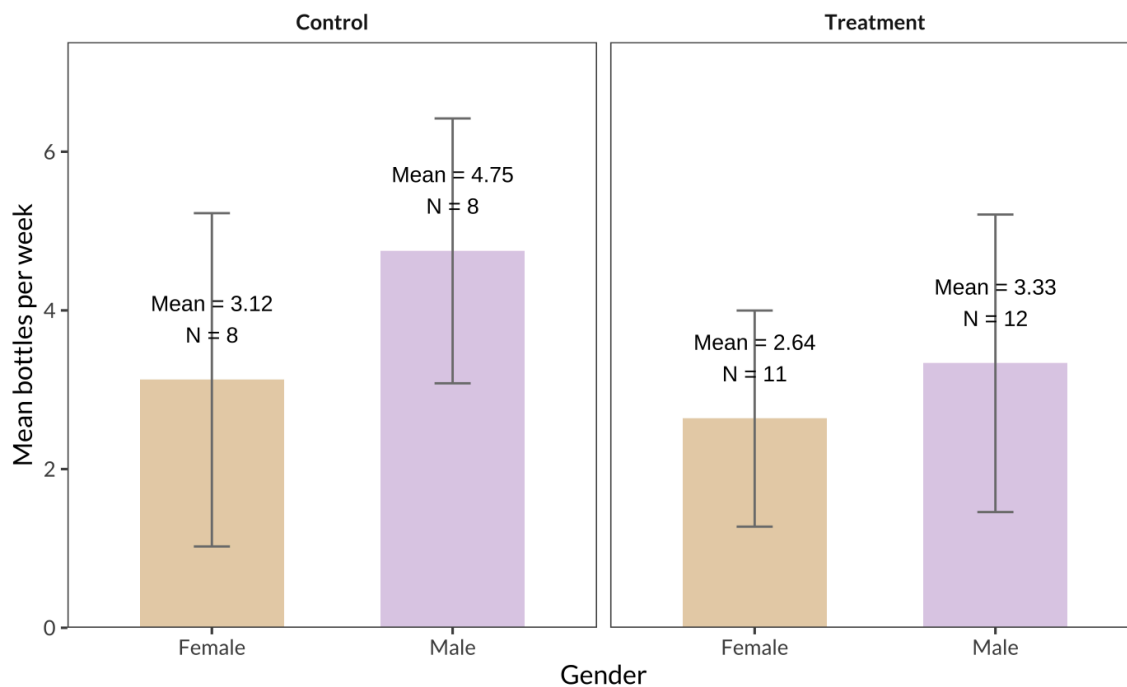
According to participants self-reports, listening to the drama led to the realization of alcohol's detrimental effects, both regarding relationships and economic outcomes.

Furthermore, in the above section, participants descriptions of the benefits and drawback of alcohol consumption reflected the drama's messages exactly. They sometimes even used the drama's characters to illustrate their descriptions.

"So, this drama changed my view of alcohol: I now see that alcohol has no benefit and no good future. It makes the family live badly, both in their relationships and through constant conflicts and quarrels between the couple. The children also grow up with a bad view of their father and with problems. Alcohol is of no value." (FGD 2, Men)

"When I listened to the drama, I started to change the way I was thinking. [...] I realized that I should not spend money drinking alcohol thinking that tomorrow I will have more. I discovered that it is not true." (IDI 3, Man)

Figure 7. Average perceived acceptable alcohol consumption (bottles/week), by treatment status and gender.



Note. Bars show mean responses to the survey question “For you, how many bottles of alcohol per week would be okay to drink, without it being too much?”, by gender and treatment status. Error bars indicate variability; subgroup sample sizes are shown.

We also attempted measuring confidence in reducing personal alcohol consumption, but the results remained inconclusive (no women reported drinking, and men misunderstood the question as referring to general confidence to reduce, and not their personal confidence). **However, one man shared that having already spent a week without consuming alcohol makes him feel confident that this could extend to more time.**

“I could reduce it. [...] The reason is that if a whole week can pass, and even five months can pass, why wouldn’t that day also pass while I continue life without alcohol?” (IDI 5, Man)

In particular, incremental change and having personal goals are brought up as reasons why a person generally should feel confident that they can reduce their alcohol consumption:

“Whenever they want alcohol, they can refuse it and gradually reduce consumption.” (IDI 3, Man)

“A person with goals may say: if I used to drink three times a week, let me try to drink once. [...] That is why I am confident that a person can reduce alcohol by about 80% or even more.” (IDI 1, Man)

Some men acknowledged continuing alcohol-related behaviors despite recognizing their harm, suggesting that a change in attitudes does not necessarily translate into changed behaviors.

“We came back here [to the bar] even though the lessons said this place wastes our money... ‘Let me just drink, anyway.’” (IDI 8, Man)

3.2.3 Changes in behaviors

2 men reported reducing their frequency of drinking. One of them says this pleased his wife, and he surprised her by bringing money home.

