BBC Media Action Approach: preventing violence against women and girls

A. What is violence against women and girls?

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most widespread human rights violations we face today and affects one third of women through their lifetime (Devries et al., 2013). It has severe consequences for individual physical and mental health, as well as a serious economic and social impact. VAWG is a form of gender based violence (GBV) and is rooted in historical and structural inequalities between men and women. GBV, of which VAWG constitutes the vast majority, is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender. It reflects and reinforces inequalities between men and women.

Violence is not always visible. It can be physical, sexual or psychological and can occur within the family, within the wider community or be perpetrated by the State. VAWG takes a multiplicity of forms and is deeply shaped by context (see Annex 1 for WHO typology). Within a given country, VAWG will affect women very differently according to their age, where they live, their class/social status, their sexuality, disability etc. Across countries, it is most likely, though not exclusively, perpetrated by someone known to the victim, such as a family member or partner (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005). Understanding what forms VAWG takes in a given context is vital for identifying its drivers and designing effective prevention programmes.

> **VAWG in conflict** - VAWG increases and takes on a particular character in conflict settings. Rape is frequently used as a military tactic. Violence and war can also weaken systems of protection, security and justice, as well as increasing vulnerability to abuse and trafficking. Violence in the home is also often driven by conflict and insecurity which puts strains on the family. (Source UNDP)

B. What drives VAWG?

VAWG is driven by inequality and power dynamics between men and women. A complex interplay between individual, family, community and societal factors can increase or decrease the risk of VAWG (Heise 1998). Factors driving VAWG include (Collated from Fulu and Heise 2015):

Individual (factors that increase likelihood of perpetration)	Violence in childhood
	Alcohol and substance use
	Depression and personality disorders
	Delinquency, such as involvement in gangs
	Attitudes: acceptance and support of partner violence under certain circumstances
Community/ societal	Norms: Harmful notions of masculinity and rigid gender roles, such as men as breadwinner, heterosexual performance and entitlement, men's right to control over women, men considered to have greater value than women
	Poverty and social disadvantage
	Instability and conflict
	Lack of legal provisions and enforcement

Working in media for development, our interventions will focus on addressing attitudes and norms.

C. What works in preventing VAWG?

Interventions to prevent VAWG take a variety of different forms, broadly across four levels: individual, family, institutional (for example in schools) and community/societal. The table below (adapted from Fulu and Heise 2015) summarises the evidence base across different areas. Overall,

many interventions have been shown to have an impact on risk factors related to violence such as attitudes, school attendance, sexual practices and alcohol use. However, few show an impact on either women's experience of violence, or men's perpetration. Many evaluations do not measure this final outcome; and where it is measured, an impact is rarely recorded.

In general, impact is enhanced when projects have multiple components, work with both men and women and include some element of face-to-face engagement. Crucially, interventions are most effective when they transform gender relations, rather than just targeting attitudes and behaviour. This means interventions which aim to address women's and men's gendered roles in the family, communities or economy, challenging what it means to be a man or a woman in a given context (Fulu anf Heise 2015).

Summary of evidence for different types of interventions to prevent VAWG		
	Fair evidence	*Insufficient evidence*
EFFECTIVE (Impact on VAWG)	- Microfinance and gender transformative approaches - Relationship-level interventions - Group education with community outreach (men/boys) - **Community mobilisation to change social norms**	- Social empowerment interventions with vulnerable groups - Alcohol reduction programmes
PROMISING (Impact on risk factors only)	- Parenting programmes	- Whole-school interventions
CONFLICTING	- Bystander interventions (urging men and boys to speak out against VAWG)	- School curriculum-based interventions
INEFFECTIVE		- **Single component communication campaigns** - WASH interventions in schools

D. What about media and communications?

Media and communications can contribute to prevention by addressing the attitudes and norms which drive VAWG. Media and communications interventions are most effective when they have multiple components, are combined with face-to-face engagement and aim to transform gender roles (Fulu and Heise 2015). As shown in the table above, community mobilisation interventions have been shown to be particularly effective. These are interventions which target transforming social norms through both empowering women and engaging whole communities. They typically involve community workshops and peer training, as well as localised campaigns and localised media.

