

LINEA intervention development process

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BACKGROUND

Between 2015-2020 the [Learning Initiative on Norms, Exploitation and Abuse \(LINEA\)](#) co-developed a multi-component social norms intervention to prevent age-disparate transactional sex between adolescent girls 13-15 years-old and men at least 10 years older in Tanzania. The intervention was developed in collaboration with three research and implementing partners in Tanzania: [The National Institute for Medical Research \(NIMR\)](#), [Amani Girls Home \(AGH\)](#) and [Media for Development International \(MFDI\) Tanzania](#). Building on the LINEA formative research described in [Evidence Brief 1: Systematic review of social norms linked to the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents](#), and [Evidence Brief 2: Attitudes, beliefs and normative influences linked to transactional sex: Insights from LINEA formative research in Brazil, Tanzania and Uganda](#), this brief (Evidence Brief 3) describes the key LINEA intervention components and learnings from co-developing this intervention.

The LINEA intervention is rooted in evidence about the effectiveness of social norms interventions, which suggests that significant and cost-effective reductions in intimate partner violence can occur during programmatic timeframes.ⁱ The development phase of an intervention happens after the idea for an intervention occurs, and prior to the formal pilot testing of the intervention.ⁱⁱ Although evidence about best practice for co-developing interventions, and the role of different partners in the process is limited, researchers and practitioners have identified promising characteristics associated with co-developed interventions, and have established some key learningsⁱⁱⁱ:

- Co-developed interventions are more likely to meet the needs of target populations and be contextually specific.
- Co-developed interventions are more likely to be acceptable to practitioners, communities and individuals.
- Co-development will produce more interventions which can successfully be implemented in the real world and are practically and financially feasible.
- In the longer-term, co-developed interventions have been found to be sustainable, scalable and transferable to different contexts.
- Intervention development should be dynamic, iterative, open to change and forward-looking to future evaluations. It should also be evidence-based, incorporate stakeholders' views, demonstrate methodological expertise and be scientifically robust.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

LINEA takes a collaborative and action-oriented approach to research. One of our key aims is to test social norms change theory by designing an intervention to prevent age-disparate transactional sex. Following multiple stages of research to understand the problem, and develop and refine programme activities, we co-developed a 39-episode radio drama and two curricula targeting adult men and adolescent girls respectively. As a result, the intervention is relevant and appropriate in the target population, optimising the chance of the intervention being effective.



Photo by Marie-Celine Schulte

WHAT IS AGE-DISPARATE TRANSACTIONAL SEX?

Age-disparate transactional sex happens when there is an implicit understanding that material support or other benefits will be exchanged for sex between adolescent girls under 18 years-old, and adult men more than 10 years older. These relationships occur outside of marriage or sex work,ⁱⁱⁱ and are characterised by inherent inequities between adolescent girls and adult men based on age, gender and access to resources.^{iv}

i Esplen, E. (2020). Changing social norms to prevent VAWG: What works and where do we go from here? Conference Presentation: LINEA Meeting. Online. <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/4.%20Emily%20Esplen.pdf>

ii Turner, K. M., Rousseau, N., Croot, L., Duncan, E., Yardley, L., O'Cathain, A., & Hodinott, P. (2019). Understanding successful development of complex health and healthcare interventions and its drivers from the perspective of developers and wider stakeholders: an international qualitative interview study. *BMJ Open*, 9(5): e028756.

iii Stoebenau, K., Heise, L., Wamoyi, J., & Bobrova, N. (2016). Revisiting the understanding of "transactional sex" in sub-Saharan Africa: A review and synthesis of the literature. *Social Science & Medicine*, 168, 186-197.

iv Mojola, S. A. (2014). *Love, money, and HIV: Becoming a modern African woman in the age of AIDS*. California: University of California Press.



Adolescent girls and AGH staff who partook in the radio drama listener group sessions celebrate with their participation certificates.