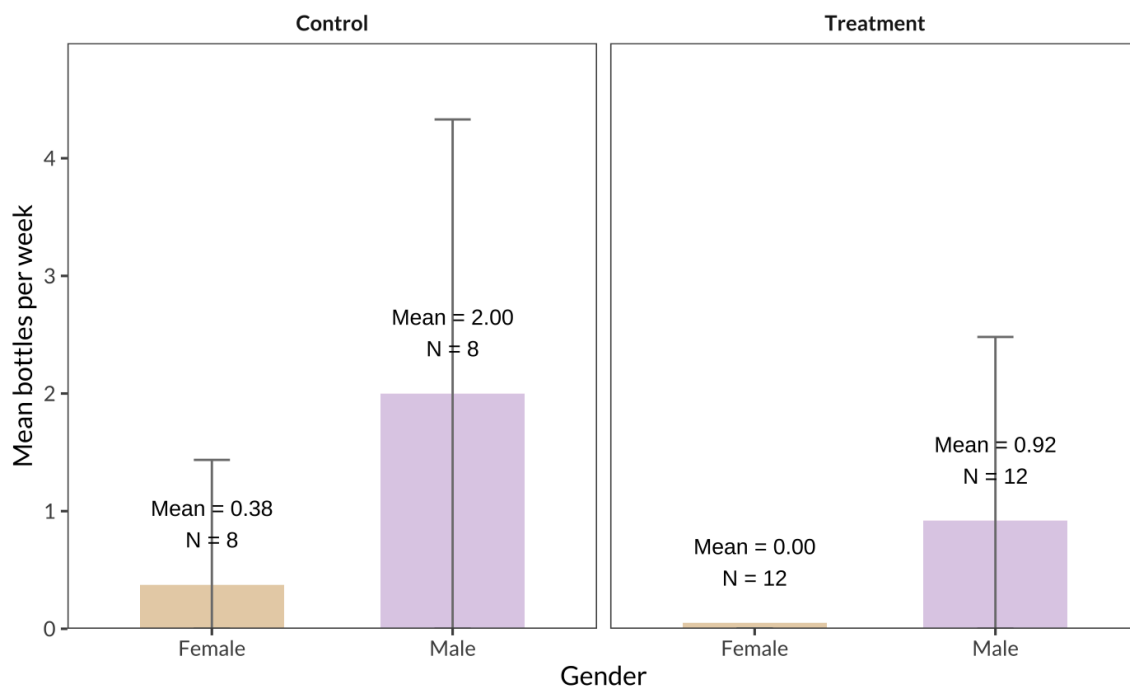
“Before, I used to drink many bottles because I thought I had to finish all the bottles I had, thinking tomorrow I would get more. Now, I drink just one bottle and stop. When I drink just one bottle, it doesn’t bother me, and at home, everything is safe, we don’t argue.” (IDI 3, Man)
“[...] now I limit myself to one or two bottles, as I learned from the drama [...]” (IDI 2, Man)

One man decided to quit drinking completely, mentioning former peer pressure and a new realization for resources that are earned together must be shared.

“Before, I used to drink because of the group of people I was hanging around. And my wife would tell me that I drank and I would say yes. I would feel ashamed and I removed myself from that [...] I changed by deciding that I won’t drink again. [...] It’s because the money I used to spend on drinking was money we had struggled to earn. So, we must share something that comes from our hard work. I can’t say I’m going to drink a whole bottle alone; instead, I bring sugar and we enjoy it together” (IDI 5, Man)

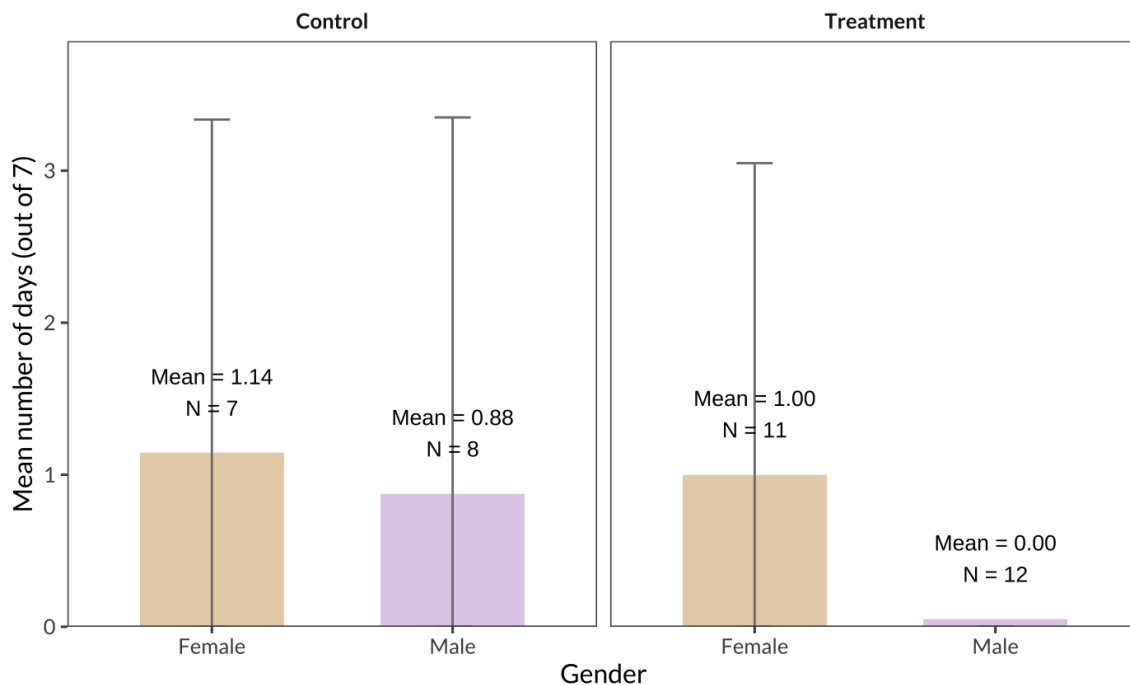
These findings are consistent with self-reported drinking behavior over the past seven days. As shown in Fig. 8 below, men (purple bars) in the treatment group (right) report drinking less than men in the control group (left). **However, women do not report a similar improvement.** In Fig. 9 below, women (yellow bars) indicate comparable levels of alcohol consumption among their husbands in both the treatment and control groups. This discrepancy may reflect reporting bias (see [our discussion](#)), or the lack of wives’ information about their husbands’ actual alcohol consumption.

