Twubakane's evaluation (season 1)

Executive summary

This impact evaluation presents the results of NOVAH's qualitative study of the Twubakane radio drama, a six-episode series designed to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV) in Rwanda through entertainment-education. The drama focused on promoting shared decision-making and seeking help from other community members in case of IPV. Fifty participants took part in the study.

After the study confirmed the drama's safety and appropriateness for broadcast, it was aired and reached 30,000 active listeners on a regional radio station (7% of the population in the coverage area), according to a quantitative study conducted post-broadcast.

The evaluation highlights Twubakane's success in engaging listeners. The drama was well-understood and appreciated for its realistic portrayal of marital struggles and gender dynamics. The content resonated deeply with both men and women, sparking meaningful discussions and reflections. Community leaders saw it as a valuable educational tool for addressing conflicts and violence.

One of the key outcomes observed was a shift in attitudes and behavior toward shared decision-making, particularly in economic matters. Many participants, especially men, shifted their beliefs and attitudes, effectively leading to more collaborative decision-making within couples. This also sometimes resulted in increased involvement in domestic tasks from men.

The drama also changed perspectives on seeking help in cases of IPV, with many participants expressing greater confidence in discussing relationship issues and increased willingness to turn to trusted community members or mediation before escalating matters to authorities.

Some participants also reported other behavioral changes, including reduced anger, increased patience, and, particularly among men, a reduction in alcohol consumption.

The drama had a substantial impact on relationships, well-being, and communication within couples, characterized by discussions of higher quality, less conflict, and more empathy. Couples who listened together saw the most substantial benefits. Importantly, Twubakane did not elicit major risks, and no risks for backlash were identified. While some participants had adverse reflections and/or experienced discomfort during scenes of domestic violence, this seemingly did not result in serious negative outcomes.

In conclusion, the results show improvements in two key drivers of IPV: gender equality (through shifts in power dynamics in decision-making) increased and communication between partners improved. This shows the potential of edutainment, and in particular Twubakane, to reduce IPV. The next step is to conduct a rigorous quantitative study to understand if it can prevent IPV cost-effectively.

"This radio drama acts as a form of medicine for Rwandan families" - *Male participant*

"Honestly, it's like you created Twubakane after first studying how people live. Because looking at it, it is truly changing the lives of married couples." - *Male participant*

"This drama changed me." - *Male participant*

"The drama helped me a lot. Before, my husband used to make decisions alone, but now we discuss everything."

- *Female participant*

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Abbreviations

- FGD: focus group discussion
- GBV: gender based violence
- IDI: in-depth interview
- IPV: intimate partner violence
- IZUs: Inshuti z'Umuryango, literally "friends of families" (see dedicated box).

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.

Between September and December 2024, NOVAH produced "Twubakane" ("Let's build together") a six-episode radio drama, in partnership with RWAMREC and Urunana DC. In January 2025, NOVAH conducted a qualitative in-person evaluation of the drama with ~50 participants. The drama was then aired on a regional radio station, RC Musanze, once it was deemed safe for airing, and afterwards. Following the airing, a small quantitative survey was conducted to measure listenership.

This report mainly presents the results of the qualitative evaluation, with additional insights from the listenership quantitative survey in section 2.6. It was written in March 2025.

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

NOVAH uses edutainment, or entertainment-education, as it has been shown to be a promising way to prevent IPV. NOVAH's theory of change is based on edutainment's theory and standards (i.e. a relatable story, with positive, negative and transitional role models, etc.) as well as on the scientific literature on IPV prevention.

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

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Direct impact	Indirect impact
NOVAH realizes: 1. **Research** (which leads to message identification) 2. **Writing** 3. **Production** 4. **Broadcast**	- Target audience (young couples) **listen**. – Listeners find the **content good** (understandable, relatable, entertaining), **engaging** (with emotional transport) and **educational** (with a clear and well understood message).	**Think & Feel:** The story leads to shifts in attitudes, beliefs, skills, or social norms. **Do:** The story drives specific behavior changes, like increased cooperation between spouses on economic matters.	**IPV reduction:** Change in prevalence, frequency, severity.	**For women and children:** - better physical and mental health - better wellbeing **For the family:** - improved economic situation

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

- **Shared decision making:** "Decisions should be made conjointly, in particular financial decisions. This benefits everyone (men, women, children, community)." This message was primarily directed at men.

- **Help seeking**: "Seeking help early and through appropriate channels can prevent escalation and promote safer resolutions in cases of intimate partner violence."[1] This message was mainly aimed at women.

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.

