



Practice Brief

DOING VIOLENCE PREVENTION WELL

Matching Aspirations with Funding Timeframes

“There is now rigorous evidence which shows that violence against women (VAW) is preventable, and that greater gender equality can be achieved. Several evidence-based prevention strategies have shown substantial reductions in the levels of violence after 1 to 4 years of solid implementation.”

Introduction

Evidence that violence against women (VAW) can be reduced in years rather than lifetimes has attracted new interest and money to the field of violence prevention. While exciting and welcome, this attention has at times encouraged overly ambitious aspirations and expectations on the part of some funders and programme planners. It is essential that practitioners working to address VAW help manage these expectations and negotiate realistic objectives and timeframes; without these, both the impact of organisations’ investment and women’s safety may be put at risk.

Evidence and practice-based learning across different contexts has repeatedly shown that community-wide prevention strategies (e.g. SASA! Together, Communities Care, Ghana’s Combat programme) require a minimum of 3 years of high intensity implementation to have a measurable impact on VAW prevalence. This is in addition to the

9 to 12 months of preparatory work that is needed to map local resources and stakeholders, adapt a programme to a new setting, train staff, and most importantly, build trust and partnership among implementing organizations and the communities they serve. Conducting a formal evaluation and/or capturing practice-based learning requires even more time.

Realistically, implementing an effective community mobilization approach to violence prevention (such as SASA! Together) requires 4 to 5 years of dedicated and flexible funding. Organisations and funders unable to make this level of commitment should probably avoid this type of programming. Attempting to do more than money and timing allow is not value neutral. It represents an inefficient use of resources (by investing in ineffective programming) and can provoke backlash from male partners and community members.

Programme officers and managers often confront the reality that the vast majority of funds available for work to prevent VAW is short term and contractually limited. Short time frames and the political pressures to show quantifiable results are two of the biggest challenges currently facing the VAW field. Fortunately, there are useful contributions that donors and organizations working to end VAW can make in shorter timeframes to contribute towards prevention in the longer-term. The key is to match available funding to realistic outcomes and avoid overpromising.

About this brief

To help programme officers moderate their own expectations and those of funders, this brief provides examples of prevention programming that would be suitable for different timeframes, ranging from 1 year, 2 years, 3 years to 5+ years. It also highlights investments that for ethical and effectiveness reasons, should be avoided. It draws on the work and experiences of UN Women EAW teams and the technical expertise of the Prevention Collaborative, a global network of practitioners and researchers with deep knowledge of VAW prevention programming worldwide. The brief's









goal is to provide benchmarks for reasonable investment that programme officers can use when writing concept notes or negotiating funding.

When discussing timeframes, this brief refers to the time available specifically for partners/contractors to design, implement and evaluate any effort. It does not include time that organisations may need to finalize their contract with a funder, recruit and hire staff, undertake competitive bidding or grant making, and finalise any sub-agreements. Not infrequently, these tasks can absorb a considerable part of the time afforded in a funder contract.

Strategic options for VAW prevention programming

Firstly, it is useful for programme teams and funders to consider the full range of strategic options in terms of programming for VAW prevention. Not all programmes need to be designed from scratch; some build on lessons from a pilot or initial phase of programming; others adapt approaches that were promising in other contexts. The table below sets out the various strategic options and considers when they are appropriate.

Options	This may be appropriate when ...
 Build capacity; Capture knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience with violence prevention programming is new to a country office and/or setting • Funding timeframes are limited (e.g., <18 months) • An office anticipates that additional funding may be forthcoming; early money can be used for formative research, stakeholder convenings and mapping, co-design of a future prevention programme, etc.
 Strengthen an existing programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The monitoring and learning data suggest there is a need to improve aspects of implementation e.g., intensify activities, add activities, strengthen facilitator training
 Expand an existing programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are promising results from a programme being funded and there is potential to test the program with a different sub-population or in a different setting
 Adapt an evidence-based programme to a different context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is potential that a successful programme (i.e., one that has reduced VAW prevalence elsewhere) could work in another context (the drivers of violence are similar) • There is adequate time and resources to adapt, pilot and refine the programme (adaptation, pre-testing and piloting generally takes 12 to 18 months) • There is willingness to consult the programme originators and work to ensure both fidelity to the model and contextual relevance.
 Scale up a programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An existing programme has strong results (i.e. reductions in VAW prevalence) and has been optimised based on learning and evaluation • There is funding to deliver this programme to more communities / populations whilst remaining faithful to its design and implementation quality
 Innovate to design a completely new program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim is to innovate and design new interventions to try to address new types of VAW, achieve greater impact on reducing a specific type of violence, or build on existing community strategies/assets for reducing violence • The aim or desire is to co-design a programme from the bottom-up with partners / communities / populations