Figure 8. Mean self-reported alcohol consumption (bottles/last week)



Note. Mean number of bottles of alcohol consumed in the past week, based on responses to the question: “In the past week, how many bottles of alcohol did you drink?”. Results are shown separately for control and treatment groups and by gender. Error bars indicate variability.

Figure 9. Average number of drinking days in the past week (partner)



Note. Mean number of days (out of seven) respondents reported that their partner consumed alcohol during the past week, regardless of location (at home, at a bar, or elsewhere). Responses coded as “99 = I don’t know” were treated as missing. Error bars indicate standard deviations, and sample sizes are reported above each bar.

Message #3: Seeking help early

Early help-seeking aims to interrupt the escalation of conflict and violence before harmful patterns become normalized. It is supposed to enable couples or individuals to access advice and mediation at a stage when problems are still manageable, increasing the likelihood that conflicts are resolved through communication rather than coercion or force. While evidence is promising for high-income countries that empowering women to seek out psychological support can reduce their experience of IPV, more evidence for low-income countries is still needed (UN Women, World Health Organization, & Social Development Direct, 2020).

Table 5. *Summary of Results for Message 3*

Dimension	Messages in the drama	Results
Summary	Participants viewed help-seeking as positive and supported the graduated pathway promoted in the drama, which starts with friends, family, or community mediators before involving authorities. However, a minority, particularly women, highlighted patience and enduring harm as a solution to IPV. Some participants showed limited awareness that even a single incident of violence is unacceptable, or were hesitant to involve authorities, showing that the drama was not entirely successful in changing existing beliefs about IPV and help-seeking.	
Think	(o/-) Help-seeking is seen as appropriate, ideally before violence happens. A few (3) women show limited awareness that even one incident of violence is not OK, patience/ endurance are highlighted as positive.	
	Even one incident of violence is not OK.	(o/-) 4+ participants in FGDs emphasize that help-seeking should occur before violence happens. However, 3 women show limited awareness that even one incident of violence is not OK.
	Seeking advice or mediation is a strength, not shameful.	(++) Participants agree that it was a good idea that the characters in the drama sought help.
	Silence makes things worse. Speaking up makes families stronger; it is an effective first step.	(+/o) Help-seeking is generally framed as positive, however, at least 2 men and 2 women highlight patience before speaking up as a positive quality.
	Who could be the first trusted person to share with?	(+) 2 women reported that the drama encouraged them to seek help from friends.
Feel	(+/o) Through the drama, a few (2) women feel encouraged to seek help, and 2 men	

	feel capable to advise others. Most participants agree that help-seeking can lead to positive outcomes, however, at least 2 participants would encourage enduring violence.	
	Feel comfortable reaching out to family, friends, or community members for help.	(+) 2 women reported that the drama encourages them to seek help from friends.
	Feel reassured that seeking help is not shameful and can lead to positive outcomes.	(o) Participants generally agree that it was a good idea that the characters in the drama sought help. However, at least 1 man and 1 woman would encourage endurance of violence. Without being prompted, 2 men frame police, RIB, or “higher authorities” as not always helpful and potentially damaging to family reputation.
	Feel capable and positive to offer support if they suspect a friend of being beaten who chooses to stay silent.	(+) 2 men reported that through listening to the drama, they feel capable of advising others.
Do	(+/o) Some men (4) & women (4) report advising others to seek help/ communicate more (1 man has adverse reflection in doing so). Some men (3) & women (4) say they would seek help from community mediators before authorities. No behavioral data.	
	First: discuss or seek mediation from family/friends. Next: involve family friends (IZU) if problems persist (then higher authorities).	(o) Lack of data for behavioral changes: 3 men and 4 women mention a system of graduated escalation, starting from seeking help from family friends, and only if that fails, going to authorities.
	For serious cases: report to RIB or police with family support.	(o/-) Lack of data for behavioral changes: Authorities are consistently framed as a later or last resort. Men in particular show resistance to formal authorities. 1 woman shows signs of adverse reflection by deprioritizing formal help-seeking channels after listening to the drama.
	Intervene positively if a friend is being beaten but is afraid to speak.	(++) 3 men and 4 women report having encouraged friends and acquaintances to seek help or communicate more. One man reported advising another couple but exhibited adverse reflection, opposing authority involvement and endorsing tolerance of household conflict.

3.3.1 Message perception

Early help-seeking is articulated as the ideal response by a majority. Across all 4 focus groups, participants agreed it was a good idea that Iribagiza sought help from Mbabazi. However, when further prompted, 2 women and a man say that she also could have talked to her husband first, or to a local leader to prevent the abuse from happening:

"It would have been better if she first talked to her husband and told him everything. Maybe he would have understood and the abuse would stop. Or she could have gone to a local leader or a respected person to ask for advice." (FGD 1, Women)

Additionally, at least one participant in each focus group articulated that Iribagiza waited too long to seek help.

"In my view, she should have immediately gone to seek help before it reached the point of being physically assaulted." (FGD 1, Women)

Violence remains the practical trigger for action. Participants endorsed early help-seeking in principle, but also framed Iribagiza's actual timing as understandable and justified through patience and hope for change. Violence marked the moment when the situation became "beyond endurance."

"She should have sought it earlier, but, as you know, sometimes a person first tries to be patient and tells herself, 'This person will change.' [...] and later it escalated to beatings, which had not happened before. That is when she said, 'Let me seek advice,' because it had gone beyond what she could handle" (FGD 2, Men)

When prompted whether the participants would have given different advice, a man and a woman mention patience and endurance (see [section 4.1](#) for risks associated with patience).

"Another thing she could have done was to endure. Patience wins. She could have endured those trials, and they might have reached a point where her husband would notice her patience and then abandon those behaviours." (FGD 1, Men)

Referring someone to trusted contacts is seen as a good response when asked for advice.