Drama synopsis (more detailed here, audio here)

"Twubakane"("let's build together") is a radio drama, consisting of six 20-minute episodes that follow Jeanine and Kazimiri, a young couple whose marriage faces strain due to Kazimiri's tendency to make major decisions without consulting Jeanine. Tensions escalate when he makes a poor financial decision and loses their goat to trickster, Cyokere. Kazimniri disregards Jeanine's input, and even resorts to physical violence for the first time in their relationship.
Jeanine decides to seek advice from role model couple Kawera and Murihano (also IZUs), who model a successful, cooperative marriage. By the end of the series, with Murihano's guidance, Kazimiri takes responsibility for his behavior, asks for forgiveness and decides to share decision-making with his wife. Communication in the couple improves, and we later see their economic progress as well.

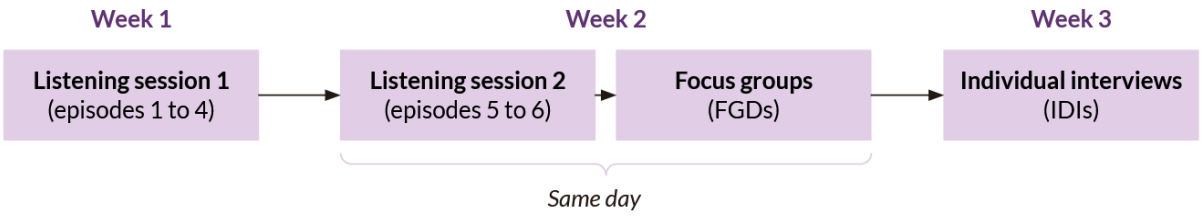
1.3 Methods, ethics, and limits

The study included 51 participants from rural areas—evenly split between men and women—who were divided into different groups:

- Non-couples groups (aged 18-34): 25 married participants whose partners were not part of the study.
- Couples groups (aged 18-34): 18 married participants whose partners were part of the study.
- Community leaders: 8 local administrative and health center officials, as well as IZUs.

[1] This message has been included to make the drama safe. Without it, the main female character doesn't intervene enough, and the story resolves with the main male character changing "on his own", which would incite most female listeners to think the lesson from the drama is to stay patient. Finally, note that the story also presents the advantages of non-IPV.

Data was collected over three weeks with three tools[2]:
(i) 11 in-room listening sessions, two for each group of participants with observation—except with community leaders who listened to all episodes on the same day
(ii) 8 focus group discussions (FGDs) at the end of the second listening sessions, and;
(iii) 20 individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) with some individuals from the non-couples and couples groups, a week after the collective discussions.



All usual ethical precautions in IPV studies were taken, following a do-no-harm approach. Finally, note that this study is qualitative and doesn't claim to achieve full scientific accuracy and replicability. Limits include limited sample size, desirability bias, and research design effect. For those interested in more details on the methodology and research design, please refer to our extended report.




Interviews with study participants

2. Audience perception: Strong engagement and appreciation from listeners

2.1 An easy to understand and relatable drama

The story was easily understood by all participants. The sound quality was clear and the voice actors and sound effects were convincing.

[2] For the couples' and community leaders' groups, listening sessions were gender-segregated. Every focus group was gender-segregated. Community leaders were not interviewed. It was never possible to interview both partners of the same couple.

Both men and women unanimously found the drama highly relatable (20+ people in the focus group discussions explicitly shared their perspective on relatability).

> *"The reason I gave it 10/10 is that it reflects the life we live. It touched on all aspects of life. We have people like Cyokere in our communities, families like Kazimiri's, and families like Murihano's." - female participant (FGD, non-couple)*

> *"Did they go door to door collecting these stories before creating the drama?" - male participant (IDI, couple)*

Respondents found the story relatable because it depicted common themes such as conflicts within couples, IPV, local sounds (e.g., animals), local institutions, and the behavior of men and women in rural settings (e.g., men making decisions alone and misusing money). Participants noted some limitations, including the absence of older children, the lack of GBV against men, and the portrayal of overly perfect advisors.

2.2 An engaging story

During the listening sessions, participants' engagement was generally high to very high, with only a few participants (~10%) appearing unfocused at times. Listeners seemed emotionally engaged, displaying visible reactions (smiles, frowns, exchanging glances, shaking their heads, laughing, discussing, etc.) during the key moments of the drama. Additionally, several participants spontaneously began taking notes or recording the drama with their (feature) phones during the listening sessions, particularly toward the end of the drama.

This observed engagement was further confirmed in both FGDs and IDIs, where participants reported experiencing a range of emotions while listening to the episodes.

> *"[The harmony at the end was] a very heartwarming moment" - female participant (FGD, non-couple)*

> *"Kazimiri's realization [...] surprised Jeanine, it really touched me." - male participant (FGD, non-couple)*

After the first listening session, participants **expressed that they were eager to come back** to the second session and shared that they were sad that the drama only lasted 6 episodes.

The majority of the 20 interviewees (~80%) also shared that they later discussed the drama with others, and when they discussed it, they discussed it on average with 3 people (median: 1.5), who were mostly their partners or other family members, but also with friends and community members.

