

R E S P E C T

W O M E N

Preventing violence  
against women



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# RESPECT women:

## Preventing violence against women



World Health  
Organization



UNITED NATIONS  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



UNODC  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the  
Netherlands



Australian Government



# Introduction

The primary audience for this document is policymakers. Programme implementers working on preventing and responding to violence against women will also find it useful for designing, planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluating interventions and programmes.

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**Commit to  
action!**

# Know the **facts**

Violence against women (VAW) is a **violation of human rights**, is rooted in gender inequality, is a **public health problem**, and an impediment to sustainable development.

Nearly **1 in 3 (35%)** women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence, not including sexual harassment, by any perpetrator.

Globally, **30%** of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

Adolescent girls, young women, women belonging to ethnic and other minorities, transwomen, and women with disabilities face a **higher risk** of different forms of violence.

.....  
**Humanitarian emergencies** may exacerbate existing violence and lead to additional forms of violence against women and girls.

.....  
Globally between **38%-50% of murders** of women are committed by **intimate partners**.

.....  
Violence negatively affects women's physical and mental **health** and well-being. It has **social and economic consequences** and costs for families, communities and societies.

.....  
Low education, exposure to violence in childhood, unequal power in intimate relationships, and attitudes and norms accepting violence and gender inequality increase the risk of **experiencing intimate partner violence and sexual violence**.

.....  
Low education, child maltreatment or exposure to violence in the family, harmful use of alcohol, attitudes accepting of violence and gender inequality increase risk of **perpetrating intimate partner violence**.

.....  
The majority (**55-95%**) of women survivors of violence **do not disclose or seek any type of services**.

.....  
Violence against women and girls is **preventable**. To prevent violence, mitigate the risk factors and amplify the protective factors.

.....

# Assess **the risk** & **protective** **factors**<sup>1</sup>

## Risk Factors

Discriminatory laws on property ownership, marriage, divorce and child custody

Low levels of women's employment and education

Absence or lack of enforcement of laws addressing violence against women

Gender discrimination in institutions (e.g. police, health)

**SOCIETAL**

Harmful gender norms that uphold male privilege and limit women's autonomy

High levels of poverty and unemployment

High rates of violence and crime

Availability of drugs, alcohol and weapons

**COMMUNITY**

High levels of inequality in relationships/ male-controlled relationships/ dependence on partner

Men's multiple sexual relationships

Men's use of drugs and harmful use of alcohol

**INTERPERSONAL**

Childhood experience of violence and/ or exposure to violence in the family

Mental disorders

Attitudes condoning or justifying violence as normal or acceptable

**INDIVIDUAL**



**SOCIETAL**

Laws that:

- promote gender equality
- promote women's access to formal employment
- address violence against women

**COMMUNITY**

Norms that support non-violence and gender equitable relationships, and promote women's empowerment

**INTERPERSONAL**

Intimate relationships characterized by gender equality, including in shared decision-making and household responsibilities

**INDIVIDUAL**

Non-exposure to violence in the family

---

Secondary education for women and men and less disparity in education levels between women and men

---

Both men and boys and women and girls are socialized to, and hold gender equitable attitudes



## Protective Factors

**R E S P E C T**

**Implement**  
**7 strategies** to  
**prevent violence**  
against women<sup>2</sup>

## → **Relationship skills strengthened**

refers to strategies aimed at individuals or groups of women, men or couples to improve skills in interpersonal communication, conflict management and shared decision-making.

## → **Empowerment of women**

refers to both economic and social empowerment including inheritance and asset ownership, microfinance plus gender and empowerment training interventions, collective action, creating safe spaces and mentoring to build skills in self-efficacy, assertiveness, negotiation, and self-confidence.

## → **Services ensured**

refers to a range of services including police, legal, health, and social services provided to survivors.

## → **Poverty reduced**

refers to strategies targeted to women or the household whose primary aim is to alleviate poverty ranging from cash transfers, savings, microfinance loans, labour force interventions.

## → **Environments made safe**

refers to efforts to create safe schools, public spaces and work environments, among others.

## → **Child and adolescent abuse prevented**

refers to establishing nurturing family relationships, prohibiting corporal punishment, and implementing parenting programmes as mentioned in *INSPIRE - 7 strategies for preventing violence against children*.

## → **Transformed attitudes, beliefs, and norms**

refers to strategies that challenge harmful gender attitudes, beliefs, norms and stereotypes that uphold male privilege and female subordination, that justify violence against women and that stigmatize survivors. These may range from public campaigns, group education to community mobilization efforts.