This is illustrated by participants valuing Mbabazi's advice to Iribagiza to go to trusted friends or [IZUs](#). They found it especially credible because, while struggling with similar problems herself, Mbabazi recognized the limits of her authority and redirected Iribagiza to people better placed and trained to provide guidance.

"Mbabazi herself was not in an easy situation because she had also been going through difficulties. She [Mbabazi] told her [Iribagiza], 'Whatever the case, you should go to family friends or go to Hakiza so they can help you and advise you.' I thought that was a good decision – guiding her [Iribagiza] to people trained to give advice." (FGD 1, Men)

Seeking help from the [IZUs](#) Rukundo and Margarita is framed in all focus groups as the right step for Iribagiza.

"Family members are there to talk about things that aren't going well. When there are problems or conflicts, they help bring solutions and restore order." (FGD 1, Women)

Legal authorities are consistently framed as a later or last resort.

"If the issue is too much for you, and you have passed through all local structures and nothing has changed, then going to legal authorities becomes the right step." (FGD 1, Men)

Men in particular show resistance to formal authorities. Police, RIB, or "higher authorities"

are framed as not always helpful, potentially damaging to family reputation, or something participants are afraid of.

“Authorities cannot always help because sometimes they separate you or try to solve things their way. The best thing is for people to agree among themselves. If the person refuses to listen, then you tell a trusted friend who is reasonable” (IDI 3, Man)

Women tend to see seeking help from authorities as an appropriate step:

“She was beaten, she should immediately seek help from authorities [RIB].” (IDI 3, Woman)

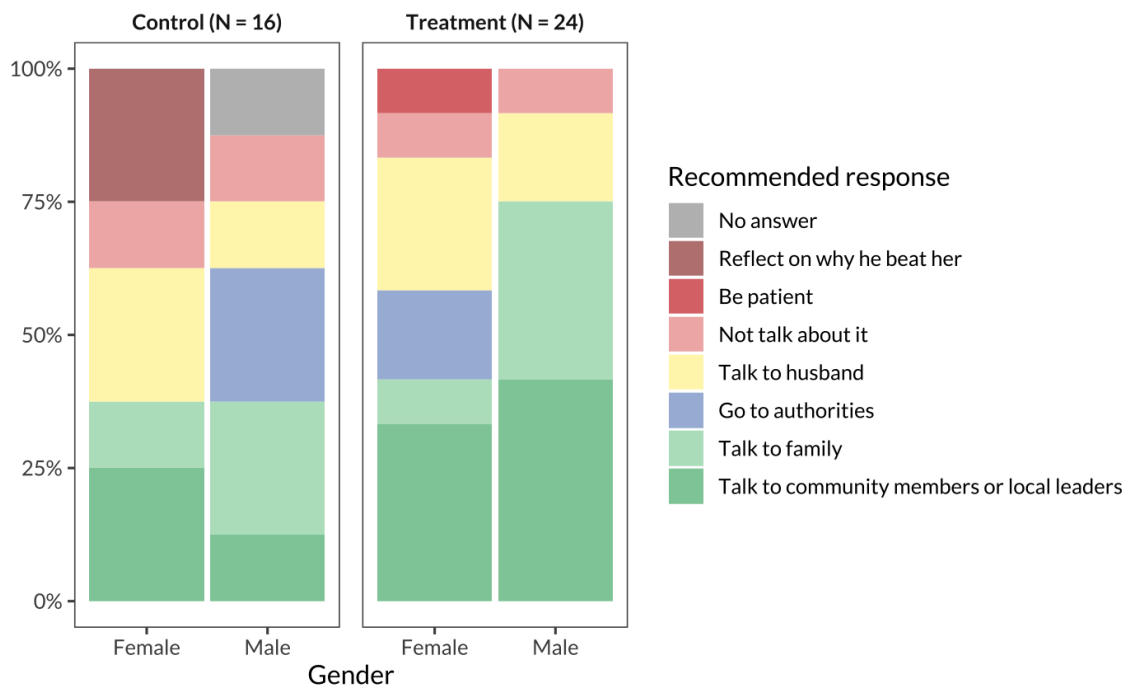
3.3.2 Changes in attitudes & beliefs

With the exception of one female participant, no one explicitly identified “seeking help early” as a key message of the drama. Nevertheless, data from the survey and interviews suggests the drama helped transform attitudes and beliefs towards seeking help early.

In the survey and interviews, we prompted participants with the fictional scenario of Umutoni, a survivor of intimate partner violence, and asked them i) what they think Umutoni should do, and ii) what they would do if Umutoni told them she had been beaten.

i) When asked what they think Umutoni should do, both women (~+20pp) and men (~+10pp) in the treatment group are more likely to recommend one of the desired answers (authorities, family, local mediators) than in the control group. In the treatment group, men are less likely than women to recommend “going to authorities” and propose local solutions instead. This pattern is reflected in the interviews.

Figure 10. Recommended responses for a fictional victim of intimate partner violence



Note. Distribution of responses to the question “Let’s imagine that Umutoni has been beaten by her husband Ntare. What should she do in your opinion?”, by treatment status and gender. Bars show proportions.

While in the survey, 5 out of 7 women's responses were interpreted as one of the desired responses, when prompted to further explain their responses in interviews, it seemed that only 2 out of 7 women would actually recommend Umutoni to seek help from friends, family members, and authorities (for one woman, data was missing).

2 women do not mention that Umutoni should seek help. One woman said Umutoni should talk to her husband. Another one said she should find out why he beat her.

3 women show limited awareness that even one incident of violence is not OK. They think Umutoni should be patient and endure before seeking help.

