

Reducing intimate partner violence: examining the effectiveness of Send a Cow programs

Summary findings of research conducted by
Send a Cow & the Global Women's Institute

FEBRUARY 2022



Overview

Funded by the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) and The World Bank, this research project, led by the Global Women's Institute at The George Washington University, set out to examine the effectiveness of Send a Cow's gender transformative approach in economic empowerment programs on reducing intimate partner violence (IPV) levels in rural communities of Western Kenya.

Send a Cow (SAC) works alongside rural women and their families to empower them

socially and economically through agricultural development. SAC utilizes an Economic and Social Empowerment (EASE) approach, that includes a strong gender component, together with its Transformative Household Methodology (THM). Though not designed to tackle violence directly, SAC staff have seen the potential for EASE to address it. Even though violence against women and girls (VAWG) was not openly discussed in communities, due to secrecy, fear and stigmatization, SAC staff are aware of its presence.

The importance of this research

Globally, more than a third of women have experienced sexual and/or physical violence at some point in their lives (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021). There is widespread evidence of the harmful effects of violence on women's physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health, as well as on their productivity (Maman, S. et al. 2000; Swanberg, Logan et al. 2005; WHO, 2013). Women in Kenya suffer even higher rates of violence with 38% experiencing violence in their lifetime, rising to 60% in western Kenya where the risk factors of poverty and low education are prevalent (WHO, 2021; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Violence against women has significant economic costs in terms of expenditure on services, decreased productivity as well as lost

income for women and their families (Duvvury, et al., 2013; McLean & Gonzalez Bocinski, 2017). The ongoing COVID-19 crisis is compounding risks for VAWG and likely to be increasing intimate partner violence (IPV) at household level (Santagostino Recavarren & Elefante, 2020; Peterman et al., 2020).

Being aware of the presence of violence in SAC project locations, SAC took this research opportunity to better understand the impact of its programs on IPV and more importantly, how SAC might adapt future project design and implementation to purposefully and effectively address and reduce violence.

Research aims

1. Develop specific and appropriate tools and approaches for measuring rates of IPV.
2. Increase the capacity of SAC staff to ethically collect data on violence and deliver quality prevention programs.
3. Identify best practices from SAC's EASE approach to change attitudes to, and experience of, violence for women.



Send a Cow's Economic & Social Empowerment (EASE) approach

SAC supports farming families to improve their economic situation using an integrated approach that combines agricultural and gender & social inclusion interventions to bring long-term positive changes to food security, nutrition, income generation, savings, women's participation, relationships and gender equality. The approach combines training, inputs, supportive supervision and mentoring, delivered by SAC and government extension staff to self-help groups where the majority of members are women.

The gender & social inclusion component of SAC's projects is initiated by a process called 'envisioning' in which individuals, groups and families identify their goals and aspirations and set out plans for achieving those. Capacity building in group dynamics

and conflict resolution is complemented by training on gender equity, nutrition and hygiene & sanitation so that women have social skills and the confidence to be able to speak out and contribute to decision making and leadership, as well as to manage the home and health of themselves and their families.

Training is complemented by the use of SAC's Transformative Household Methodology (THM) - a gender tool, developed by SAC by combining the Harvard Gender Analytical Tool (focused on activity profiles and access to, and control over, resources) with Participatory Rural Appraisal exercises. It was designed to challenge unequal gender attitudes, roles and norms through facilitated dialogue at household level involving women, men, girls and boys.

How THM works

- 1. A trained facilitator explains to the family how THM works and what it is intended to do.**
- 2. All members of a household create a grid on the ground in which each column represents an activity (e.g., fetching water, hoeing, cooking, childcare) or a resource (e.g. food, livestock, income). Each row is allocated to one member of the family, including children.**
- 3. Every member places stones, or beans, in the grid to represent their level of engagement in activities or influence over resources.**
- 4. Scores are counted, exposing areas of disparity which are then discussed in relation to gender stereotypes and assumptions around roles and responsibilities.**



- 5. The family is assisted to develop an action plan for bringing greater equality and participation for all members.**

While training is primarily delivered for group members, they are encouraged to bring along spouses or other relatives to sessions, and to take lessons they have learned back home to share with their family. Excelling members of self-help groups are selected for additional training to become Peer Farmer Trainers and Community Resource Volunteers, who mentor and train their own group members, as well as other people within the community.

