



# Fidelity Brief for Adapting Toose

A practical guide on what it means to have 'fidelity'  
to the Toose intervention





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## About this brief

This fidelity brief is intended as a practical guide on what it means to have ‘fidelity’ to the Toose intervention. It focuses on how to maintain adherence and integrity to the core components of Toose, as originally intended when it was initially designed and tested in Zimbabwe. When adapting and implementing the intervention, it is important to consider the different elements that were included in the original intervention, as these support overall integrity to Toose.

This brief is primarily aimed at organisations that are planning to adapt or implement Toose. However, it can also be used by donors or evaluators who are assessing or evaluating programmes which includes Toose methodology. It was developed in response to a desire for Toose to be widely taken up and direct interest from organisations wishing to adapt it.

## About Toose

The Toose model was developed under the **Stopping Abuse and Female Exploitation (SAFE) Programme**<sup>1</sup>, a four-year programme funded by UK International Development in Zimbabwe to prevent gender-based violence (GBV).

Toose was developed under the SAFE Programme, led by Ecorys, with technical support provided by Social Development Direct. Tetra Tech International Development was the evaluation partner with WFP being a consortium partner leading implementation in the fourth cohort.

The name Toose is derived from the Shona word Tose which means ‘Together’. It is a programme intervention which seeks to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV) and was implemented in two rural districts and one urban district in Zimbabwe from 2019 to 2023, with further implementation in Chiredzi in 2024.

**Implementing partners** involved at different stages were Caritas Harare; JF Kapnek Zimbabwe; Mwenezi Development Training Centre (MDTC); Plan International Zimbabwe; Self-Help Development Foundation (SHDF); Musasa and the World Food Programme.

The Toose intervention consists of three prevention-focused components:

### 1. Economic Empowerment

- › 6-session curriculum focused on setting up and running a successful Toose Internal Saving and Lending (TISAL) groups with seed funding provided by the project.
- › 5-session Selection, Planning & Management (SPM) curriculum focused on setting up and running successful income generating activities.
- › See Toose Economic Empowerment Facilitators Guide

### 2. Social Empowerment

- › 10-session couples curriculum focused on addressing social drivers to IPV at the household level, including sessions supporting couples to communicate better, balance power in their relationship and work together towards a shared family vision.
- › See Toose Social Empowerment Facilitators Guide

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1 The Stopping Abuse and Female Exploitation (SAFE) Programme, SAFE is a four-year programme funded by the UK government in Zimbabwe to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) by focusing on addressing economic insecurity and social norms as key drivers. Framed as a family wellbeing programme, the SAFE programme adopts an economic and social empowerment approach to GBV prevention, and works at individual, and relationship levels to achieve its objectives.

### 3. Community Diffusion

- › Promotes broad community level change through modelling Toose behaviours and values and sharing key messages in community level discussions and events.
- › See Toose Community Diffusion Guide for Facilitators

Supported by a response component:

### 4. GBV Response

- › Complementing the prevention work is a response package that supports existing response providers to handle the increased demand for GBV services associated with the Toose intervention, whilst also strengthening the quality of survivor centred response provided by community cadres This provision was considered an ethical imperative alongside the prevention intervention.
- › See Integrating GBV Response & Handling Disclosures During Toose Sessions: A Guide for Facilitators'

**Together, the 4 elements (social, economic, community diffusion and response) make up the core components of the Toose approach across individual, couple/family, and community levels. These 4 elements should be adhered to for full fidelity to the Toose Model at these different levels.**

Toose also had a focus on the meaningful integration of disability inclusion and a robust learning and adaptation approach from design through implementation.

To ensure that the results and outcome are consistent with what was achieved during implementation of the Toose approach, organisations seeking to take up the model are encouraged to take up all four components as they are mutually beneficial and interlinked.