Age-disparate transactional sex contributes to negative health, social and developmental outcomes such as sexually transmitted infections including HIV, unplanned pregnancy, child marriage, school dropout,^v sexual coercion and intimate partner violence.^{vi} Adolescent girls and young women are 2.5 times more likely to contract HIV than their male peers, and account for 26% of new HIV infections in Southern and Eastern Africa despite making up only 10% of the population.^{vii}

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PREVENTING AGE-DISPARATE TRANSACTIONAL SEX?

There is limited evidence about what works to prevent age-disparate transactional sex. The LINEA intervention fills important gaps in research and practice including:

- Interventions where preventing transactional sex is a primary outcome.
- Interventions which work with men and adolescent girls.
- Mass media or 'edutainment' interventions to shift harmful social norms.
- Gender transformative interventions that incorporate a clear gender and power lens.
- Interventions that work with peer groups to critically reflect on long- and short-term implications of sexual transactions and build skills to reduce risk associated with the practice.

THE LINEA INTERVENTION

The finalised LINEA intervention has two key components which are mutually reinforcing: a radio drama, and two curricula (one targeting adult men, and the other adolescent girls). The exercises in the curricula connect to the radio drama by using the names of the characters and some of the elements of the storylines.

v Luke, N. & Kurz, K. (2002). Cross-generational and transactional sexual relations in sub-Saharan Africa. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women.

vi Kyegombe, N., Meiksin, R., Wamoyi, J., Heise, L., Stoebenau, K., & Buller, A. M. (2020) Sexual health of adolescent girls and young women in Central Uganda: exploring perceived coercive aspects of transactional sex. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters* 28(1).

vii UNAIDS. (2020). UNAIDS Data 2020. Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.



RADIO DRAMA

The **radio drama** entitled 'Msichana wa Kati' or 'The Girl in the Middle' comprises 39 episodes and is targeted at the whole community. Complementing the curricula, the radio drama was designed to help listeners critically reflect on the drivers of age-disparate transactional sex, and what the community can do to support girls and men to avoid age-disparate transactional sex. Episodes can be aired on a local radio station, multiple times per week, ensuring exposure to a varied audience. The radio drama will start to air before the curricula are delivered and will continue after the curricula have finished. Through the radio drama storylines, the listeners will get to know the characters and witness them supporting each other to take action to avoid and prevent age-disparate transactional sex.



CURRICULA

The **curricula** comprise 17 sessions for adolescent girls aged 13-15, and 18 sessions for adult men, to be implemented over a period of five months. The curricula are designed to facilitate change both in the lives of individual participants and the social norms in their communities by encouraging critical reflection on issues of gender and power, and participants' own values. They also encourage participants to reconsider age-disparate transactional sex with new information about the risks and benefits of living without it. The curricula will progressively build participant's awareness, knowledge and practical skills to tackle age-disparate transactional sex. The curricula include a number of unique features such as using a **gender transformative and synchronised approach**; a **focus on positive, alternative norms and goal achievement for girls**; and targeted **take-home assignments to promote organised diffusion** outside of the sessions.

KEY STAGES IN THE LINEA INTERVENTION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



ACTIVITIES

OUTCOMES

KEY LEARNINGS

The LINEA intervention development process helped us establish several unique design features to improve the effectiveness of the intervention.

- The intervention content and approach are **evidence-based**, and **relevant and acceptable** for the target population. This improves its ability to successfully interact with the contexts where it is implemented, and improve the likelihood of successful uptake and sustainability.
- Through the co-design process LINEA has fostered **close partnerships** with two implementing organisations. Implementing staff delivering the intervention will have been working on the project for over four years, increasing **ownership by global south partners**, improving constructive communication between collaborators, and improving the quality of services delivered.
- The two elements of the intervention are **mutually reinforcing** (but could be implemented separately), for example case studies of radio drama characters and storylines are used in the curricula. The mass media component works at the community level, creating an enabling environment to foster new protective norms, attitudes and behaviours to prevent age-disparate transactional sex. The curricula target 'high risk' individuals, working at the individual and peer group levels to increase knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, and encourage critical thinking around inequitable gender and power in relationships.