Research methodology

SAC, and its research partner, the Global Women's Institute (GWI) at George Washington University (GWU), together with SAC Kenya (SACK), undertook a two-year research study from June 2018 to examine the effectiveness of SAC's economic interventions on reducing rates of IPV in target communities in western Kenya.

GWI conducted a preliminary desk review of available evidence and best practices surrounding economic empowerment and VAWG. Qualitative data (via focus groups and key informant interviews) was collected from participants of SAC's completed *Wealth Creation* project in western Kenya, to understand how the program affected the lives of women & girls and family dynamics in targeted communities. The findings of this qualitative research were used to develop a data collection tool to monitor IPV in the households and communities where SAC works. The IPV data collection tool was based on the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women model (World Health Organization, 2001; World Health Organization, 2005), as it is considered internationally to be the best practice for VAWG data collection.

GWI staff trained SACK program staff and enumerators on how to carry out gender-based violence (GBV) research, using the tool, whilst applying ethical data collection methods. The IPV data collection tool was incorporated into SAC's impact monitoring survey and used to collect quantitative data at the start and one year into SAC's *Improving Nutrition* project in western Kenya, capturing changes in IPV for women during the two periods.

A random selection process was used to identify households for inclusion in the survey, whilst a systematic sampling strategy was used for selecting participants from each household; a total of 96 men and 274 women were sampled.

The findings of the survey and research were shared with SAC and SACK staff at a review workshop, at which they examined the results and the implications for future programming, particularly how SAC can improve EASE to have the greatest impact on vulnerable women and girls.



Research findings

Qualitative research into the situation of women before and after their participation in SACK's *Wealth Creation* project in western Kenya, found that prior to intervention, women were financially dependent on men, unable to provide food or meet the basic needs of their families and experiencing severe poverty and food insecurity. Men dominated decision-making, whilst women were overburdened with work. Through SAC's EASE approach, women and men reported a reduction in women's workloads and an increase in their confidence and involvement in decision-making. Women were earning income from agricultural activities,

becoming economically empowered and food secure. Relationships were better, with men and women respecting each other more, whilst women were able to take up positions of leadership within the community.

The quantitative analysis of IPV in the *Improving Nutrition* project in Western Kenya, found that prior to delivering SACK's program, there were high levels of violence within the target communities, with **71% of women participants having experienced violence from a partner within their lifetime.**



Figure 1.
Prevalence of lifetime IPV reported by women in SAC program

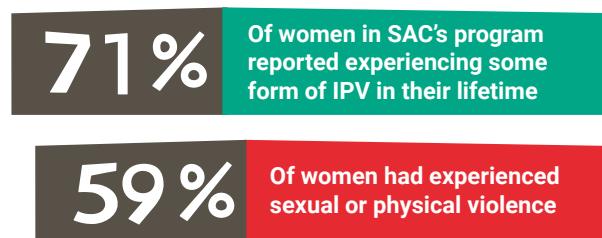
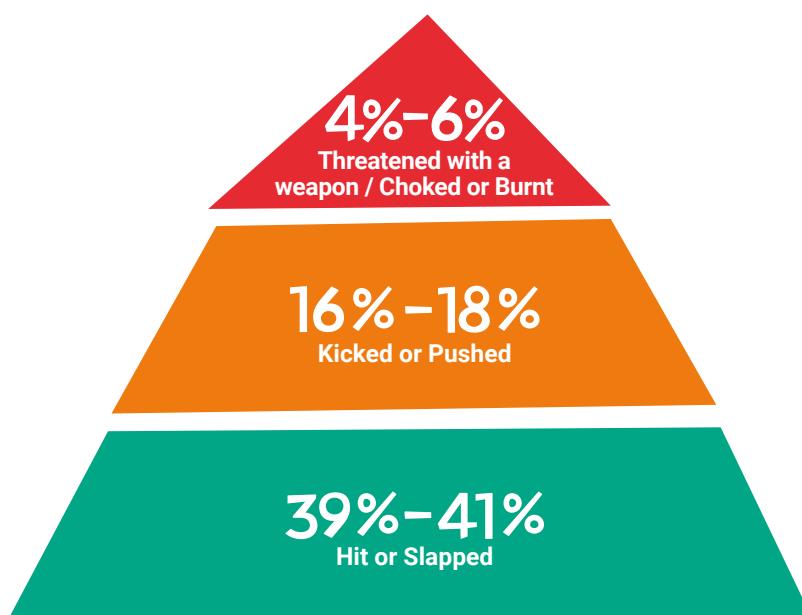