> *"My wife and I would come home after listening to the drama and go over it again. I would ask her, 'Didn't the drama speak to us, especially that part where Kazimiri and Jeanine disagreed on what to plant? Don't you think we also face similar issues?'"- male participant (IDI, couple)*

2.3 A very appreciated drama

Every participant reported enjoying the drama, both in the FGDs and IDIs. During the FGDs, participants gave the radio drama an average rating of **9.3 out of 10**, with the lowest grade being 7 and the median 10.[3]

> *"Honestly, if I could, I would have given it a twelve! Why? Because the way it started with conflict and ended with peace—it felt as though this drama was made for our own community." - male participant (FGD, couple)*

All participants but one said they would listen to the drama again[4], primarily for its lessons and messages, as hearing it a second time would help them understand and retain it better. Several respondents also spontaneously mentioned hoping to have a recording of the show to replay on their phones.

> *"I kept thinking about it. I even turned on the radio to see if it would be aired. I asked my husband, and he told me that they had requested it to be played on RC Musanze."- female participant (IDI, couple)*

Most men and women indicated that they would listen to Twubakane again with their spouse or family, to make it even more meaningful.

> *"The first person I would most want to listen to it with is my spouse. Because when I listen to it and she listens to it too, it forces both of us to wake up—to become more aware and understand things better." - male participant (IDI, couple)*

Participants also recommended spreading it more intentionally to the community at large, as not everyone has a radio or would be able to listen at specific times. They suggested alternatives such as community gatherings or local savings groups as possible platforms to promote the drama.

Some participants **had already actively recommended the drama to others.**

> *"I told my family, 'Although I don't know the exact time, they told me that the drama would be aired on Radio Musanze, so you will also get to hear a lot. You will understand how I used to be like Cyokere and how now I have changed, realizing that I shouldn't make decisions alone regarding our household and finances." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

2.4 Character perception: successful role modelling

Following edutainment standards, the drama featured main transitional characters and both positive and negative role models, which appeared to be depicted successfully.

Men relate to Kazimiri due to the challenges he faces, and they admire him for his strong family values and eventual personal growth. He isn't seen as a failure, as he is relatively successful in his job, although he could have been more appreciated.

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[3] In order to reduce confirmation bias, participants were asked to write down their score on a piece of paper, and only after writing it down, to share it with the rest of the respondents.
[4] During the interviews, when asked if they would like to listen to the drama again, there was only one participant who didn't explicitly say they would.

"I also found it enjoyable because I could relate to Kazimiri. I saw myself in him. In family life, especially when starting out, one can make impulsive decisions without consulting their spouse." - male participant (FGD, non-couple)

Women relate to Jeanine because of the challenges she faces, and they admire her for her wisdom. However, more conservative listeners feel she doesn't completely conform to gender norms, while more progressive listeners are surprised she doesn't simply leave after experiencing violence—this illustrates a complex tradeoff in scriptwriting.

"I was once a Jeanine" - female participant (FGD, non-couple)

Murihano and Kawera are viewed as inspiring role models and excellent advisors. However, both men and women acknowledge that such individuals are rare in real life and they don't feel they can relate much to them.

Cyokere serves as a strong anti-role model, disliked by all, with his alter ego Mukankima.

2.5 Community leaders' appreciation

Both female and male community leaders appreciated the radio drama, agreeing with its messages, the reporting pathway depicted, and finding it well done and relatable.

"I also gave it a 10/10. As a family friend [IZU] who constantly deals with conflicts and gender-based violence in our community, I found that you really went deep into the issues we face daily." - female participant (FGD, community leader)

"After listening to the drama, I found it to be realistic and impactful, especially for certain families I know. If you bring a radio to such families and give them time to listen, the drama alone can inspire them to change without needing additional advice. [...] Many individuals might find it difficult to accept advice in person, but hearing the same advice on the radio might make them more receptive. For some, the message will click right away. There's no doubt that people who listen to this drama in our area will experience positive change." - male participant (FGD, community leader)

They said that the drama would be useful for them personally, either as a training tool (e.g. in weekly community meetings or to support their work with families in conflict) or as a source of inspiration from the role model couple offering advice.

2.6 Complementary insights from reach survey and radio station feedback

After airing the drama, data on reach and appreciation was collected through a 500-person quantitative survey conducted one week after the broadcast. Additionally, Facebook comments, text messages, and calls to the radio station were monitored, revealing that listeners actively engaged with and appreciated the show.

"Good day! This drama is truly delightful. Please continue supporting it because it is building our families. Married couples must complement each other for true progress. I am [Emmanuel] from Rusasa. Thank you!" - A Facebook comment

According to the survey, **27,000 people *actively listened* to the show (i.e., are able to talk about events within the show)**[5] in the radio station coverage area. This represents 7% of the total possible listenership (375,000 people) and counts adult respondents to the survey only.