However, there is little evidence around the effectiveness of single component communications campaigns in preventing VAWG (Fulu and Heise 2015). Moreover, it has been argued that existing interventions lack strong theoretical foundations (Heise 2011). Evidence around 'edutainment' approaches is also limited. Although an evaluation of drama Soul City in South Africa found an association between exposure to the programme and changes in knowledge and attitudes towards intimate partner violence. However, there was no influence on social norms around sexual harassment and acceptability of violence (Udin 2015). In particular, interventions which only target individual knowledge and attitudes without addressing the gender norms which drive VAWG are both un-evidenced and unfounded in theory (Fulu and Heise 2015, Khosla 2013).

E. BBC Media Action's approach

Based on this evidence, BBC Media Action uses media and communications to address the attitudes and norms which drive VAWG, generate constructive public discussion on VAWG and influence those in power to defend and uphold women's rights. Projects are based on strong theories of change and integrated with face-to-face engagement wherever possible. Media and communications can affect change in this area in five inter-related ways:

1. Empowering women and girls - There is strong qualitative evidence that women's disempowerment and dependence on men makes them more vulnerable to experiencing violence and less able to challenge violence when experienced by them or those around them (Fulu and Heise 2015). Empowerment is the process of the developing the autonomy and self-confidence to participate in, benefit from and change the world around you. Projects can aim empower women and girls in different parts of their lives, from economic[1] to political empowerment.[2] Media and communications can build knowledge, efficacy and skills to empower women and girls.

2. Influencing attitudes towards violence – Data from a wide range of countries demonstrates that where VAWG is considered normal or justified, prevalence increases (Fulu and Heise 2015). Support for violence is often expressed as the need of men to 'discipline' women, primarily for behaviour which deviates from what is expected of them as women, for example defying male authority. Media and communications can reach populations at scale and challenge the acceptability of violence.

3. Challenging gender norms - Societies which are more patriarchal have higher prevalence of VAWG (Fulu et al 2013). This is where men are considered to have greater value, the right to control women's behaviour and have power over economic and political spheres. Men are expected to be breadwinners, as well as conforming to ideals of masculinity, such as toughness. Rigid and unequal conceptions of what it means to be a man and a woman is a key driver of VAWG (Fulu and Heise 2014). Media and communications can use real life role models or drama, to subvert and transform gender roles, presenting alternatives and showing that gender relations can change.

---

[1] Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/womenseconomicempowerment.htm

[2] Political empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate and have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives at different levels of governance.

4. Generating discussion – Taboo and a culture of shame prevent survivors from speaking out. This culture of silence can be replicated and reinforced by the media if it fails to report on VAWG or raise it as a human rights issue. When media does report on VAWG, it often does so in a way which apportions blame onto survivors and upholds norms that violence is acceptable under certain circumstances. BBC Media Action projects can support media to generate public discussion on VAWG which allows women to share their experiences and feel connected. By reporting responsibly on VAWG, portraying survivors as agents, not just victims, and asserting that women are never to blame for violence, media can break the silence around VAWG.

5. Putting VAWG on the political agenda – VAWG is frequently seen as a private matter and not taken seriously as a political issue. In many countries where we work, women's right not to suffer violence is not upheld in law. And where women have rights on paper, they may not be enforced in practice or be undermined by parallel informal legal systems. Media can put VAWG on the political agenda, and hold power holders to account where they are not taking action on VAWG.

F. Key principles[3]

1. **Context is critical** – use research and local expertise to understand VAWG in a given context.
2. **Work with women's organisations from the country** - either as delivery partners or advisers.
3. **Engage whole communities, including leaders, men and boys** to change social norms.
4. **Manage the risk of backlash** – engage whole communities to limit the risk of backlash and increased violence as a result.
5. **Protect your team and audience** – minimise traumatising content. And set up process to support your team as they deal with sensitive issues.[4]
6. **Make content that empowers women and shows hope** of how things can change.
7. **Integrate media with face-to-face engagement**

G. I'm developing a project on VAWG, what should I think about?

- What does VAWG look like in your context? What are the different types of violence? (see WHO typology)
- Which types of violence would be best addressed by a media and communications intervention? Which types of violence will your project seek to address? Are you working in the context of conflict?
- Which women are most likely to be affected by violence in your context? Prevalence of VAWG often varies greatly by area, class, ethnic/religious group, sexuality etc. – and the most vulnerable may suffer multiple discriminations.
- What are the drivers of VAWG in this context? Think about the individual, community and societal level.
- What are the attitudes and social norms which drive VAWG and underpin inequality between men and women? What are women's provisions and rights in law?
- Which of these drivers can be best targeted by a media and communications intervention?