Figure 2.
Prevalence of different acts of physical IPV reported by women

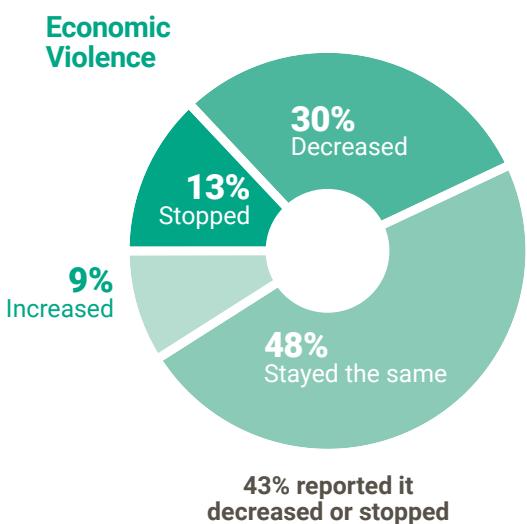
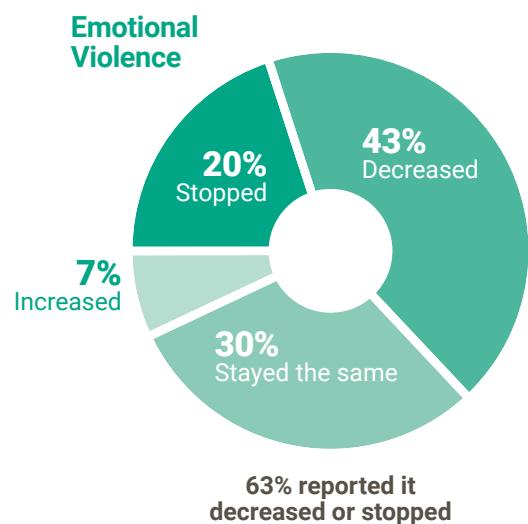
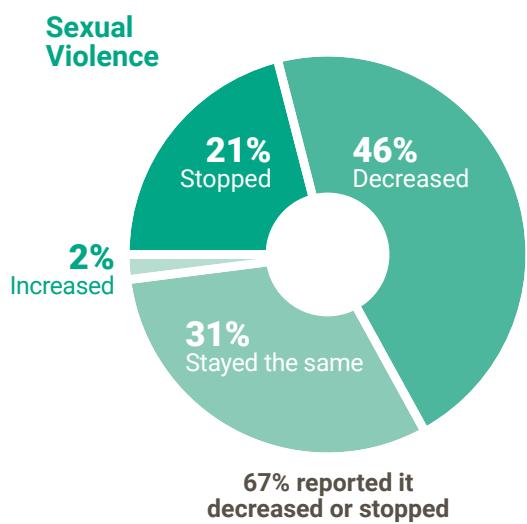
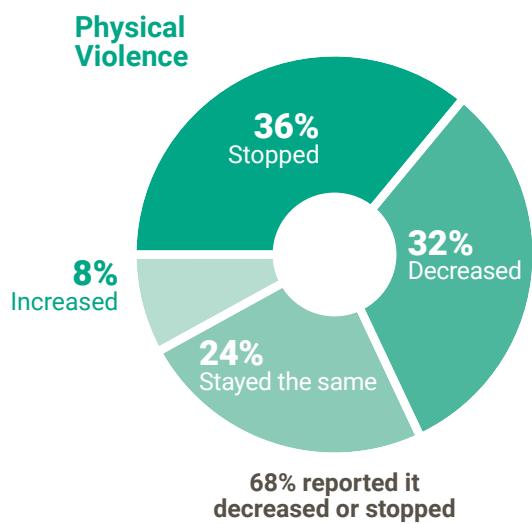