## Evidence of effectiveness

An endline evaluation of Toose was conducted in 2024 by the programme's independent evaluation partner, Tetra Tech International Development.<sup>2</sup> The evaluation found Toose significantly improves family wellbeing, particularly the quality of intimate partner relationships, parent relationships with children, and the family's overall sense of emotional and material well-being. Toose's impact on IPV is less clear cut as the evidence base presents conflicting findings. Qualitative evaluation studies conducted during Toose's implementation were generally positive about Toose's impact on conflict resolution in the household and on IPV and the endline study recorded a reduction in the mean number of IPV acts experienced by women in the past year. However, an overall increase in IPV prevalence since baseline was recorded and no change in the severity of IPV, albeit with significant variations in these findings according to different factors. For more information and access to evaluation findings, please visit: [Evaluation and Learning Unit of the Stopping Abuse and Female Exploitation programme – intdevtetratecheurope.com](https://intdevtetratecheurope.com)

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<sup>2</sup> The endline evaluation was a longitudinal study that tracked participants from the quantitative Baseline Study conducted in 2022, allowing for measurement of change over time.

## Key considerations when adapting and contextualizing Toose

Toose is designed as a couple's intervention, centred on family wellbeing.

Organisations wishing to implement Toose should read the Toose Implementation Guide, and associated facilitators guides listed above. Content from the facilitators guides (particularly the session outlines) will need to be adapted to the specific context, including translation into local languages.

### A note on adaptation and contextualisation

#### Adapting Toose

Adaptation involves changes required when implementing Toose in a new context that is different from the ones where the programme has already been implemented (i.e. where the drivers or types of violence may be different) or with different target groups (i.e. with polygamous couples or a younger age group), this might include adding new topics or content to address specific issues (such as sessions on violence against children or alcohol abuse) or translating to a new language.

#### Contextualising Toose

Contextualisation involves making changes to the presentation, terminology and activities of Toose manuals and associated materials to make them relevant to local participants. This could include making activities more culturally appropriate and translating or changing design elements of the manuals (i.e. images in handouts etc). It is, however, important that the core content of the approach remains unchanged. Contextualisation should also be based on a local formative research phase to understand the specific context including drivers of violence, norms, policy environment, etc. Translating into new language can also be part of contextualising, as well as adapting

It is essential that organisations without prior experience of GBV programming include /draw on the technical expertise of GBV prevention experts in the adaptation or contextualisation of Toose, as with any other IPV prevention programme, to ensure the programme does no harm. **This includes** from certified Toose facilitators to ensure the integrity of the approach is maintained from the outset. Toose has a pool of certified facilitators in place in Zimbabwe to support this requirement (see Annex). By adhering to this standard, any entities that choose to implement the model can maintain consistency and fidelity to its core principles. Meaningful partnerships with local organisations working on IPV prevention and response, including WROs, is also strongly advised.

## Key design requirements

### 1 Adherent to the core components

- › As a minimum, when adapting or contextualising Toose organisations should adhere to the core components of the Toose model if the intervention is to have its desired effect.
- › Whilst the sequence and content of the sessions should remain the same (including rolling out each session as described in the manual), elements such as visuals, scenarios, names, and other contextual aspects can be adapted to make them more relevant to the geographic, social and legal context.
- › Core components include:
  - **11 economic empowerment sessions** to establish successful ISALs and start sustainable income generating activities. At the end of these sessions, women should have begun to earn an income that she can use to start or contribute to the overall household economy. See the Toose Economic Empowerment Facilitator's Guide for the sessions and guidance for facilitators.
  - **10 social empowerment sessions** delivered as a couple's curriculum, which focuses on healthy relationships and improved communication between couples – including developing shared family visions. See the Toose Economic Empowerment Facilitator's Guide for the sessions and guidance for facilitators.
  - **A robust approach to response** that works with local GBV response service providers/ WROs. See the Toose Response Facilitator's Guide titled 'Integrating GBV Response & Handling Disclosures During Toose Sessions: A Guide for Facilitators' for more information on how to respond to disclosures as a facilitator.

#### A note on sequencing

Combined economic and social empowerment programming often starts with the social empowerment content to address the root causes of violence by challenging and changing the harmful gender norms and power imbalances that drive GBV. However, the SAFE programme in Zimbabwe opted to start with the economic empowerment curriculum to directly respond to the economic situation of women in Zimbabwe and challenges of engaging men in gender transformative programmes. It did this by setting up predominantly women-only and a few men-only Toose Internal Savings and Loans groups and supporting them to establish income generating activities which provided an income stream to households. Further information on the sequencing and delivery of the components in Zimbabwe can be found in the Toose Implementation Guide.