Options for deploying funding that must be used in 1 year

- 1 Capacity strengthening of staff on VAW Prevention programming
- 2 Research to inform future programming and/or policy priorities
- 3 Translation and/or subtitling of materials into local languages to make them more widely accessible
- 4 Sponsoring exchange visits between policymakers, WROs and other stakeholders
- 5 Participatory design of a prevention approach with stakeholders and partner organisations
- 6 Investment in local policy processes or field-building organizations

Capacity strengthening of staff on VAW Prevention programming

Many organisations and their staff have limited expertise on VAW prevention or on how to design

and implement an effective programme. Thus, an excellent use of short-term funds is to support capacity strengthening on prevention among programme staff, policymakers, women's right organisations and other local partners. A variety of online and in person participatory courses are available. Many of these courses are free of charge; others may be a few hundred dollars per participant.

Topic	Sponsor(s)	Link(s)
Understanding Violence	Emory University	Coursera
Prevention Essentials	Prevention Collaborative	Facilitated on-line
Finding and Using GBV data	KnowVAWDData	Self-Directed
Measuring Violence against children	SVRI	Self-Directed
Confronting GBV: Global Lessons for Health Workers	Johns Hopkins University	Coursera
Researching GBV: Methods & Meanings	LSHTM	In person
Designing Effective Prevention Programmes	Prevention Collaborative	Facilitated
Mitigating risk of Sexual Exploitation in AID	Empowered AID	Self-Directed
Managing GBV in Emergencies	International Medical Corp	In person (8 days)

Together with WHO, UN Women has designed an overview course on VAW Prevention based on the [RESPECT Framework](#). Supporting the delivery of a RESPECT training in your country or region is also a strategic first step toward building understanding and political will toward violence prevention. Previous RESPECT workshops for 20-80 people have been delivered virtually for around US \$20,000 and in-person for around US \$50,000 - \$80,000 depending on travel and logistics costs. There are also multiple organizations that can offer bespoke mentoring and/or accompaniment to groups seeking to enter the prevention field or build capacity. Often this takes the form of initial capacity development workshops on prevention followed by regular 'on-the-job' inputs over a 12-18-month period. A mentoring arrangement of this type might cost US \$20,000 – \$30,000.

Research to inform future programming and/or policy priorities

Programmes should be designed to address the specific drivers and triggers identified for a specific type of violence in a specific context. Funding “situational analysis” or formative research is important to understand the sociocultural context of VAW, populations affected, attitudes and norms that sustain violence, opportunities and constraints for intervening, and programming realities. It can also be used to inventory and evaluate existing services, an essential first step in any effort to implement community-based violence prevention programmes. Prevention activities often lead to an increase in women seeking services, so it is important that existing services are mapped and strengthened so they can be properly integrated into prevention programming. Ideally, a local research organization or team should lead this initial research. Costs depend on the scope of the research, but, as an example a qualitative study

across three communities involving interviews and focus groups might cost US \$40,000-\$80,000 depending on context and travel costs.

Translation and/or subtitling of materials into local languages to make them more widely accessible

There are a variety of useful resources on VAW prevention produced by organisations globally, regionally and nationally – including evidence reviews, practice and ‘how to’ guides, learning briefs as well as interactive, video and audio resources. Yet most of these resources are in dominant global languages like English and remain inaccessible to some practitioners. It is therefore worth funding the translation and/or subtitling of key resources into local languages. Costs will depend on document type, length and local translation rates.

Sponsoring exchange visits between policymakers, women’s rights organisations and other stakeholders

These visits can prove good value for money when they are focused on organisations planning to implement a similar prevention approach with organisations that have experience doing so. They are often best timed when the visiting partner has already committed to an approach and has funding, so that they can directly apply lessons learned. Seeing a programme in action and being able to ask questions can really help avoid expensive missteps later – especially around adaptation processes and ensuring implementation quality. The costs of this will vary depending on travel and logistics costs and number of people.



Participatory design of a prevention approach with stakeholders and partner organisations

12 months is not adequate to design and implement a prevention programme; however, it is adequate time to co-design a new prevention approach with a set of stakeholders and/or implementing partners. Most development funding, especially monies coming from bilateral or multilateral donors, does not accommodate this type of early collaboration, which means that stakeholders feel less ownership of the project and it remains less informed by local knowledge and political realities. A [UK-funded study on prevention programme costs](#) suggests that quality intervention development can cost US \$30k - \$150,000.