Following delivery of SAC's EASE approach, the quantitative analysis found that women reported considerable reductions in levels of physical, sexual, emotional and economic IPV (see diagram below). Over 60% of women reported that physical or sexual violence had stopped or decreased

in the previous year. The reduction in IPV levels was sustained, or enhanced, for some women. For a small proportion of women, IPV increased during the period of intervention, particularly for those in unequal relationships, influenced by patriarchal attitudes and controlling behaviors.

Figure 3.

Reported reductions in IPV from start of SAC program to follow up survey



Exploration of traditional beliefs found that negative attitudes that foster and normalize violence were still held by some men and women. After one year, many women participating in the *Improving Nutrition* program continued to hold attitudes that reinforced a patriarchal structure. **85% of respondents considered it natural for men to be the head of the household and 82% believed a wife should obey her husband, even if she disagreed with him.** Most women participants continued to maintain gender inequitable views and half thought that the use of violence by a partner was acceptable.

SAC project participants reported experiencing controlling behaviors perpetrated by their partners during their lifetimes. Only 35% of respondents had experienced no controlling behaviors ever during their lifetimes. After a year of participation in the SAC program, **46% of participants said that**

Figure 4.

Gender inequitable attitudes among women in SAC Improving Nutrition program



96%

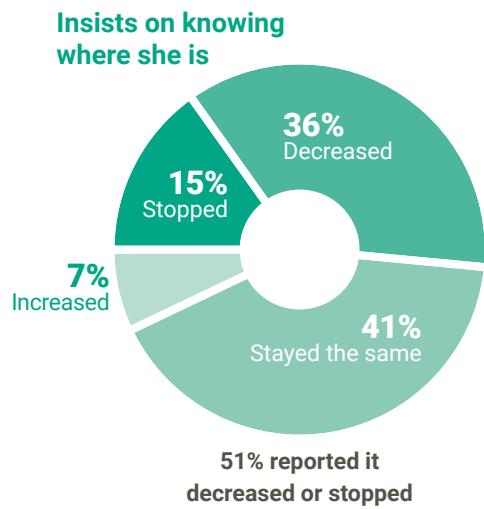
Of respondents agreed with at least 1 gender inequitable attitude

22%

Of respondents held gender inequitable attitudes on all 5 questions assessed

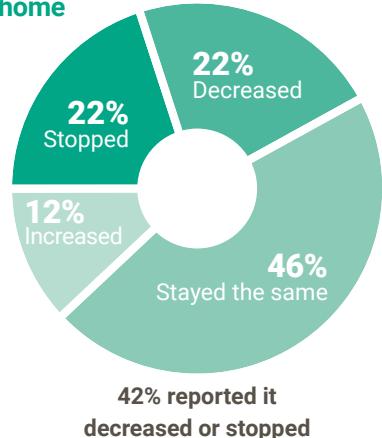
Figure 5.

Reported reductions in selected controlling behaviors from start of Improving Nutrition to follow up survey

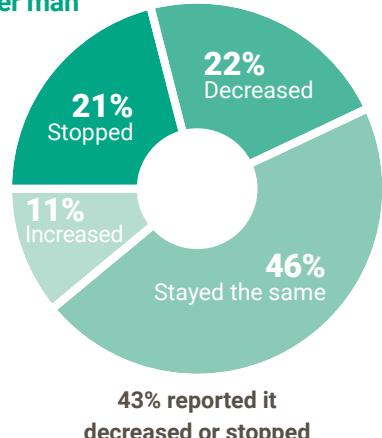


some controlling behaviors by their partners had stopped or decreased. While these numbers are very promising, it is important to note that almost 10% of women reported an increase in controlling behavior.