## Relationships skills strengthened

Group-based workshops with women and men to promote egalitarian attitudes and relationships



Couples counselling and therapy



### EXAMPLE

#### Group-based Workshops

In the two-year period following the implementation of *Stepping Stones* in South Africa with female and male participants aged 15–26 years, men were less likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence, rape and transactional sex in the intervention group compared to the baseline.<sup>x</sup>

## Empowerment of women

Empowerment training for women and girls including life skills, safe spaces, mentoring



Inheritance and asset ownership policies and interventions



Micro-finance or savings and loans plus gender and empowerment training components



### EXAMPLE

#### Microfinance plus gender and empowerment

The *IMAGE project* (Intervention with Microfinance for Aids and Gender Equity) in South Africa empowers women through microfinance together with training on gender and power and community mobilization activities. Studies show it reduced domestic violence by 50% in the intervention group over a period of two years. At US\$244 per incident case of partner violence averted during a 2-year scale up phase, the intervention is highly cost-effective.<sup>w</sup>

## Services ensured

Empowerment counselling interventions or psychological support to support access to services (i.e. advocacy)



Alcohol misuse prevention interventions



Shelters



Hotlines



One-stop crisis centres



Perpetrator interventions



Women's police stations/units



Screening in health services



Sensitization and training of institutional personnel without changing the institutional environment



### EXAMPLE

#### Advocacy for survivors

The *Community Advocacy Project* in Michigan and Illinois, United States, is an evidence-based program designed to help women survivors of intimate partner abuse re-gain control of their lives. Trained advocates provide advocacy and individually tailored assistance to survivors so that they can access community resources and social support. The intervention was found to lower recurrence of violence and depression and improve quality of life and social support. Two years after the intervention ended, the positive change continued.<sup>y</sup>

# Assess the evidence on interventions<sup>3</sup>

## Poverty reduced

Economic transfers, including conditional/unconditional cash transfers plus vouchers, and in-kind transfers



Labour force interventions including employment policies, livelihood and employment training



Microfinance or savings interventions without any additional components



### EXAMPLE

#### Economic transfers

In Northern Ecuador, a cash, vouchers and food transfer programme implemented by the World Food Programme (WFP) was targeted to women in poor urban areas, intending to reduce poverty. Participating households received monthly transfers equivalent to \$40 per month for a period of 6 months. The transfer was conditional on attendance of monthly nutrition trainings. The evaluation showed reductions in women's experience of controlling behaviours, physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partners by 19 to 30%. A plausible mechanism for this was reduced conflict within couples related to poverty-related stresses.<sup>P</sup>

## Environments made safe

Infrastructure and transport



Bystander interventions



Whole School interventions



### EXAMPLE

#### Right to play - preventing violence among and against children in schools

In Hyderabad (Sindh Province), Pakistan, a right to play intervention reached children in 40 public schools. Boys and girls were engaged in play-based learning providing them opportunity to develop life skills such as confidence, communication, empathy, coping with negative emotions, resilience, cooperation, leadership, critical thinking and conflict resolution that help combat conflict, intolerance, gender discrimination and peer violence. An evaluation showed decreases in peer victimization by 33% among boys and 59% among girls at 24 months post intervention; in corporal punishment by 45% in boys and 66% in girls; and in witnessing of domestic violence by 65% among boys and by 70% in girls.<sup>o</sup>

## Child and adolescent abuse prevented

Home visitation and health worker outreach



Parenting interventions



Psychological support interventions for children who experience violence and who witness intimate partner violence



Life skills / school-based curriculum, rape and dating violence prevention training



## Transformed attitudes, beliefs, and norms

Community mobilization



Group-based workshops with women and men to promote changes in attitudes and norms



Social marketing or edutainment and group education



Group education with men and boys to change attitudes and norms



Stand-alone awareness campaigns/single component communications campaigns



### EXAMPLE

#### Community Mobilizations SASA!

SASA! is a community intervention in Uganda that prevents violence against women by shifting the power balance between men and women in relationships. Studies show that in SASA! communities 76% of women and men believe physical violence against a partner is not acceptable while only 26% of women and men in control communities believe the same. At the cost of US\$ 460 per incident case of partner violence averted in trial phase, intervention is cost-effective and further economies of scale can be achieved during scale-up.<sup>v</sup>

## LEGEND<sup>4</sup>

- promising**, >1 evaluations show significant reductions in violence outcomes
- more evidence needed**, > 1 evaluations show improvements in intermediate outcomes related to violence
- conflicting**, evaluations show conflicting results in reducing violence<sup>5</sup>
- no evidence**, intervention not yet rigorously evaluated
- ineffective**, >1 evaluations show no reductions in violence outcomes
- H** | World Bank High Income Countries (HIC)
- L** | World Bank Low and Middle Income Countries (LMIC)