NEXT STEPS

Having collected enough evidence to suggest the intervention is feasible and has minimal unintended consequences, the next step for LINEA is to conduct an impact evaluation of the intervention. This will provide information about the intervention effectiveness and uptake, and provide important lessons for sustainability, replicability and transferability.

CONCLUSIONS

The LINEA intervention development process provides learning for other initiatives aiming to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse of children and adolescents, and to operationalise complex behaviour change theories. It also provides a model for iterative and collaborative intervention development. There are multiple benefits to this approach, most importantly that it will improve the chances of the intervention's success (to reduce waste of resources), decrease the risk of negative unintended consequences, and help understand the conditions needed for scale-up, transferability and replicability of the intervention to different contexts.

FORMATIVE RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

1. Wamoyi, J., Buller, A. M., Nyato, D., Kyegombe, N., Meiksin, R., & Heise, L. (2018). "Eat and you will be eaten": a qualitative study exploring costs and benefits of age-disparate sexual relationships in Tanzania and Uganda: implications for girls' sexual and reproductive health interventions. *Reproductive Health*, 15(1), 207.
2. Wamoyi, J., Heise, L., Meiksin, R., Kyegombe, N., Nyato, D., & Buller, A. M. (2019). Is transactional sex exploitative? A social norms perspective, with implications for interventions with adolescent girls and young women in Tanzania. *PLoS One*, 14(4).
3. Ignacio, C. F., Araújo, D., Ruge, E., Cerdeira, L., Cosmelli, L., Page, V., Cislighi, B., Lauro, G., & Buller, A. M. (2019). Community perceptions of transactional sex with children and adolescent girls, a qualitative study in favelas of Rio de Janeiro. *Global Public Health*, 15(3), 424-437.
4. Kyegombe, N., Meiksin, R., Wamoyi, J., Heise, L., Stoebenau, K., & Buller, A. M. (2020). Sexual health of adolescent girls and young women in Central Uganda: exploring perceived coercive aspects of transactional sex. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*, 28(1).
5. Kyegombe, N., Meiksin, R., Namakula, S., Mulindwa, J., Muhumuza, R., Wamoyi, J., Heise, L., & Buller, A. M. (2020). Community perspectives on the extent to which transactional sex is viewed as sexual exploitation in Central Uganda. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 20(1), 11.
6. Howard-Merrill, L., Wamoyi, J., Nyato, D., Kyegombe, N., Heise, L., & Buller, A. M. (2020). 'I trap her with a CD, then tomorrow find her with a big old man who bought her a smart phone'. Constructions of masculinities and transactional sex: a qualitative study from North-Western Tanzania. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 29 Oct, 1-14.
7. Kyegombe, N., Buller, A. M., Meiksin, R., Wamoyi, J., Muhumuza, R., & Heise, L. (2021). Adolescent girls' perceived readiness for sex in Central Uganda - liminal transitions and implications for sexual and reproductive health interventions. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 2 Feb, 1-17.
8. Wamoyi, J., Gafos, M., Howard-Merrill, L., Seeley, J., Meiksin, R., Kyegombe, N., ... & Buller, A. M. (2021). Capitalising on aspirations of adolescent girls and young women to reduce their sexual health risks: Implications for HIV prevention. *Global Public Health*, 1-10.
9. Perrin, N. A., Levtor, R. G., Ignacio, C., Anunciação, L., Landeira-Fernandez, J., Cerdeira, L., Lauro, G., Cislighi, B., & Buller, A. M. (2022). Measuring social norms and attitudes about age-disparate transactional sex: Psychometric testing of the NAATSS. *The Lancet Regional Health - Americas*.



The Learning Initiative on Norms, Exploitation and Abuse (LINEA) is an international and multi-pronged project exploring how social norm theory can be used to prevent the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents globally. LINEA aims to better understand and address the interdependence of human behaviour and the structural realities that shape the individual experience of adolescent girls. LINEA was established in 2014 and is nested within [Gender Violence and Health Centre \(GHVC\)](#) at the [London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine \(LSHTM\)](#).

More information: www.lshtm.ac.uk/linea