"What she should do is, if he hits her, I would tell myself: maybe he's hitting me to show he's the man of the house. I'd wait and see if he changes. If it keeps happening and becomes a habit, I would go to friends or family to talk about it and get support." (IDI 4, Woman)

"[...] she should not be beaten just once and immediately run. She should first calm down and try to reason with her husband. If it continues, she brings trusted family friends to talk to him." (IDI 6, Woman)

Additionally, 3 men and 4 women mention a system of graduated escalation (which is recommended in the drama), starting from seeking help from family friends, and only if that fails, going to authorities.

"Because family friends are closer and easier to reach, while Isange is at a higher institutional level, one should follow proper channels." (IDI 2, Man)

ii) When looking at what respondents would do if a friend of them were to experience IPV, here too, men and women are more likely to give a desired answer⁸ in the treatment group than in the control group (Fig 11). Women are more likely to try to mediate themselves (a large share would still recommend patience), while men are more likely to ask a relative to mediate (instead of recommending patience).

7 out of 8 interviewed men would go and talk to the couple. One man would advise Umutoni to seek help from the neighbors so they can mediate.

For the interviewed women, responses are somewhat more varied. Out of 7 women for whom data was available, only 3 would intervene by listening and facilitating a conversation, encouraging help-seeking from authorities or friends.

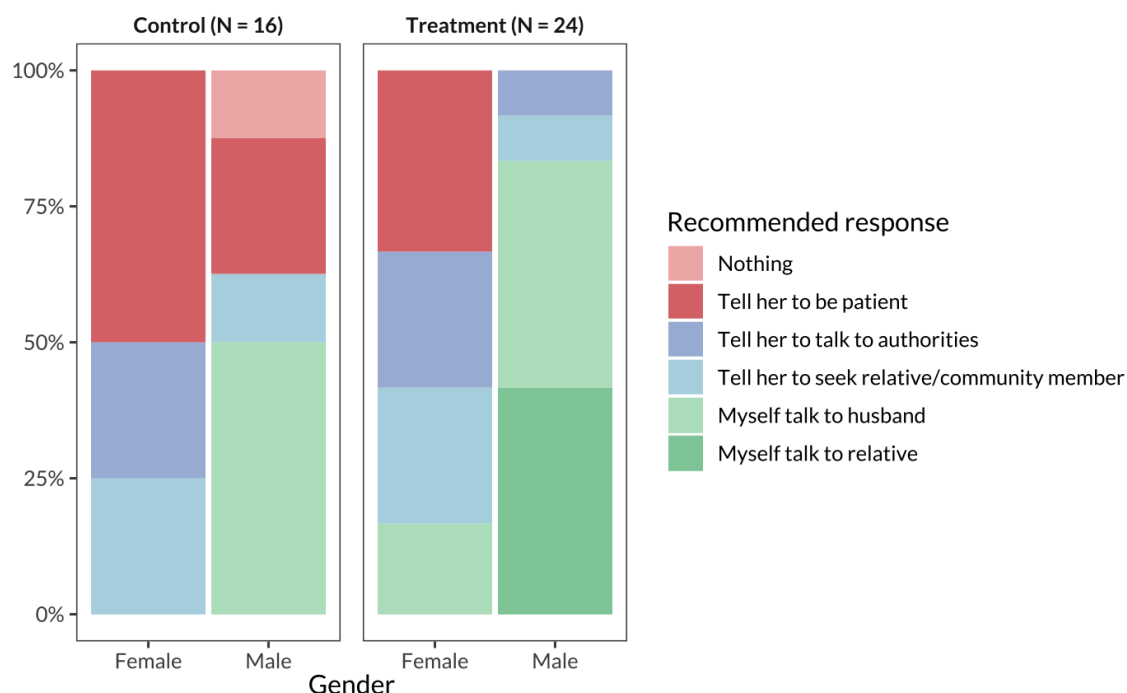
4 women show signs of adverse reflection. 2 women would advise Umutoni to be patient, with one explicitly endorsing endurance of violence (a pre-existing attitude).

"I would tell her to be patient, maybe it's the first time. I would tell her to endure and go back." (IDI 4, Woman)

Another woman's response suggests limited awareness that even a single incident of violence is unacceptable. One woman frames violence as preventable through women's behavior, rather than centering accountability on the perpetrator.

⁸ Tell her to talk to authorities, tell her to seek help from a community member, talk to relatives, talk to husband. Talking to the husband is included in the desired responses here because it shows efforts of trying to mediate and taking action, while in the above scenario, telling Umutoni to talk to her husband reveals gendered expectations around maintaining harmony.

Figure 11. Reported own response when a friend experiences intimate partner violence



Note. Distribution of responses to the question “Let’s imagine that one day, Umutoni comes to you and tells you that she’s being beaten by her husband. What would you do?”, by treatment status and gender. Bars show proportions within each group.

iii) Patterns across genders

Significantly more men than women in the treatment group give one of the desired responses (75% vs. 58% for i), 50% vs. 25% for ii). We comment on this pattern in the [Discussion](#).

For both questions i) and ii), and across both genders, despite reported “change,” many responses still include explicit or implicit blame placed on the woman.

“The reason Ntare beat her is that Mutoni raised her voice [...] What Mutoni should do is to lower herself and respond with kindness. [...] It is not necessary for her to immediately report him to the authorities. [...] If she responds with kindness, Ntare would see that it is good, and things would go well.” (IDI 6, Man)

“I would tell her to stay calm. First, I’d tell her to stay calm and discuss it with her husband. Later, she can see if sometimes she was beaten because of her own mistake.” (IDI 6, Woman)

Furthermore, although not always framed as victim-blaming, many responses across both genders mention efforts to find out who was wrong. Finding out who was wrong may be “positive” when it means that there are efforts to resolve the violence by finding the root cause of the conflict. It’s negative if it is based on the underlying belief that depending on “who was wrong,” the violence could have been justified.