# Develop a **theory**

**R**elationship skills strengthened

**E**mpowerment of women

**S**ervices ensured

**P**overty reduced

**E**nvironments made safe

**C**hild and adolescent abuse prevented

**T**ransformed attitudes, beliefs, and norms

**INTERVENTIONS**

Building on resiliency and knowledge, and resourcing and supporting communities to find solutions

**Women** facing violence

**Families** affected by violence

**Communities** with high levels of violence

**BARRIERS**

- **Limitations** on women's **autonomy**
- Children exposed to **violence**
- Social norms that perpetuate **male power**
- Inadequate **services**
- Inadequate **legal and social protections** for women
- Lack of **political will and resources**
- Under-resourced **women's organizations or movements**

# of change

Programmes to address VAW widely implemented

Increased resources and political will to address VAW

Increased awareness about VAW as a public health problem and that it is preventable

**OUTPUTS**

Sectoral outcomes related to health, economic, and social development improved (e.g. improved mental health, reduced household poverty, improved women's and child health, improved women's education and earnings, and reduced absenteeism)

Families, communities and institutions believe in and uphold gender equality as a norm and no longer accept VAW

Men accept and treat women as equals

Women can make autonomous decisions

Women have knowledge of their rights and access to programmes

**OUTCOMES**

Improved health and development outcomes in households, community and society

Women are exercising their human rights and contributing to development

Violence against women is reduced or eliminated

Equality and respect are practiced in intimate, family and community relationships

Interpersonal conflicts are resolved peacefully

**IMPACT**

# Apply the guiding principles

## CORE VALUES

## Put women's safety first and do no harm

Ensure confidentiality of information and anticipate and address unintended consequences

1

## Promote gender equality and women's human rights

Ensure that analysis of unequal gender and power relations and male privilege over women is at the center of programming

2

## Leave no one behind

Address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on sex, gender, class, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity

3

## Develop a theory of change

Elaborate how programming inputs will lead to changes in intermediate outcomes and likely impacts

4

## Promote evidence informed programming

Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to build the evidence base on what works and facilitate knowledge sharing to inform programming

5

## GENERATE AND DISSEMINATE KNOWLEDGE



# for effective programming

6

## Use participatory approaches

Stimulate personal reflection and critical thinking, and build on the voice, agency and skills of people.

7

## Promote coordination

Support partnerships across sectors and organizations, and at local and national levels

8

## Implement combined interventions

Facilitate collective programming with individuals, families and communities to address the multiple risk factors underlying VAW and multiple forms of violence within families.

9

## Address the prevention continuum

Link prevention and response interventions

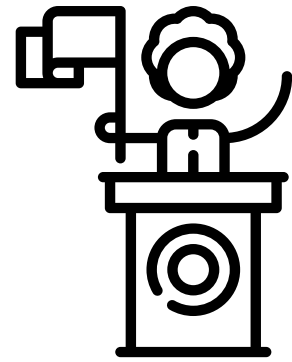
10

## Take a life-course approach

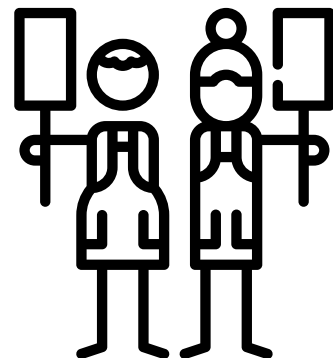
Implement programmes that work with children, adolescents and young people for early interventions

# Strengthen **enabling environment**

- a** Build **political commitment** from leaders and policy makers to speak out, condemning violence against women.

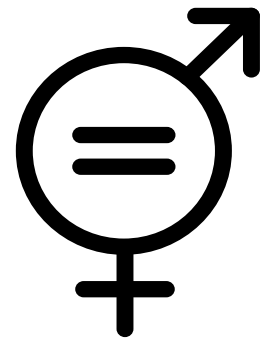


- b** Invest in, build on the work of, resource, and support **women's organizations**.

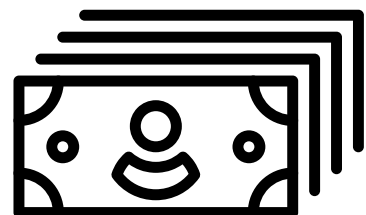


# for prevention

- c** Put in place and facilitate enforcement of **laws and policies** that address violence against women and that promote gender equality, including access to secondary education.<sup>6</sup>



- d** **Allocate resources** to programmes, research, and to strengthen institutions and capacities of the health, education, law enforcement, and social services sectors to address violence against women.



# Adapt and **scale-up** what works

Violence prevention interventions that have been shown to work on a pilot basis can be scaled-up in different ways. They can be expanded by adding more beneficiaries; they can be adapted and replicated in another geographic location; and there can be expansion in coverage of the same intervention over a wider geographic area. Interventions that are being scaled-up in a new setting need to be adapted to context. This requires an understanding of the local culture, values and resources.