Among the small sample of active listeners from the survey (n=31), women are slightly overrepresented (60%), possibly indicating either a gendered preference or increased likelihood of listenership at that time of day (8pm). Most listeners didn't listen to all the episodes, while 80% of listeners listened with their spouse or family.

Among those who actively listened and were married (n=26), more than 90% said that their relationship has changed since listening to the show—39% said it improved a lot (64% for men) and 54% said it improved a bit. Respondents were able to give brief one-line answers about the change in their relationship and the learnings from the drama. Their key takeaways are similar to those participating in qualitative research. Likewise, Facebook comments aligned with the answers provided in focus groups.

3. Important reported changes in shared decision-making attitudes and habits

3.1 Understanding and retention of the intended message

It was clear to the participants that a large part of the story revolved around shared decision-making.

The extent to which participants fully understood or embraced the concept of equal and shared decision-making varied: Most acknowledged its importance but they did not explicitly state that both partners should have equal say in decisions. Others agreed with the idea of consulting their partner but did not fully grasp that shared decision-making goes beyond simply informing or discussing decisions.

> *"After listening to the drama, I realized that the level of involvement she had in our family discussions wasn't enough. Looking at the lessons from the drama, I decided to make sure we consult each other on everything." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

Participants attributed many benefits to the practice of shared decision-making. The top five most common ones were household development, reducing conflicts, improved well-being for children, increased trust, and better decision making.

> *"When financial decisions are planned together, progress and development are inevitable because resources are used wisely." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

[5] Active listenership is measured by participants correctly answering a control question after claiming they listened to the drama. Notably, four times as many respondents reported listening but were unable to answer the control question correctly.

One week later, the message of shared decision-making was clearly remembered and intertwined with the story. Several interviewees (7 out of 20) spontaneously brought it up when asked what they remembered most about the drama.

3.2 Changes in attitudes and beliefs around shared decision making

Overall, reportedly since listening to the drama, half of the respondents (10 out of 20), mostly men (8), now see more that decision-making should be shared, in at least some aspects of life. For others, mostly women, changes were either very small (4), mixed or absent (4), or they were already convinced of this approach (2).

Changes in beliefs and attitude include:

1/ Valuing more the importance of discussing decisions together

> *"Before the drama, I might have decided something on my own, but after listening to the play, I realized that we should make decisions together as a family, and we should work together. If I were to make a decision now, I would make sure that my wife and I discuss it and agree on it." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

2/ Valuing more the benefits for communication or household progress

> *"I realized that if I worked together with my wife, our financial situation could improve." - male participant (IDI, couple)*

3/ Now viewing it's possible and/or OK to listen to your wife

> *"I never knew that a man could genuinely listen to his wife's advice. In most discussions, we are always told that "a man is the pillar of the home" and "a man is the head of the household." I always thought that meant a man always had the final say in everything and that the wife had to follow his decisions." - male participant (IDI, couple)*

4/ Viewing unshared decision-making as a form of economic violence/ GBV. (The fact that the drama mixed together physical IPV and unshared decision-making may have influenced men in seeing this as something as problematic)

> *Constantly pressuring someone or making financial decisions without consulting your spouse is also a form of violence. I wasn't aware of that before. For example, I used to think that if a man made a financial decision in the household, that was final because that's what I grew up seeing. But now I understand that it's a form of control that can be harmful. - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

8 respondents (out of 20), mostly men (7), also reported being more motivated to share decision-making at home. The changes include (i) the fact that shared decision-making feels more natural than before (and, inversely, that it now feels unnatural *not* to practice it), and (ii) the decision to implement shared-decision making more in the future.

> *"Well, it felt natural. The first thing that the program taught me was humility. I felt like it was normal. I realized that when a wife plays a role in development, there's no pride in thinking, "What did my wife help me with?" Instead, I found it to be a normal thing for people to come together and work well for the family's good." - male participant (IDI, couple)*

3.3 Behavioural changes around decision making

For two-thirds of respondents (13 out of 20), including the majority of men (7 out of 10), there has been some change in decision-making related behavior since listening to the drama (with no apparent difference between the couples and non-couples groups)**.**

Men changed, sometimes considerably, in the following ways:
(i) They began to share more decision-making at home, with important changes for 4 out of 10 men.

> *"Before, we didn't discuss things much. Even when we had discussions, I was just informing her about a decision I had already made. Now, we discuss everything and make sure we agree on it." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

(ii) They tried to convince others (e.g. coworkers, neighbors) that this is positive for the households. This was reported by 5 men, among which one shared the advice with 5 families. Given the short timeframe, this appears remarkable.

(iii) They became more transparent about their income, which led to greater openness regarding how the money would be used, mentioned explicitly by two men.

> *"Before, I used to receive my salary, and my family wouldn't know what remained or what was spent. But this experience changed me a lot. Now, my wife has full knowledge of our finances." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

Women started conversations with their husbands about being more involved with decision making, sometimes leading to changes in how decisions were made, including in the non-couples' group. They themselves also **shared more decision-making** with their husbands.