### 2 Focus on depth over breadth

Toose has consistently focused on depth of transformation rather than breadth. Therefore, when scaling up the approach, it is essential to weigh the need for breadth against whether the scale-up parameters will support depth of transformation. Organizations utilizing Toose are more likely to achieve sustained and significant change if they commit to scaling within the bounds of achieving meaningful transformation for individuals.

### **3 If resources, context and evidence support it, carry out community diffusion activities**

- › Organisations who carry out community diffusion activities are encouraged to do so after implementing economic and social empowerment sessions.
- › This will ensure the core Toose messages around equitable relationships between couples is spread beyond those most intensively exposed.
- › It also helps build a more receptive environment around the Toose couples, with a view to supporting the sustainability of any changes made at the household level.

### **4 Understand the existence, quality and accessibility of local GBV services**

- › Carry out inclusive GBV service mapping that looks at the availability and quality of services, and referral systems that are in place. Ensure your service mapping identifies services which are accessible and inclusive, including for people with disabilities.
- › Use the mapping to establish whether it is safe to start a prevention intervention in the local area. If there are not sufficient services, or the existing services are not of good quality, consider if it is appropriate to start Toose prevention work in this area.
- › See the Implementation Guide and the 'Integrating GBV Response & Handling Disclosures During Toose Sessions: A Guide for Facilitators' for more details about response when designing your Toose intervention.

### **5 Do preparatory work**

- › The preparatory design or inception phase is important for assuring implementation fidelity. It is vital to fully invest in this, in terms of time, budget and personnel.
- › It is important to try to ensure that you have the time (suggested 6-12 months) and resources for the following key steps:
  - Selection and induction to GBV programming to implementing organisations and staff.
  - Conduct Formative Research to understand the context and drivers of violence.
  - Contextualisation or adaptation of manuals to fit the context and drivers identified.
  - Selection and training of facilitators.
  - Selection of intervention sites and couples (ensuring community is on board with intervention before entering).
  - Testing or piloting manuals.
  - Developing M&E tools and indicators (tools are available within Toose Facilitator Guides to adapt).



## 6 Work with couples

- › The Toose approach is most suited to intimate partners that reside in the same household. Toose was also trailed with partners in polygamous marriages and single women (including widows), however the feedback received from testing this in Zimbabwe indicated clearly that more tailoring is needed to the sessions to meet the specific needs of these alternative family structures.
- › The TISAL groups are single sex (apart from the first session, which includes couples) and some of the more sensitive discussions and activities in the social empowerment manual can be held in single-sex groups. However, for the greatest impact on the couple as a whole, efforts should be made to bring the couples together where possible.
- › Men's involvement is also central to the implementation and various strategies should be used to encourage men to attend the sessions and promote Toose, including piloting men-only TISAL groups, involving male leaders in the community diffusion activities and choosing a family well-being framing rather than an IPV prevention framing as a positive motivator to engage all.<sup>3</sup>

## 7 Use a benefits-based approach to inspire change.

- › Toose is about benefiting households with a deliberate emphasis on how both women and men benefit. This principle provides the foundation for the entire approach, raising positive energy within households and between couples, applying tools and facilitating conversations that focus on visions for the future and positive hopes, ambitions and strategies, rather than starting with and focussing on experienced and perceived problems.

## 8 Catalyse personal reflection.

- › The success of this approach depends on its authentic connection to real people, through direct, reflective engagement and a focus on open and participatory discussion through groups and between couples and within families rather than just one-way distribution of information.
- › The topics covered in the sessions are issues which generally aren't openly discussed between couples but are important to encourage better and more open relationships built on trust and sharing of power.
- › Personal and/ or couple and group reflections are encouraged, for example through take home exercises, group work, couple reflections during sessions etc.

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<sup>3</sup> Despite the benefits of taking a family wellbeing approach, the findings from several SAFE ELU studies suggest that a focus on family wellbeing rather than individual empowerment may have limited empowerment outcomes for women. For more information see the SAFE Learning Brief.