Interventions identified as promising (pages 10-11) can be adapted and scaled-up with attention to the guiding principles for prevention and to the adaptation and scaling-up considerations on the next page; those classified as "more evidence needed" (pages 10-11) may need to be replicated or further refined before they are scaled-up; and those identified as "conflicting" or "no evidence" need to be further evaluated.

a

.....

**Align with national commitments** (e.g. a national plan, policy, strategy) to end violence against women, or to promote gender equality or women's health.<sup>7</sup>

.....

b

.....

**Identify and maintain fidelity to core principles** of gender equality, rights and safety as well as to minimum "dosage", while also adapting to context, including language and culture.

.....

c

.....

**Programme for synergy**, combining multiple strategies and interventions at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels for sustained impact.

.....

d

.....

**Invest in capacity among implementers**, and giving enough time to scale-up and to allow for change to occur and sustain.

.....

e

.....

**Build on on-going initiatives**, integrating prevention activities into existing health, development and other existing sectoral programmes.

.....

f

.....

**Design with "scale" in mind**, investing for the long-term, keeping costs and sustainability in mind.

.....

g

.....

**Start small, document and evaluate** the adaptation and scale-up in order to innovate and strengthen evidence-informed programming.

.....

h

.....

**Support a community of practice** among programme developers and implementers to facilitate learning and knowledge sharing.

.....

# Monitor, evaluate and measure **progress**

Progress in preventing violence against women can be measured in the short and the long-term.

- 1.** In the long-term, the impact of prevention programmes can be measured as reductions in prevalence of different forms of violence against women.
- 2.** At the global level, countries are required to report progress in preventing violence against women as part of SDG targets. Two indicators are proposed:
  - prevalence of intimate partner violence in the last 12 months among women aged 15 years and older (SDG target 5.2 - eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls);
  - proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18 (SDG target 16.2 - End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children).

**3.** In the short to medium term, interim indicators that contribute towards reductions in prevalence of violence against women will depend on the types of programmes. These can include, for example, improvements in:

- gender equitable attitudes and norms
- partner communication
- women's autonomy, agency and/or self-efficacy
- girls' and women's education

**4.** It is important to specify a theory of change elaborating how the programme will likely improve interim indicators and how these in turn will contribute to reducing prevalence of violence against women.

**5.** It is important to evaluate before scaling-up and to monitor the scaling-up on an on-going basis to ensure that resources are invested in programmes that work, unintended or harmful outcomes are mitigated, and the scaling-up process takes into account the local context.

ENDING VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN  
BEGINS  
WITH

**R E S P E C T**





# The way forward: a **call to action**

Commit to change

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Start today

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Support evidence-based approaches

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Join others

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# Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> These are for both perpetration of and victimization from intimate partner violence (IPV)

<sup>2</sup> The 7 strategies are not mutually exclusive, should not be seen as silos, and there are some overlaps across them.

<sup>3</sup> Although specific interventions and their examples are listed under one particular strategy, it is important to note that many of them reflect combination/bundled programming with multi-component and multi-level interventions that fall across more than 1 of the 7 strategies of RESPECT. Their categorization under one strategy reflects the primary intent of the intervention. For example, some interventions under transforming norms also include relationship strengthening skills. Likewise, empowerment of women interventions may include an economic transfer component. Therefore, these strategies should not be seen as stand-alone but as approaches whose impact may be better enhanced in combination with others.

<sup>4</sup> Evidence ratings are largely derived from systematic reviews of more than 1 evaluation of interventions that mostly use experimental designs including randomized, cluster randomized and quasi-experimental methods. It is recognized that for some strategies such as justice sector interventions, alternative evaluation methods may be more appropriate including time series, observational and cross-sectional designs despite being typically considered lower quality. This is an emerging field and hence, there is a great deal of variation in rigor of study design and evaluation. The sources for these reviews and studies are provided as part of references.

<sup>5</sup> Refers to evaluations where some studies may show positive impacts and others may show no impacts or negative impacts, highlighting that the impact of interventions may be context specific. Hence, any replication or adaptation of the intervention must pay close attention to the contextual or implementation factors.

<sup>6</sup> This includes laws and policies that: criminalize sexual abuse; promote equality in inheritance; ban child marriage and FGM; marriage, custody and divorce laws that guarantee equality for women; action plans that promote gender equality and address violence against women. It also includes implementing justice and law enforcement services such as arrest orders and legal aid.

<sup>7</sup> Even where there is no national commitment to ending violence against women, there may be other commitments to empower women, to gender equality, or to women's health that may be useful to consider.

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