> *"Before, I would just agree without questioning. But now, I no longer just say, "Okay." [...] He even tells me, "You've really matured," and I think that's because of the radio drama." - female participant (IDI, non-couple)*

For almost half of couples participating in the interviews (45%), decision-making is now more shared, meaning women are more involved, including in making (new) plans and projects together.

> *The drama helped me a lot. Before, my husband used to make decisions alone, but now we discuss everything. This is like a testimony I would give. I gave it a 10/10. - female participant (FGD, couple)*

For several couples (25%), household chores (particularly cooking) are also now more shared, with men being more involved. This change occurred almost exclusively within the couples group (4), and wasn't an explicit goal of the drama.

> *"Before, he would come home when I had already eaten and gone to bed, but now he comes early, helps me cook, and we eat together." - female participant (IDI, couple)*

4. Important reported changes in help-seeking attitudes and motivation

4.1 Understanding and retention of help-seeking messages

Most participants demonstrated a strong understanding of the message. When asked what they would do if someone sought their advice, they were able to repeat the recommendation from the story. Participants also understood Jeanine's motivations for seeking help.

> *"First, you have to comfort her. Second, I would tell her, "Before going to the authorities, try speaking to a family friend or an elder. Sometimes they might be the ones to advise you to go to the authorities." Also, not all authorities are about punishing or imprisoning people—some focus on reconciliation. So, I think I would give her that advice." - female participant (IDI, couple.)*

One week later, all participants clearly remembered how and why Jeanine sought help. Most could recall the different pieces of advice in the story, though a minority misremembered one small part of the advice (they believed a secondary character advised Jeanine to go to the police, when she actually mentioned it as one of many options without explicitly advising it).

4.2 Changes in attitudes and beliefs around help-seeking

The vast majority of participants already agreed that speaking up was important. Some who initially disagreed changed their mind (3), while others (3) still prioritize patience as the most important value.

> *"Before, I thought talking about [IPV] would lead to mockery." - female participant (IDI, non-couple)*

> *"Yes, [I still think] patience is the best approach." - female participant (IDI, couple)*

Mediation is now seen as a strong option in cases of violence by ~50-60% of respondents, whereas reportedly it wasn't considered before. Depending on the respondent, it's a change in belief (i.e. that it's acceptable to involve strangers), in attitudes (being more likely to recommend mediation) or in knowledge/ awareness (recognizing that IZUs are available and helpful). The change in attitudes is the area with the most data points:

> *"Before, I would have told her to go straight to the authorities. But after hearing how Jeanine handled her situation—first consulting her trusted friend before deciding not to go to the authorities—I realized that I would also advise someone to consult family friends [IZU] first." - female participant (IDI, couple)*

Most women (6 out of 10) are now more likely to first try or recommend mediation (involving husband/ friends/ IZUs) rather than silence, leaving or calling the police. Half of the men also say they would now recommend mediation to a female friend, while they wouldn't have before.

> *"Before, I thought if someone mistreated me, I would make a scene and run back to my family. But now, I feel motivated to handle it the way Jeanine did." - female participant (IDI, non-couple)*

4 participants out of 20 (2 men, 2 women) haven't shifted from their negative viewpoint, expressing concerns about rumors or sharing that outsiders shouldn't be involved.

> *"Jeanine was wise because she didn't expose her family's problems to everyone..." - female participant (IDI, non-couple)*

Regarding changes in motivation, confidence increased: ~50% of men and women (9 out of 20) are now more confident in seeking help for themselves or others, with no major difference between men and women. They report that the drama empowered them, providing knowledge about whom to seek help from and how to do so through an inspiring example.

> *"No, [before listening to the drama I wouldn't have the confidence to advise someone,] because I didn't know about these things. I wouldn't have been able to tell her, but the drama gave me the confidence to do so" - female participant (IDI, non-couple)*

Some participants (5) spontaneously shared they are now more motivated to help others. This is particularly true for community workers (night security, health, etc.), and seemingly also for those who have experienced trauma themselves.

> *"Now, whenever I see a situation where peace is lacking, I try to remind people that violence is not the solution." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

4.3 Changes in help-seeking behaviours

Behavior change was limited to a few respondents, which is still noteworthy given the short timeframe. No one reported reaching out for help for themselves during the study.

Five respondents (25%) intervened in others' conflicts, whereas previously they either wouldn't have intervened or would have handled it differently.

> *"For example, I have two neighbors who got married around the same time as me. After listening to the drama, I didn't just sit back—I reached out to people, and we resolved some of their issues publicly through community meetings, using local authorities." - male participant (IDI, couple)*

5. Additional changes

5.1 Additional inferred messages

Apart from the two main messages, other positive messages (though not always planned) were picked up and sometimes led to attitude and behavior changes.