“My wife and I would go together and advise them properly, because the advice we would give them would make them realise who is at fault and help them change and leave the wrongdoing.” (IDI 6, Man)

iv) Attributing changes to the drama

3 men explicitly reported that their advice changed by listening to the drama.

One man explicitly states that the drama changed his attitudes regarding the acceptability of violence, and enabled him to advise others:

"Before, I wouldn't have given any advice because I didn't know anything myself. [...] Before, I would have taken the decision to say, 'I will hit my wife,' but now I would explain it to a man (neighbor/older person) and say, 'Fighting is not the solution.'" (IDI 3, Man)

One man reports a shift from gender solidarity to moral neutrality:

"Before, I might have sided with the husband just because he is a fellow man, even when he was wrong" (IDI 2, Man)

The drama led one man to recognize his own stubbornness and enabled him to give advice to individuals experiencing IPV:

"Before hearing this drama, she could have come to ask me for advice, but I myself, in my home, was stubborn. I could not give good advice to a woman." (IDI 4, Man)

2 women reported that the drama encouraged them to seek help from friends:

"[...] I didn't consider going to family members until she suggested it. [...] I hadn't realized that going to family members could be helpful." (FGD 1, Women)

"When I heard the drama it changed me. I felt I should find my trusted friends and talk about the problem without broadcasting it everywhere." (IDI 3, Woman)

The drama seemed to have discouraged one woman from seeking help from authorities/ leaving the household to being patient even when violence occurs:

"Before, I thought if a man hit me, I would leave immediately, like run away and never come back. I felt there was no reason to be hit. But after hearing that drama, listening to those women talk about how they handle things, I realized it's not the end of the world." (IDI 6, Woman)

2 women reported no change of their attitudes regarding help-seeking. One of them held the attitude of enduring violence before and after the drama, the other saw authorities as a good solution before and after the drama.

For 4 interviewed women, we do not know if their attitudes changed because not enough questions were asked by the enumerators.

Inspiration to change seems to have come from the drama's characters, especially for men.

The advice provided by Hakiza & Mwamini to Karinda & Mbabazi, as well as Karinda's character-transformation is cited by two men as catalyzing change:

"The key parts that helped me immediately change the advice were those showing that enduring alone without help wasn't effective. Seeing the part where the wife approached the neighbors for guidance, and the counselors intervened to advise the husband, showed that seeking help resolves the problem better than merely enduring." (IDI 7, Man)

"The part where Karinda quarrelled with his wife after failing the driving permit exam and not telling her, and the wife went to Hakizimana's wife for advice. They later came and advised them together, and that advice helped them, and it also helped me" (IDI 2, Man)

3.3.3 Changes in behaviors

The drama appears to have prompted concrete behavior changes, with about half of interviewed men and women reporting that they shared constructive relationship advice after listening. Only one male participant expressed adverse reflection.

4 out of 8 interviewed men reported they have advised someone they know since listening to the drama. Among the 4 who did not, three of them say that this is because they did not encounter any instances of violence. One man encouraged help-seeking from family friends:

"The way it was, the husband disrespected his wife, and after he disrespected her there was chaos, and everyone came to know about it. I told them, 'Instead of spending your time fighting and shouting and causing public disorder, you should look for people who can mediate and understand the issue you disagree on. [...]' [...] It ended with the wife taking the first step and going to talk to the close family friends I mentioned. The family friends went to their home, told the husband, 'Here you were wrong; no man should behave like this.' They also told the wife, 'You should not always react harshly. When you live together, if one gets emotional, the other should lower their voice and calm down so that you can agree later—or if you see it escalating, walk away.' [...] It ended with one of them accepting their mistake. The husband humbled himself and said, 'My wife, here I was wrong, forgive me—it will not happen again.' It ended with mutual understanding, and now they live together peacefully."

(IDI_1_Man)

One man encouraged communication instead of beating:

"I told a husband, 'Beating your wife is not good. First, you must communicate because no one else can solve your problem. If you do not communicate, you have to discuss and reach understanding, and that is better.' And he agreed with me." (IDI_3_Man)

One man directly gave advice to a friend "who would sometimes mistreat his wife openly:"

"[...] I made him understand that even though he is the man, he is not supposed to be the one handling every single thing. I showed him that if he is at home with his wife, there is something she can do too and even advise him" (IDI 4, Man)

One man shows signs of adverse reflection, as he opposed the involvement of authorities and highlights tolerance of household conflict as a positive quality:

"[...] when I heard they were going to arrest him, I told them that I didn't think arresting him was the solution. [...] It ended with him not being arrested. The woman agreed to return home, but because it wasn't fully in her heart, the next day, on Wednesday, the husband went to look for her and found that she had taken her things and left. [...] just like in that drama, those women really had the mindset that they didn't act rashly. They made decisions with purpose, and they tolerated whatever came in the home." (IDI 8, Man)

3 out of 8 women reported that they have encouraged help seeking since listening to the drama. For 4 out of 8, data on this question was missing, either because part of the recording was missing (2 instances) or because the question was not asked (2 instances). For the last woman, she did not report having encouraged anyone.