Expects she asks permission to leave home



Gets jealous if she talks to another man



Conclusion

Overall, the changes in attitudes and behaviors that have been engendered by SAC's EASE approach are very positive.

The program clearly had a considerable impact on the lives of women, empowering them socially and economically, and at the same time has reduced violence. Household dynamics between men and women have improved. **Women and men are working and planning collaboratively** to make decisions and both report that communication is clearer and more constructive. **Women's economic empowerment has been considerably enhanced** as they have gained access to and control over assets and financial resources. As a result, poverty (a key driver for violence) has been reduced. **Relationships between men and women have improved such that they report greater respect and harmony in the home.**

The research has shown that the impact has not just been felt at family or household level but also changed the situation for people from the wider community. **The confidence of women to speak out, participate in decision-making and lead has also been built** such that they have a higher profile and are taking a more active role in the community, for mutual benefit. These factors are reducing conflict and lessening the trigger points for violence. Subsequently, **rates of physical, sexual, emotional and economic IPV have reduced considerably** for a high proportion of women.

What is most encouraging from this study is that SAC's EASE approach was found to have a very considerable impact on the levels of

violence women experienced. Approximately **60% of women who had suffered violence reported that it had stopped or decreased**. In particular, the majority of women who suffered physical IPV before entering the program reported that they experienced less violence, or none at all, after just one year of project participation.

These are important and substantive findings demonstrating a considerable reduction in violence, all the more significant since EASE was not designed to intentionally address violence.

However, the data did also show that **for a small proportion of women (2-9%), IPV increased** after participating in the program for a year and almost 10% of women reported an increase in controlling behavior. Further investigation is required to fully understand the reasons behind this. The research team posited that women who experienced an increase in violence were in very unequal relationships, with partners who possessed strong patriarchal attitudes and controlling behaviors. The increased aggression of these men may have been a form of resistance against the changing attitudes, household practices or economic benefits accruing for women, that could potentially have led men to feel that their control over their household and relationships was threatened, resulting in violence as a response.

Recommendations

It is recommended that further research be undertaken, and additional elements incorporated into SAC's programming so that the EASE approach can fulfil its potential to contribute to a reduction in VAWG within the communities where SAC works. A key question to consider for further study would be whether SAC's programming could address IPV even more effectively if it was more intentional in addressing violence from the start. The researchers consider that the EASE approach could be even more successful should SAC address some additional areas in their future programming, in particular the underlying drivers of violence.

Further research to:

- Apply and assess the EASE approach in different contexts and situations to test and evaluate its impact on IPV further.
- Explore which elements of EASE contributes most to the positive changes and reductions in IPV and develop greater understanding of the underlying beliefs and behaviors that drive patriarchal norms and negative preconceptions.
- Understand whether there are important barriers limiting potential reductions in IPV in any given situation. In particular, unpacking why violence increased for a small percentage of women and how this could be prevented in future programming.

Developing tools:

- Widen the scope of Transformative Household Methodology. SAC is in the process of exploring how THM can be adapted for nutrition-related gender

inequalities and aspects of disability inclusion. The researchers suggest SAC also consider how THM could be used to look at the areas of gender inequality that impact on VAWG, as well as how to share this innovative and effective tool more widely.

- Explore how EASE and THM may impact other forms of VAWG and patriarchal practices such as polygamy, female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage, nyumba mboke, bride price and land rights for women.

Strengthen SACs IPV programming:

- Incorporate the IPV tool into SAC's monitoring systems to continue measuring gender attitudes and IPV in the areas where SAC works, as well as incorporating IPV into SAC program outcomes.
- Build the capacity of men and women in SAC projects who have embraced more equal gender dynamics and experienced positive changes to become gender champions within their communities and mentor households where gender attitudes are more traditional.
- Assimilate learning from other IPV approaches such as SASA! Raising Voices in Uganda and UK Aid What Works, to further strengthen IPV programming.
- Integrate education on violence and its prevention into SACs community-led safeguarding, to ensure communities continue to work towards protecting, preventing and mitigating against violence so women and girls can be safe in the long term.