They include, for men:

- **The ability (and importance) of apologizing**. Three men notably shared that they now see it is OK for men to apologize and ask for forgiveness, in particular from their wives, as it doesn't make them weak (3 respondents).
  > *"If there are men who never used to apologize to their wives, a Rwandan man listening to this drama might think, "I did something wrong to my wife, and this other man in the drama apologized and nothing bad happened to him. Why shouldn't I do the same?" This will help*

men humble themselves and stop seeing themselves as superior to their wives". - male participant (FGD, couple)

- **How drinking less could lead to more savings and investment.** In particular, two men are now more critical of alcohol consumption.
  "If someone like Cyokere earns money monthly but by the 15th of the next month is already in debt, they might reflect on how that behavior hasn't led to any improvement in their life. It could inspire them to change and adopt better habits like saving. For instance, if they drink, they could decide to limit themselves to just one drink every two days. The money they save from not drinking excessively could then be used for more productive activities."- male participant (FGD, non-couple)

And for women:

- **The importance of staying calm or humble with one's spouse, especially during arguments** (7 respondents). It led to behavioral change (see below, as well as the risks section).
  "Jeanine did not react with anger when her husband spoke to her; she was humble. That is something I learned from her—it helped me grow, to avoid immediately reacting emotionally". - female participant (IDI, couple)

And for both men and women:

- **A higher willingness to succeed or to have a successful/ happy family.**
  "Or even when you're farming, you'd farm with enthusiasm and think, "Let me see if I can make it like the family of Kazimiri and Jeanine." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)

5.2 Additional individual behavioural changes

Changes in women's relationship behaviours. Three women shared that they are now much more "patient": they pressure their husband less, get angry less easily, raise their voices less, and reconcile faster with him. This change had an impact on their relationships (see the section dedicated to changes in the relationship).

"Yes, there have been changes. Before, I used to hold grudges. We could argue at night, and I would stay silent until morning. But now, I can't even stay silent for an hour without addressing the issue because of the drama I listened to. I immediately think of Jeanine, and the resentment disappears." - female participant (IDI, non-couple)

Two women also shared that they advised other women to do the same. Additionally, one woman mentioned that she now comes home earlier and drinks less at the bar.

Reduction in alcohol consumption among men. Five men (50%) reported reducing or stopping their drinking. While these changes seem very important, they also appear somewhat difficult to assess over a one-week period based on the respondents' answers.

"After listening to the drama, I realized that drinking just for the sake of drinking is not good. Now, [...] I drink in agreement with my wife. [...] Before, I was the kind of person who could go out intending to spend 1,000 Rwf on drinks, but then I'd end up spending 5,000 Rwf. Today, I realized that's not right." - male participant (IDI, couple)

6. Reported improvements in relationships and well-being

6.1 Improvements in relationships

Nearly all participants (18 out of 20 couples - 90%) reported a positive improvement in their relationships. The change was subjectively described by NOVAH as very important for 20% of the couples, important for 30%, and less important for 40%. For one couple that did not experience any change, the participant had been separated from their partner for the entire duration of the study. Changes could be broadly categorized into two categories: increased gender equality and better communication, and are illustrated in the two case studies in the annex.

The impact was greater when men listened to the drama, and even more so when both partners listened together. No negative changes in well-being were observed. However, this does not mean that certain "negative behaviors" were completely absent by the end; relationships did not become perfectly equal after listening to the drama, even within the couples group.

Some changes had already begun before listening to the full story. In the focus group discussions, 25% of the 36 participants reported changes, including 3 women from the couples group who were eager to share that things at home had already improved. This indicates that the impact could be linked to the drama rather than the research design (the FGD).

> *"This drama really made a difference. Husbands started to change after listening to it just once. Now imagine after listening to it multiple times. Those outside will be benefiting from what we have learned here, we will teach them. We will be like Kawera and Murihano." - female participant (FGD, couple)*

6.2 Improvements in well-being

On an individual basis, a few men and women also spontaneously shared that they are now happier, because of better communication, but also because of less stress, better social interactions, and better long-term plans.

> *"That has changed now—since my wife and I started communicating better, I also feel happier, and it is visible when I interact with others." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

> *"[I started chatting about plans for our children's future.] I felt very happy because of how she received it and how it touched my heart. It made me happy." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

> *My spouse was very happy and said, "I truly appreciate those people; they have been helpful. - male participant (IDI, non-couple)*

> *"Yes, it made me feel free and stress-free. It showed me that struggles in marriage are not unique to me." - female participant (IDI, non-couple)*

6.3 Driven by improved communications

For almost all couples (85%), including all couples in the couple group, communication has improved. There is less conflict and/or better discussions and/or more care and bonding, whether during everyday interactions or conflicts. Including:

a. **Less anger/ irritation, fewer arguments leading to escalation, less raising one's voice.**
“I learned to be more humble. [Now,] I value her opinion, and I would approach her gently and then help her reduce the intensity of any anger or issues she might be facing. [...] If there is a situation where I feel the need to raise my voice, I try to control myself, reflecting on the lessons from the drama to ensure our conversations are peaceful and productive.” - male participant (IDI, non-couple)