## Quality of implementation

### 1 Maintain an integrated intervention

- › Toose's pathway to more healthy and balanced relationships between couples was built on the identified need to address both economic insecurity and inequitable gender attitudes, norms and behaviours as key drivers of IPV. As such the mutually reinforcing nature of economic and social empowerment sessions are crucial to the success of the programme impact on outcomes related to GBV.
- › To maintain integrity to the Toose intervention, as originally intended, it is important to consider the other elements of community diffusion and GBV response throughout implementation, as these support overall integrity to Toose. On response, it is important for any GBV prevention programme to maintain safe and ethical practice when it comes to response services available.
- › Overall, the hypothesis behind the design of Toose was that each of the four components played a pivotal role in catalyzing change at multiple levels (individual, interpersonal and community), which collectively worked toward the reduction of IPV. Each step therefore contributes incrementally to the transformation journey for individual men and women, couples, and communities at large. As such, there is a strong value add in maintaining all four components as a **cohesive framework**.

### 2 Ensure well trained and mentored facilitators

- › Ensure peer facilitators are carefully selected, trained, and supported and that they are well-respected by the community and group members.
- › Whilst selection criteria are important, organisations should provide facilitators with ongoing trainings, supervision, mentoring and supportive feedback.
- › Adequate resources should be included in the implementation budgets to cater for the salaries and ongoing training and support of facilitators.

### 3 Ensure the programming has sufficient time.

- › It is strongly advised that Toose requires a minimum of 12 months to be effectively implemented, making it unsuitable for shorter project cycles and unsuitable for implementation in insecure or conflict affected settings.

### 4 Centre "visioning"

- › The inclusion of visioning across both the economic and social sessions was a uniting factor for couples and is key to fostering collaboration and discussion within and between families about the changes they want to see.
- › The inclusion of visioning, alongside a new cash stream, can create an impetus for families to engage in joint visioning and planning and contribute to women's empowerment outcomes by allowing women to lead on the development of their own visions.
- › Overall, visioning promotes joint planning and serves as an entry point for families to work together to build a more economically secure household while creating positive relationships.

## 5 Focus on addressing power dynamics and violence

- › Both the content and messaging on the different uses of power in relationships, and the focus of certain sessions on IPV, were included and strengthened in later iterations based on feedback from participants and are essential to addressing the drivers of violence including the abuse of power and harmful norms.
- › For similar impacts, it will be important to maintain both of these content elements. It is also essential to have personnel with expertise or strong training in how to address these topics, including handling any questions, sensitivities or push back.
- › Distortion of sessions or messaging on power and IPV can result in the reproduction of patriarchal gendered norms.
- › Those implementing Toose should carefully consider how they manage the sessions on violence – including potentially adding additional sessions after the violence ones to give more time for this information to be absorbed and reflected on.

## 6 Make time for the gender transformative journey for the whole team

- › Everyone working on the programme should have some exposure to gender transformative workshops prior to starting implementation. This should include time to reflect critically on their own beliefs and attitudes through exploring their personal experiences of gender, violence and power alongside learning key skills to be able to listen and have empathy for the views and experiences of others.
- › Organisations are also advised that, if they do not have a background or previous exposure to gender equality interventions or GBV prevention programme, they should work with a partner organisation that does. Ideally this should be a women's rights organisation.

## 7 Integrate response and pay attention to GBV disclosures during implementation

- › Where possible select a GBV response partner (ideally a local WRO). Where this is not possible, develop strong relationships with organisations providing GBV response services, whether or not they are official partners of Toose.
- › Train facilitators and all programme staff and volunteers on the referral pathway and how to handle disclosures (see the guide: 'Integrating GBV Response & Handling Disclosures During Toose Sessions: A Guide for Facilitators' for more information on relevant response related topics for facilitator trainings).
- › Develop internal procedures about how your staff handle disclosures of GBV that may happen during the programme.

## 8 Build in time and resources for self and collective care

- › This work is hard and intense and often comes with backlash and demands on our emotional and mental wellbeing. As such, it is vital to include resource, strategies and time for self and collective care of the team, partners, facilitators and participants.



## Contact details

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