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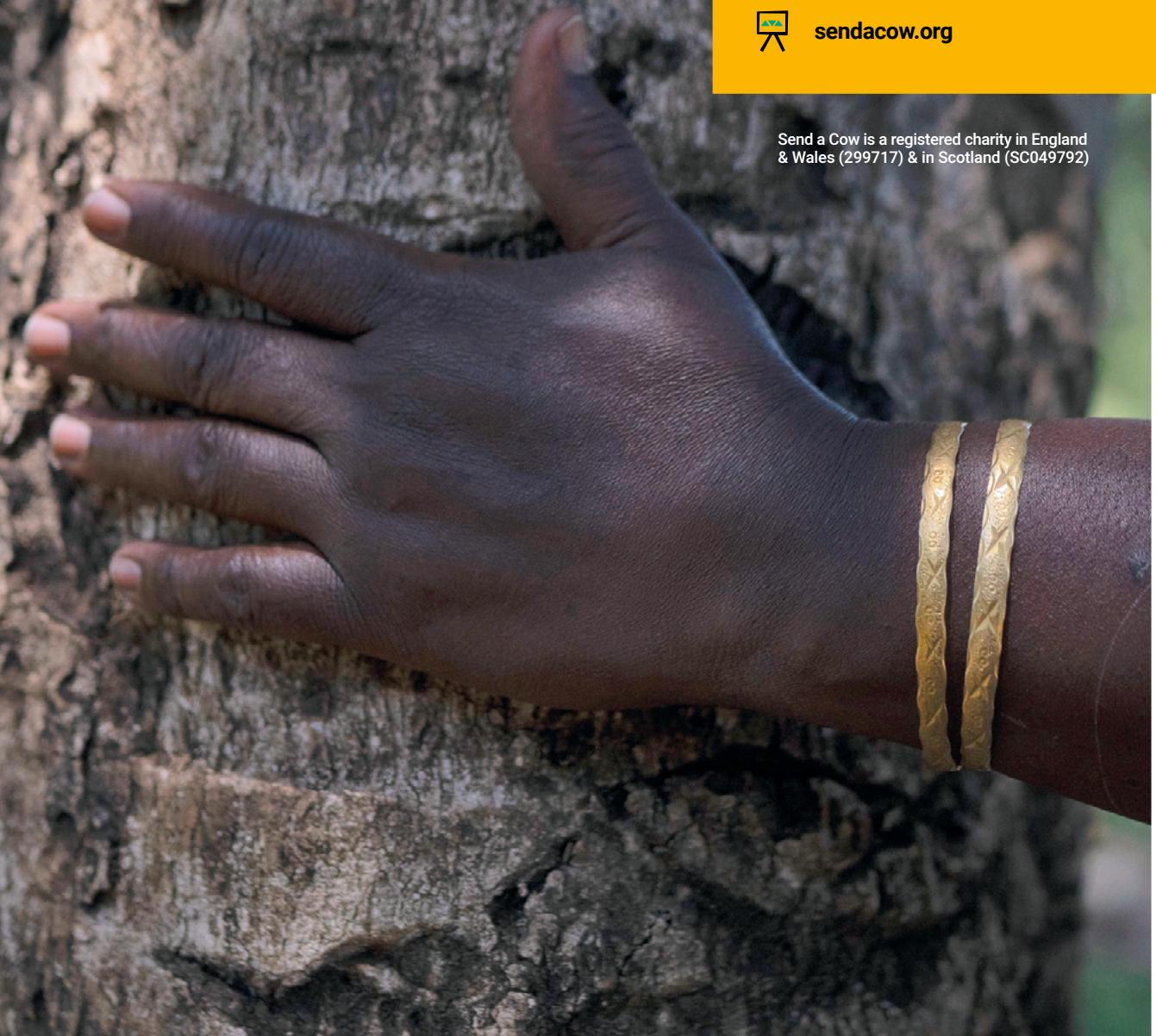
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