---

[3] Influenced by ActionAid's Theory of Change for tackling VAWG. 2012 and .
[4] For audiences, a warning should be played before any potentially sensitive content. At the start of the project, plan how you will minimise the psychological and emotional effect of dealing with such issues on your team. You can speak to Ed Dev and A&P to put this in place plus there are external resources from DART: http://dartcenter.org/

- Can I bring women, girls (and men and boys where relevant) into the project design process?
- Who else is working on VAWG in this country (think about local, regional and natioal women's organisations, not just big agencies)? How can we work with them?

H. Practical tips for programming on VAWG

- Set up processes to support the production team as they deal with sensitive issues, including how to deal with trauma within the team
- In the inception phase, bring together the whole team (project and production) to discuss their own feelings towards and experiences of VAWG
- Put survivor safety at the heart of all programmes e.g. avoid reliving traumatic experiences
- Play a warning at the beginning of the programme
- Provide a helpline number at the end of the programme
- Research the support and services available to your audience and, where there is sufficient capacity, provide details of how to seek it
- Provide positive male and female role models
- Bring in community, religious and political leaders
- Protect the identity of all survivors
- Never apportion blame onto the victims
- Make content that empowers women and shows hope of how things can change
- Avoid making content that is likely to be traumatising

Annex 1

WHO Violence against women throughout the life cycle

http://www.who.int/gender/violence/v4.pdf

Phase	*Type of violence*
Pre-birth	Sex-selective abortion; effects of battering during pregnancy on birth outcomes
Infancy	Female infanticide; physical, sexual and psychological abuse Girlhood Child marriage; female genital mutilation; physical, sexual and psychological abuse; incest; child prostitution and pornography
Adolescence and adulthood	Dating and courtship violence (e.g. acid throwing and date rape); economically coerced sex (e.g. school girls having sex with "sugar daddies" in return for school fees); incest; sexual abuse in the workplace; rape; sexual harassment; forced prostitution and pornography; trafficking in women; partner violence; marital rape; dowry abuse and murders; partner homicide; psychological abuse; abuse of women with disabilities; forced pregnancy
Elderly	Forced "suicide" or homicide of widows for economic reasons; sexual, physical and

	psychological abuse

Resources and References

ActionAid. 2012. ActionAid's Theory of Change for tackling VAWG.

Ellsberg and Heise. 2005. Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists. PATH, World Health Organization. Accessed http://www.path.org/publications/detail.php?i=1524

Devries, K., et al. 2013. Global health. The global prevalence of intimate partner violence against women. Science, 340(6140), 1527–8. Accessed: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/ pubmed/23788730.

DfID. 2012. A Practical Guide on Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls.

Fulu, E., et al. 2013. Prevalence of and factors associated with male perpetration of intimate partner violence: findings from the UN Multi-country Cross-sectional Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific. The Lancet Global Health, 1(4), e187–e207. Accessed: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/ S2214109X13700743 [Accessed April 13, 2014].

Fulu and Heise. 2015. State of the field of research on violence against women and girls. What works to prevent violence against women and girls evidence reviews. Accessed http://www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/16-global-evidence-reviews-paper-1-state-of-the-field-of-research-on-violence-against-women-and-girls/file

Heise, L. 1998. Violence against women: An integrated, ecological framework. Violence Against Women, 4(3), 262–290.

Heise, L. 2011. What works to prevent partner violence: An evidence overview. London: Strive.

Khosla. 2013. Combating Violence Against Women Through C4D: The "Use Your Voice" Campaign and Its Implications on Audience-Citizens in Papua New Guinea. International Journal of Communication. Accessed http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1852.

UNDP. Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Crisis Situations. Accessed http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/focus_areas/gender_equality_andwomensempowerment/sexual-violence-in-conflict.html

Usdin, S., et al. 2005. Achieving social change on gender-based violence: A report on the impact evaluation of Soul City's fourth series. Social Science and Medicine, 61, 2434-2445.

World Health Organisation. Violence against women: Definition and scope of the problem. Accessed http://www.who.int/gender/violence/v4.pdf