Several innovative prevention initiatives have had success applying principles from Human Centred Design to ensure that strategies meet the needs and realities of programme participants. Likewise, consultative processes can help organisations to design better concept notes for funders and more informed Terms of Reference for competitive bids. Investing in upfront planning processes is critical for ensuring that:



Programmes are informed by a setting's social cultural context, power relations, stakeholders, and locally available assets.



Programmes suit the lives of those affected, in terms of accommodating their care responsibilities, mobility, availability, and preferences.



Partner organisations have the time necessary to deepen their knowledge, skills, and capacity to do prevention well.



Partner organisations and stakeholders are committed and are more likely to engage and sustain efforts.

Investment in local policy processes or field-building organizations

Investing in existing networks and organisations that are working globally, regional or nationally to build political will and capacity on VAW prevention is also a good use of shorter-term resources.

Examples include national GBV coalitions bringing together governmental bodies with women's rights organisations and civil society as well as regional and global initiatives set up by funders, governments and CSOs.



Creation of accessible, well-targeted resources; Capturing practice-based knowledge

Much of the global evidence on VAW prevention does not reach practitioners in ways that are accessible and actionable. Likewise, there is little documentation of the innovative country- or regional-level programming that may already exist. Supporting efforts to either capture lessons learned from previous prevention projects or to generate new resources specifically designed for practitioners, can be a strategic investment for shorter-term funding. In addition to 'briefs' working with creative organizations to produce videos, short animations, or podcasts, can be an effective way to make insights from research and practice more accessible to a variety of interest groups. Videos distributed via social media can also be an effective way to educate young people about things like cyber risk, sexual exploitation on the internet, and where to seek help.

Options for deploying funding that must be used in 2 years

- 1 Adapt and pilot a successful intervention to a different context
- 2 Work with a national (or state level) government and civil society to develop a prevention strategy
- 3 Conduct a VAW survey to provide data on the prevalence, causes and consequences of violence

Adapt and pilot a successful intervention to a different context

A programme that is successful in one socio-cultural and political context may not be immediately appropriate to another context. It may need changes in language, images, and content, as well as changes to activities, delivery mechanisms and partnerships. Adaptation involves changing the design and/or implementation of a prevention approach or model to be as appropriate as

possible to a new context, whilst ensuring that the fundamentals that made the original programme effective are maintained. Effective adaptation and piloting usually require at least 12 months. It is essential to understand the importance of good adaptation and invest the resources to achieve this; otherwise, organisations risk wasting resources, delivering an ineffective intervention, and potentially doing harm.

Work with a national (or state level) governments and civil society to develop a prevention strategy

Processes to build consensus and to develop national or local prevention plans or strategies can take upwards of 2 years, as evidenced by the experiences of Australia, Fiji, and Peru. Time is needed to build understanding and ownership of the plan among government officials and civil society partners. To be successful, such processes require time for robust reflection, analysis, and co-design with a range of stakeholders as well as planning for an implementation budget. There is guidance available for conducting such processes.

Conduct and publish a VAW survey to provide data on the prevalence, causes and consequences of violence

Accurate data is important for designing effective VAW programmes. However, VAW data from sources such as police records, the judiciary or health clinics are inadequate for understanding violence prevalence and its risk factors because only a small percentage of women who experience violence report to authorities. Thus, this data is best obtained from a well-designed household survey – whether at national level or in the programme areas – and this is something that funders can support working with national governments, NGOs and local research institutes. 1.5 years is recommended for a stand-alone study, as adequate time is needed to produce a robust research design, receive ethical approval, train field workers on reliable and ethical data collection, analyse the results, report the findings back to the community; and publish, disseminate, and apply the study's conclusions. Costs vary from \$100,000 to \$500,000, depending on the scale of the study.



Options for deploying funding that must be used in 3-4 years

- 1 Optimise, implement and evaluate an evidence-based programme
- 2 Integrate violence prevention into a sector-based programme
- 3 Establish a new platform for evidence, learning and/or capacity development

Optimise, implement and evaluate an evidence-based programme

If a programme has already been deemed effective in the same or a very similar context, 3-4 years is adequate time to optimise, implement and evaluate the same programme in new communities. Preferably, the programme should have been deemed effective by a robust impact evaluation (e.g., mixed methods, quasi-experimental or randomised controlled trial) or an in depth, qualitative case study that assesses implementation quality, pathways to impact, background historical trends, and other relevant factors.