One woman encouraged another woman to seek out help from a trusted friend:

"There is a neighbor of ours whose husband does nothing for her. I told her "Don't focus on the husband, instead ask yourself what can you do to get something?" [...] If you want to do something and your husband wants to do something, talk and choose one thing you will do together. Enumerator: [...] So you advised her about that, any other advice? About how she was being beaten? Participant: Yes, about how she was being beaten. I told her "did you talk to anyone? How did it happen? Did you keep quiet? Did you resolve it?" She said "I tried to talk to someone but I am still trying." I told her "then find your trusted friend, talk about the issue, go with her to your home or she comes to you and helps you resolve the issue." (IDI 3, Woman)

One woman encouraged another woman to seek help from the authorities:

"The woman was being beaten, and you could see that it was serious – constant conflict, they argued, and after arguing the husband beat her. It reached a point where I told her, 'Instead of staying until he kills you, go and seek help from the local authorities so that they get involved and he gets the punishment he deserves. They are the ones who will make the right decisions because reconciling has failed.' " (IDI 5, Woman)

One woman even reports that she advised one woman to stay calm and seek help from others:

"Because a friend of mine also had some conflicts at home. [...] I told her that if there's a problem at home, she must stay calm, not react to her husband's outburst, and then come and talk to him peacefully. [...] I told her to seek help. [...] Because I could see that she couldn't handle it on her own. [...] I was giving her advice, but I knew she might not understand it because I'm alone. I advised her to seek others to talk to her." (IDI 6, Woman)

Discussion: Systematically different responses by men & women

Across the messages, men (in the treatment group) consistently give the desired response more often, and consistently report their relationships more positively than women. This tendency is particularly apparent in the survey, but also observable in interviews.

While it goes beyond the scope of the report to explain why this is the case, we have a few hypotheses.

- Social desirability bias might be more prominent among men
- Men might be more oblivious to the power differentials in their households because they are the ones in power (oppressor vs. oppressed)
- The proxy variables measured in surveys (such as "shared decision"/ "calm communication") might be defined differently by men and women. For example, the bar for what constitutes "calm" communication might be much lower for men.

However, there could be other reasons, especially given the limitations of the current study in determining causal mechanisms. Further research could explore this pattern in more depth by replicating it with larger sample sizes – according to Simmons, Nelson & Simonsohn (2011), with at least 20 observations for men in each treatment and control groups.

4. Risks

Many participants, especially women, identified patience as a key takeaway from the drama. For context, patience is a strongly valued norm associated with nobility in Rwanda, which can explain why it was picked up (National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, 2023, pp. 20-21). Patience was interpreted in different ways – either as calm communication or as enduring harm and delaying help-seeking. Some participants shifted away from immediate formal support toward informal solutions, and a few expressed acceptance of violence, framed around fault, obedience, or relationship harmony.

While less frequent, emotional distress, misunderstanding key messages, access barriers, and ethical concerns around participation also emerged and should be considered in future program design.

In [section 5](#), we describe the changes we have made to mitigate those risks.

4.1 Patience, endurance & delaying help-seeking

6 out of 8 interviewed women mentioned “patience” in some capacity as a takeaway from the drama, and patience as a lesson also comes up in one focus group. There is some ambiguity as there are at least two ways to interpret patience (1) as de-escalation of heated situations and calm communication, and (2) as endurance of harm.

2 women explicitly connected patience to enduring violent relationships. One of them still recommends seeking help. For 2 women, the evidence is mixed – they learned being patient, but not in a way that is connected to enduring violence. For one woman, patience is connected to talking calmly when issues arise. For one woman, there is too little context to judge.

“I would tell her to be patient, maybe it’s the first time. I would tell her to endure” (IDI 4, Woman)

This matters because when patience is understood as enduring harm, it may delay help-seeking and increase the risk of continued violence.

At least 2 women changed their attitudes about appropriate help-seeking channels because of the drama, from thinking that authorities or running away is the appropriate solution, to first using informal channels (the first step promoted in the drama).

“[...] after listening to the drama I felt that it is not necessary to rush to report to security authorities or police or RIB. I saw it is not necessary. First go slowly, find your trusted friend, talk about your problem, and if it fails then think of going to RIB.” (IDI 3, Woman)

For one of them, an increase in IPV acceptability is discernable:

“Before, I thought if a man hit me, I would leave immediately, like run away and never come back. I felt there was no reason to be hit. But after hearing that drama, listening to those women talk about how they handle things, I realized it’s not the end of the world.” (IDI 6, Woman)

Additionally, one man endorsed endurance:

“I wouldn’t flee. Because often, in the drama, when women were beaten, they endured, hoping things would change.” (IDI 8, Man)

Another man said that in case of violence, it is not necessary to go the authorities immediately. However, the man likely already held this view before listening.

“Respond with kindness and humility. It is not necessary for her to immediately report him to the authorities.” (IDI 6, Man)

While finding a trusted friend can be reasonable for low-risk conflict, for violence it can increase danger if it delays protection, medical care, documentation, or safe exit. Informal support can be valuable, but needs explicit “red lines” for when immediate formal support is appropriate.

4.2 Victim-blaming & Violence as justifiable

About 3 women and 5 men frame responses to violence around determining who was “wrong.”

“We also get beaten, but it depends on what you were beaten for. Sometimes it’s your fault, sometimes the husband beats you because of his own mistakes.” (IDI 3, Woman)

This framing can normalize violence as a corrective response, reduce empathy and support for survivors, and pressure women to self-police rather than seek safety.

At the same time, it is important to note that many participants expressed a genuine interest in addressing underlying conflicts within relationships, which can be relevant for long-term prevention and reconciliation. However, efforts to understand relational dynamics must be clearly separated from judgments about the legitimacy of violence: violence is never justified and responsibility lies with the perpetrator. This tendency to assess “fault” reflects a broader and commonly observed pattern of victim-blaming and violence justification in the context, suggesting that the drama did not fully challenge these norms or make sufficiently explicit that violence is never acceptable.