"I feel like I love Papa Cyiza even more now. He even asks me why I always seem happy these days. I used to be easily irritated, and the smallest thing would make me angry, but now I no longer get upset with him, and he no longer comes home in a bad mood. We talk like people who love each other." - female participant (IDI, non-couple)

b. **Not staying angry as long, apologizing more often.**
"We consult each other on everything. If one of us does something wrong, we apologize immediately. This is a big change because, before, if one of us got upset, we would stay angry for the whole day and even go to bed without speaking. We could even go to work without talking to each other. But now, that has changed. [...]” - male participant (IDI, couple)

c. **Discussing more together**, for example, during the weekend or when one of them has dinner and the other has already eaten, sharing stories. It could be as small as now greeting each other at night.
“There were times when he came home late, and I would just open the door for him and go back to sleep. But now, I open the door, sit with him, and talk while he eats. He even brings me small treats like juice or soda when he comes home.” - female participant (IDI, non-couple)

d. **Having new and honest discussions; women becoming more confident in engaging with their husband.**
"There are things we now discuss that we didn’t talk about before because we now make time to understand each other better. That has been a great improvement." - male participant (IDI, non-couple)

e. **More care and bonding**, for example men bringing back small treats to their home or calling their wives during the day, and women being more caring (e.g. helping to choose clothes for an event), or an increase in sexual intimacy.
“Now my husband pays more attention to me [...] whenever we miss each other, we make time to be together.” - female participant (IDI, couple)

7. Risks appear limited

7.1 No major re-traumatization, some minor discomfort in a few scenes

Enumerators observed discomfort at times among a few participants. While most women did not show overt trauma responses, certain scenes involving domestic violence (Kazimiri hitting Jeanine, Jeanine recounting her abuse) led to some visible discomfort or subtle signs of distress (sighing, lowering heads) when violence was depicted.

Two women interviewed (out of 10) mentioned that they felt sad when Jeanine was hit, as it reminded them of times when they were hit themselves. However, they didn't mention severe emotional distress.

> *"As I explained earlier, when I first started listening to it, it triggered emotions in me. But by the end, I reminded myself that it was just a drama" - women (IDI, couple).*

During the focus group discussions participants didn't raise any concerns about re-traumatization when asked about the matter. One man, who also shared that he had mental health issues, confessed that the drama almost made him want to cry as it reminded him of a time when he acted like Kazimiri.

7.2 No risk for backlash or violence identified

The majority of participants thought the content was inoffensive. None of the participants mentioned any real concern for backlash.

No one shared that they have experienced any type of abuse since the drama. One woman explicitly stated that she enjoyed participating as a couple.

After airing, no risk was identified within the feedback collected by the radio station.

7.3 Some adverse reflections

While the radio drama aimed to promote mutual decision-making and seeking help, some participants internalized messages differently, leading to adverse reflections or unintended interpretations. This was more common among women, particularly regarding humility, patience, and the role of decision-making in relationships. Fewer men reflected adversely, though one man misunderstood shared decision-making as a potential role reversal.

Such adverse reflections were already encountered in previous dramas and also demonstrate powerful gender norms in rural Rwanda. To avoid it, it seems that portraying active women characters and conducting early content testing is key.

8. Conclusion: a very promising intervention

Listening to the drama led to substantial improvements in **(i) shared decision-making** (and thus in gender equality) and **(ii) communication** for a sizable share of participants, as well as some reduction in alcohol consumption. While no change in IPV was observed, this wasn't an objective given the study's timeframe and small sample size.

Instead, it's worth noting that the two main effects identified are key 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. A lack of shared decision-making, in particular, has been statistically associated with IPV (both across 12 countries in Sub Saharan Africa and in Rwanda, according to 2020 DHS data - table 16.11.1). Shared decision-making was found to be a powerful message and relatively easy to pick up in the cultural context in which NOVAH operates, as it is not too far from current gender norms.

No major risk has been identified, although there was some limited discomfort and adverse reflections. The latter shows there is a tradeoff between risks of adverse reflection (using a not-too-progressive message) and risks of backlash (using a too-progressive message). For the drama Twubakane, we believe the benefits outweigh the risks.

Given the promising results, it is recommended to further extend the drama and measure its endline impact (on IPV, well-being, mental health, relationship quality) through a rigorous pre-post quantitative survey that includes a control group.

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

We're currently fundraising for an extension of the radio show and a quantitative evaluation. If you'd like to know more, don't hesitate to reach out at ivy@novah.ngo.

Annex - Case studies

Note that these case studies don't represent all participants. They have been chosen for how well they illustrate the changes occurring.[6]

Anatole, 27, whose wife Alice also listened to the drama (IDI 9B)

Anatole is a builder living in Nyundo village. He also works as a hairdresser a few hours a day. He is married to Alice, 25, whom he met at church. Alice works as a farmer, and together they have one child.

