# Building Healthy Relationships: A Learning Brief on the Digital Tool used for GBV Couples Program

## LEARNING FROM DIGITALIZING INDASHYIKIRWA

# Background

In Rwanda, violence against women and girls, rooted in gender inequality and patriarchal norms is widespread and directly undermines women's economic potential. **Studies** suggest over 30% of women and men have faced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. *Indashyikirwa (Agents of change in Kinyarwanda )* is a Rwandan program designed to tackle intimate partner violence (IPV) and improve the lives of survivors. The program works to shift intimate partners' attitudes around violence and control of women's mobility and financial assets, while promoting positive behaviors like communication, positive masculinity, shared household chores and joint decision making. The program has a strong reputation of empowering individuals and fostering non-violent relationships among couples and families, shifting harmful social norms and promoting community action on GBV. The significant challenges in efforts to minimize GBV (Gender-Based  Violence) and violence within intimate partner relationships; Women are often less likely to own mobile phones to access information; women's lower level of digital literacy making navigating and utilizing digital devices difficult and safety concerns that women's access to technology and internet being controlled by intimate partners.

## The need for digitalization

CARE Rwanda; recognizing the potential of technology to enhance program delivery through the visionary leadership of the innovation team and the generous support from Sheryl Sandberg; undertook the digitalization of the Indashyikirwa initiative. The primary objective of this digital change was to I) **Increase affordabilit**y: by transitioning to a digital platform, it was sought to reduce the costs associated with program delivery and II) **Enhancing accessibility and reach**: the digital format allowing a greater flexibility in terms of couples utilizing the curriculum.


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## The process

CARE conducted a rigorous, stakeholder-led collaborative process to design and test a digital approach. The team commenced with an iterative design process, identifying three key challenges;

- **Digitization:** "How might we leverage digital technology to lower costs and extend reach of Indashyikirwa, while ensuring the fidelity and quality of programming?"
- **Digital gender divide:** "How might we ensure that digitalization does not further increase the digital gender divide and/or put women at risk?"
- **Digital ecosystem:** "How might we plug digitalization of Indashyikirwa into other digital platforms within CARE and/or within the broader Rwanda context?"

The team developed a six-dimension digital framework. Care Rwanda and Innovation team sought social enterprises aligned with the program's core needs through the **CARE 10X model,** selecting **Baobab Circle**, health tech social enterprise that has developed Afya Pap, an app that uses AI and behavioural science to help users change their habits, reduce the financial burden of managing their conditions, and improve their health. CARE Rwanda, Rwanda stakeholders, CARE Innovation and Gender Justice teams and Baobab Circle conducted a collaborative proof of concept process to validate the approach, developing the digital curriculum and a hybrid delivery approach through the **Indashyikirwa APP** and conducted a pilot with 60 couples in Rwanda.



*Figure 1: Proposed digital framework for Digital Indashyikirwa*
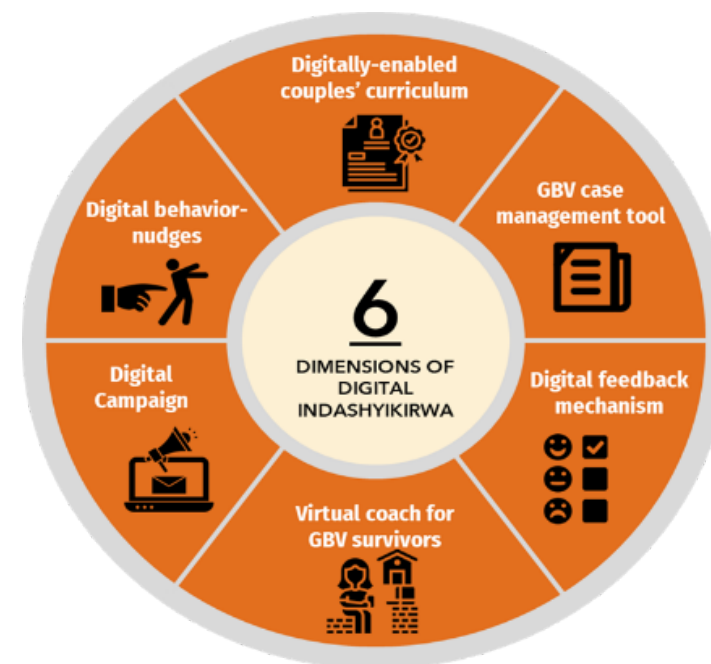
## What we've learnt

- The program demostrated exceptional engagement with 99% attendance rate and all participants completing the course. This finding suggests that couples found the mobile format engaging and accessible, leading to a high level of participation and successful completion of the lessons.
- Couples who share one phone to study lessons builds trust between them. By working together on lessons and discussing the material, they can deepen their understanding and share the learning experience. This collaborative approach can strengthen their bond and communication skills.
- The digital session took 45 min to 2hrs depending on the speed of each person while physical session (in class) took more than 5hrs (3hrs of session and 2hrs they spend on the road, going back and forth). Mobile learning offers significant time savings compared to traditional in-person classes. This not only saves time but also reduces fatigue from long commutes.

- The app improved efficiency by reducing costs for travel. By eliminating the need for physical attendance, mobile learning minimizes transportation expenses for both the program and the participating couples. This can make learning more accessible and affordable.

## Challenges

- Limited network/internet connectivity causing slow lead times making it hard to access courses non-stop at a time.

- Limited digital/technical literacy both community and facilitators facing difficulties navigating the mobile learning platform and troubleshooting technical issues.

- Reduced access for women sharing the same phone with husbands. In some situations, women might have limited control over phone usage due to shared devices.



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"My husband and I, since our wedding day, we haven't sat down as a family and had a discussion, but when we started using the app, 'It was the first time since we got married that we sat down together at home." female community member in Gatsibo district.

- Some of the partners are working on assignments on behalf of their partners due to low literacy rates. While collaboration can be beneficial, low literacy rates might lead to one partner completing tasks for the other, hindering individual learning and potentially creating a dynamic where one partner dominates.
- Facilitators facing difficulty in managing the completion of written assignments for audio users causing participants who rely solely on audio lessons struggle to complete them. This is also due to community having literacy issues to writing.