Integrate violence prevention into a sector-based programme

In addition to community-based prevention efforts, sector-based initiatives provide an important stepping-stone for integrating violence prevention efforts into government or private sector initiatives. Working with colleagues from ministries of education, health, urban planning, or transport, can also be a first step toward taking programmes to scale. Often the first step towards integration will be to mitigate any potential risks posed to women and children within the sector. For example, many ministries of education, are working to reduce corporal punishment or sexual exploitation by teachers in schools. Public and private transport bodies have implemented programmes to reduce sexual harassment and assault on buses and trains.

Ministries and/or state, provincial or municipal governments have also begun to actively invest in preventing violence by integrating violence prevention curricula in schools or by training community health workers to implement parenting curricula aimed at reducing violence against women and children in the family. Governments can



engage more easily when violence work is organized through existing sector-based programmes; but time is needed to negotiate a project, build political will and identify helpful strategies.

Establish a new platform for evidence, learning and/or capacity development

It is important to design and fund accessible, inclusive platforms and mechanisms to synthesise and share evidence and learning on VAW prevention with different audiences (e.g. practitioners, researchers, policymakers). There are a number of existing platforms that can be supported, but there is still a need to ensure that a wider range of types of knowledge are captured and shared (e.g. practice-based knowledge, qualitative and indigenous knowledge, national level programming evidence, etc)

Options for 5+ years of funding

1

Design, pilot, implement and evaluate a prevention and response programme in a new context

2

Scale up a successful prevention intervention to new populations and regions

Design, pilot, implement and evaluate a prevention and response programme in a new context

Five or more years is an ideal time-period for designing, piloting, and evaluating a violence prevention programme in a new context. A robust design/adaptation and piloting phase requires at least 12-18 months. Most evidence-based programs require an implementation phase of 24 to 36 months to ensure shifts in social norms and reductions in violence. A robust mixed methods impact evaluation (e.g., randomized control trial plus qualitative research) requires considerable up-front time to secure ethics approval (between 3 to 12 months) and baseline surveys must be completed before programme activities begin. Thus, year one of any new prevention programme is in effect a preparation year, where strategies, curricula and other elements are developed or adapted, entry

into communities is negotiated, relationships between implementing groups solidified, and evaluation methods designed and approved by appropriate ethical bodies.

Scale up a successful prevention intervention to new populations and regions

Once a prevention program has proven successful, it can be optimised and then scaled up to more people and or communities. This should ideally be undertaken with local or national government institutions and resources to ensure sustainability.

What to avoid in VAW Prevention Programming

Past experience, evaluation findings and practice-based knowledge suggest there are practices that should be actively avoided by organisations when negotiating with funders and preparing concept notes related to violence prevention programming.

Here are a few:

- Avoid programming a community mobilisation intervention such as SASA! Together or Communities Care with less than 4-5 years of funding
- Avoid seeking funding for an impact evaluation that does not also collect qualitative data to help interpret findings and assess implementation quality
- Avoid assuming that a programme that worked in one setting will necessarily reduce violence elsewhere
- Avoid developing programmes that rely on multiple training cascades. Normally ToT programs with more than one level do not adequately prepare facilitators or staff
- Avoid developing “awareness raising” activities with the expectation that they will reduce violence. Such activities can draw attention to the issue but are insufficient on their own to change behaviour
- Avoid programming intervention where funding does not allow mid course corrections



Endnotes

1. Prevention Collaborative, 2019. Towards more effective strategies to prevent violence against women and their children: a Prevention Collaborative analysis. (<https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/PC-Position-Paper-12-pages-LOW-RES-FINAL.pdf>)
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3. See, for example, Prevention Collaborative, 2020. Becoming One in Western Uganda. (https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Programme-Summary_Becoming-One-1.pdf)
4. UN Women, Social Development Direct, 2020. National Plan Guide & Workbook: Dedicated to the prevention of violence against women. (<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/RESPECT-implementation-guide-National-plan-guide-and-workbook-en.pdf>) and The Equality Institute, UN Women, 2021. Making Progress in Prevention Possible – A monitoring framework for the prevention of violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region. (<https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/07/making-progress-in-prevention-possible>)
5. Prevention Collaborative. Finding Good Data. (https://prevention-collaborative.org/about-violence/finding-good-data/?cat_id=67&scat_id=69)

This brief (2023) was authored by Naeemah Khan, Lyndsay McLean and Lori Heise of the Prevention Collaborative. It was commissioned by UN Women and draws on the experiences of UN Women Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) programme teams globally as well as the Prevention Collaborative's wider work.