4.3 Adverse thinking: Obedience

Approximately 2 women and 2 men interpreted the drama’s messages on mutual understanding and respect as emphasizing women’s obedience to male authority. When one of the women is prompted about what helps her having calmer conversations, she responds:

“What would help me is obeying my husband.” (IDI 8, Woman)

Specifically men framed mutual understanding and listening as obedience:

“Now when I tell her something, she listens. If I say ‘wash my trousers,’ she does it quickly. [...] Before, I would tell her, ‘Next week I have a trip, can’t you wash the shirt I will travel with?’ And she would tell me ‘Wash it for yourself,’ and it would lead to arguments, and I would end up washing it myself.” (IDI 5, Man)

“Before, there was no mutual understanding. Now the positive result is that whenever I tell my wife, ‘Please wash this shirt because tomorrow I will go somewhere,’ she understands immediately.” (IDI 1, Man)

These risks reinforcing inequitable gender norms that position men as legitimate decision-makers and women as responsible for maintaining harmony through compliance. In IPV contexts, this legitimizes control and submission, and poses obedience as a strategy to avoid further violence.

4.4 Triggering content

One woman felt emotionally triggered from the drama and explicitly anticipates women feeling hurt.

“The negative effects... emotional wounds can’t be completely avoided, because sometimes the husband hurts his wife, and you feel a bit triggered, like anyone would. [...] If it were aired on the radio, many women would feel very hurt, because it includes men who mistreat their wives.” (IDI 4, Woman)

Among women, the observation forms show a few mild expressions of empathy and sadness across the drama. This includes disputes between Mbabazi and Karinda, Dorosera and Iribagiza reflecting on past hardship, and Munyanziza’s violent or irresponsible behavior, such as selling the goat. Notably, the observation forms did not note any strong reactions (e.g., no women cried).

One man cried during episode 9, when Mbabazi shared with Mwamini that Karinda did not speak with her anymore.

IPV-related narratives can activate trauma, particularly when listened to in shared domestic spaces or in the presence of a partner. However, emotional activation is not inherently negative. As the participant suggests, being “touched” by the drama can also prompt empathy and reflection.

While the drama intentionally excluded explicit depictions of violence to mitigate potential harm, these findings (the woman) suggest that implicit representations of abuse can still be emotionally triggering for some listeners, as well as explicit representations of pain (the man).

4.5 Secondary risks & implementation concerns

Although mentioned infrequently, the following issues were noticeable and worth considering:

- **Misunderstanding key elements:** As the violence was implicit, (Iribagiza recounts to a friend she was hit, but we don’t hear the hitting); one woman did not perceive physical violence in the drama, indicating potential misinterpretation of core messages
“Even though there were men behaving badly, I didn’t hear any man beating his wife in that way.” (IDI 5, Woman)
- **Unintended “emancipation” via bars:** One woman interpreted the drama as legitimizing spending money on herself and going to bars, which may reflect empowerment but also goes against the drama’s messaging of reducing alcohol consumption.
“I realized I should start going to bars, and I now spend some money for myself.” (IDI 6, Woman)
- **Suggestions and risks brought up by participants:** Limited access to radios, electricity, or charging was reported as a barrier to participation, raising concerns about unequal reach.
“I don’t have a radio or electricity, and charging the phone is a problem.” (IDI 8, Man)

5. Changes made based on the evaluation

From our analysis, and in consultation with RWAMREC and the team of enumerators and transcribers (who either heard the interviews live or on tape) the risks with airing the drama were assessed as low. Most felt the drama was ready to air without any adaptations. During this review, several potential risks were discussed. Two were deemed sufficiently serious to warrant changes to the drama, and one lower-priority risk was identified that could be addressed as a “low-hanging fruit” as an added precaution:

- Risk 1: The drama could lead women or men to believe that it is good to endure economic or physical abuse for some time before seeking help.
- Risk 2: The drama could unintentionally justify violence under certain circumstances, or justify not seeking help.
- Risk 3: Audiences might interpret shared decision-making and healthy communication as obedience expected from women.

In total, seven scenes were adapted to address these risks. The full description of the changes are available in [this document](#).

Summary of mitigation strategies

Addressing risk 1: enduring abuse before seeking help

- Mitigation 1: More explicit mentions of the importance of seeking help early
- Mitigation 2: Affirming characters when they seek help
- Mitigation 3: Explicit mention that enduring or patience is not a solution to violence
- Mitigation 4: Explicit reflection on how the timing of help seeking can prevent future problems

Addressing risk 2: Justifying violence or not seeking help

- Mitigation 1: State more explicitly that violence is never acceptable and illegal
- Mitigation 2: explain more clearly where to seek help and what IZU are/do

Addressing risk 3: Shared decision-making interpreted as obedience

- Mitigation 1: Show men more clearly sharing the workload/household tasks

Beyond the scene-level adaptations, these insights [also shaped](#) the script for the introductions and outros recorded by a popular Radio Rwanda journalist.

Results: [A smaller follow up qualitative evaluation](#) showed that the adaptations were successful in mitigating the risks, with a much higher proportion of both male and female respondents recognizing and endorsing the message to seek help early.

6. Conclusion

Listening to the drama reportedly led to substantial improvements in (i) shared decision-making (and thus, in gender equality) **communication** for a sizable share of participants, as well as (ii) some reduction in **alcohol consumption**, which are drivers for intimate partner violence, according to the scientific literature ([Gibbs et al., Glob Health Action, 2020](#)), as well as NOVAH's own [field research](#) in Rwanda. **Compared to season 1, the addition of healthier communication and reducing alcohol proved themselves useful in improving relationships.**

The message (iii) **to seek help early** resonated with some participants but was not picked up by some others, which led to revisions in the drama. These revisions were tested in February 2026 with 12 early listeners, showing they succeeded in mitigating these risks.

In 2026, the impact of this season will also be quantitatively evaluated in a randomized control trial in partnership with Innovations for Poverty Action and the University of Rwanda. We consider qualitative / mixed-methods evaluations like this one particularly useful to better understand quantitative results and to adapt the drama before airing.

Learn more at www.novah.ngo and contact us at info@novah.ngo.

We're currently fundraising for a third season in Rwanda and expanding our work to Burundi and other countries. If you'd like to know more, don't hesitate to reach out at ivy@novah.ngo.

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