He really appreciated the radio drama: "It is a great radio drama that can transform families that are not doing well, especially those experiencing conflicts. [The family's transformation] really inspired me a lot." He strongly liked role model Murihano. "I didn't forget [the drama]; I kept thinking about it." "[In the future,] maybe increase episodes' length by about five more minutes."

The drama led him to have a meaningful conversation with his wife: "[With Alice] we talk about [the drama] all the time [...] I talked to her about it because there were times I made decisions alone, and it would upset her. That's why I brought it up [...] When we returned home after our last meeting here, I told her, "You know, Twubakane really touched me!" She asked, "How so?" I said, "Remember that goat I bought? The money for that goat was actually supposed to be used for potato seeds, but in the end, we didn't plant anything in the field." She was surprised and said, "Really?" I replied, "Yes, after listening to how Kazimiri and his wife started consulting each other, I realized my mistake. If I hadn't bought the goat and instead we had used the money for seeds, we might have had a great harvest." She agreed and said, "That's very true." Then I told her, "From now on, I will always consult you before making decisions so we can work together." She said, "That would be great." Now, to this day, we consult each other and make joint decisions on everything."

This led to a change in how decisions are made: "The way she has changed is that before, when I was about to make a decision and I told her about something we needed to do, she would immediately say, "Whatever you have planned, that's how it will be." So I would assume she had nothing more to add, and I would go ahead and do it. But now, she listens to me when I bring something up and asks, "Have you really thought about it?" I say yes, and then she says, "Let's sit down and discuss it." We talk about it and make a decision together."

This impacted the relationship quality: "Things have changed a lot! [...] The way our relationship has changed is that now, no one gets upset at the other. We consult each other on everything. If one of us does something wrong, we apologize immediately. This is a big change because, before, if one of us got upset, we would stay angry for the whole day and even go to bed without speaking. We could even go to work without talking to each other. But now, that has changed. [...] One clear sign is that now, when I come home, my wife is really happy to see me. She listens attentively to everything I say. [...] Before, she was happy, but she knew that even if we discussed something, I would make the final decision if we didn't agree."

[6] Participants' names, ages, occupations have been slightly adjusted for confidentiality..

Nadine, 21, whose husband Thierry has not listened to the drama (IDI 5A)

Nadine is a part-time farmer living in Gisovu village. She is married to Thierry, 28, who owns a bar and does some trading. They met when he was her neighbor, and together they have two children. They had their first child when Nadine was still under 18. Due to financial constraints, she had to stop school and enter a vocational program at the age of 11.

She was highly engaged with the drama: "I felt happy because I learned how to handle conflicts calmly, how to advise a friend while keeping their matters private. I felt happy. [...] I kept thinking about it. [...] I thought about Jeanine and how she remained calm—I could learn a lot from her."

The drama changed how she sees help-seeking: "Before, I believed that if a husband abused his wife, she should get angry and immediately report him so that he would be arrested. But now, I would first try to handle the situation calmly, seek guidance from trusted people, and only report him if he refuses to change. [...] Think about it—if you are a woman and your husband beats you, and you report him, he will be arrested. He hits you once, and they imprison him for three months—will you really be happy? You will remain in misery. But if you confide in a family friend, they will advise him, and he will return home with a better attitude."

She discussed the drama's decision-making lesson with her husband: "He understood and told me that when making decisions, neither the husband nor the wife should act alone. In a home, decisions should not be made by just one person. The household belongs to both. He accepted it well and didn't say, "This is a rule," or that I was trying to control him."

This led both of them to discuss more finances with their partner: "One thing I learned from the drama is that I shouldn't just make decisions alone—like deciding that we will plant sweet potatoes on a certain piece of land. I now understand that I should also ask my husband what he thinks. [...] Sometimes my husband would get money and say he was going to invest it in the liquor business. Before, I would just agree without questioning. But now, I no longer just say, "Okay." Sometimes he gets money, sells, makes a profit, and then says he will reinvest it all, even when we have other needs—maybe we need to buy a small animal or something else important. Now, I realize that's not the best approach, and I have the right to ask how the money will be spent. He even tells me, "You've really matured," and I think that's because of the radio drama."

She also changed how she was interacting with Thierry: "Now, if he does something, I plead with him like Jeanine did, telling him, "This is not right." Before, I would just get angry and say, "That's your problem.""

This led to changes in the relationship: "I have changed since listening to the radio drama. Before, I didn't care—we could argue, and I would hold onto my anger. But now, I understand that conflicts are inevitable in a household, but after an argument, I reflect on my behavior and tell him, "That wasn't right." And he doesn't stay angry either—it's as if he also listened to the drama. The conflicts we used to have now end peacefully, just like Jeanine and her husband."

