



# SVRI Forum 2017

Sexual Violence Research Initiative

18th -21st September 2017

Rio | Brazil

## SVRI FORUM 2017: PARTNERSHIP FOR POLICY ACTION

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, 18-21 SEPTEMBER 2017

### CONFERENCE BRIEF<sup>1</sup>

*“SVRI Forum is definitely the best conference I have attended in my 20 years of research in this area.”  
(SVRI Forum 2017 Delegate)*

*“What I liked most about SVRI Forum 2017 was the chance to learn about new research and programs happening around the world and connect to the global GBV community. It was amazing.”  
(SVRI Forum 2017 Delegate)*

There are few spaces where people working on violence against women and girls can come together to learn new ideas and approaches, meet the experts and influencers in the field, network, explore new ways of doing research, absorb positive energy and ideas from like-minded colleagues, and, just as important, re-energise and have fun. **SVRI Forum is that space.** The Forum is the key bi-annual event for research on violence against women and related forms of violence stemming from and driving gender inequality.

## SVRI FORUM 2017 – A CELEBRATION OF NEW KNOWLEDGE AND GROWTH

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SVRI Forum 2017 was SVRI’s fifth bi-annual conference. It is our most well attended Forum so far, with over 280 presentations, 6 guest speakers, 2 networking events, 14 side events, 12 exhibition stands, 9 pre-conference capacity building workshops, a young researchers programme, mentoring programme and graffiti and storytelling workshops. As many delegates noted, “SVRI Forum just keeps getting better and better.”

Dr Claudia Garcia-Moreno (SVRI Forum Scientific Chair) officially opened the conference. She highlighted how SVRI Forum 2017 was a timely space to discuss and share strategies for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030 targets aimed at ending all forms of violence against women and violence against children<sup>2</sup>. Dr Garcia-Moreno emphasised SVRI Forum 2017 as the space to renew and strengthen existing partnerships and embark on new ones. That the Forum is our platform for cross-sectoral, cross-discipline deliberation and debate – an opportunity to develop shared understandings / language to talk about violence against women and related forms of violence; extend our understanding of what are effective, evidence informed response and prevention programmes; and take

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Elizabeth Dartnall, SVRI Research Manager

<sup>2</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>



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what we have learnt to further strengthen our research, funding initiatives and response and prevention programmes.

Alessandra Guedes (SVRI Co-Chair) celebrated how much SVRI Forum has grown. Our first three Forums brought together around 200 delegates each. Our fourth Forum had close to 400 participants. SVRI Forum 2017 brought together a record number of 535+ participants from every region of the world. She spoke about how, as part of this growth, we see a new generation of passionate and well-prepared researchers attending SVRI Forums. Senior researchers are now passing on the baton to this committed, passionate group of researchers to continue advancing the study on violence against women. Their presence also shows us that a career in researching and working to end violence against women is viable in ways not possible before.

Presentations showcased at SVRI Forum also demonstrated how much we have to celebrate. Like Dr Garcia-Moreno, Emma Fulu, Director of the Equality Institute and SVRI Forum guest speaker, highlighted how addressing violence against women is firmly on the international agenda due to the SDGs, and how our research efforts show undeniably that programmes and interventions can reduce and prevent violence.<sup>3</sup> Even more inspiring was research presented at the Forum which showed that multi-sectoral coordinated, systematic responses from a diverse range of actors can reduce violence over a relatively short period of time<sup>4</sup>. Presentations at the Forum were more complex and more sophisticated than in prior years, involving more and diverse voices.

## Being Heard

### *Ethically and meaningfully engaging young people in SVRI Forum*

With support from the Oak Foundation, SVRI brought 10 young people and 5 NGO counterparts to SVRI Forum 2017 to help SVRI develop minimum standards for engaging young people in SVRI Forum 2017 and future SVRI Forums. The University of Bedfordshire's International Centre also hosted a workshop and panel on participatory methods and doing research on sexual violence with children and young people. The young researchers actively engaged in the Forum, participating in a pre-conference and graffiti workshop; asked other delegates questions; and discussed methods and translated their ideas on minimum standards through drama and art at the closing plenary. The following words from two of the young researchers echo how they all found the experience:

*"I'm now international! This was my first international trip. I enjoyed every bit of it. It's always been my dream to be heard. I've been given a chance for real to speak. Thank you for the platform to share."*

*"It was such a transforming experience that provided a platform for us to grow, make friends, share ideas and research methods and tools, network globally, the list is endless"*

<sup>3</sup> Some selected presentations on effective interventions: [Being OTEKA Together: The GREAT Project](#); [The Indashyikirwa couples curriculum to prevent IPV and support healthy, equitable relationships in Rwanda](#); [Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity \(IMAGE\) Cohort Study](#); [Using social norms perspectives for sexual violence prevention with conflict-affected communities](#)

<sup>4</sup> <https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/candies-hell-20-mixed-methods-study-prevention-violence-against-women-and-girls-le%C3%B3n-nicaragua>



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Further, there are more players working on violence, representing a diversity of views, geographic contexts, and fields, as reflected in the new initiatives and programmes launched and implemented at SVRI Forum 2017, including the launch of: The Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM)<sup>5</sup>, Being Heard project<sup>6</sup>, Joint Learning Initiative for Faith and Local Communities Gender Based Violence Hub (relaunch)<sup>7</sup>, Prevention Collaborative<sup>8</sup> and the Community for Understanding Scale UP (CUSP)<sup>9</sup>.

Finally, a range of methodologies were presented at the Forum including randomised control trials (RCT), as well as presentations using mixed methods and qualitative approaches to researching violence against women, violence against children and other forms of violence, along with discussions on how different and novel methods can generate new knowledge, innovative research questions, new interventions and approaches.

## WHAT WE LEARNT

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SVRI Forum 2017 generated several key lessons that can guide us as we strive to advance the field:

**Protect and nurture the fragile gains that have been made:** Although we have much to celebrate, these gains are fragile. Mary Ellsberg, Director of the Global Women's Initiative reminded us that without vigilance and sustained advocacy, these gains can lose traction. We were urged to remember our feminist roots; that our work is political; to keep women's and girl's voices central in our research and programmatic endeavours; and to remain focused on addressing the root causes of violence, which stem from gender inequality and other forms of oppression and marginalisation. COFEM reminded us that we need to promote women's leadership in work on violence against women and girls and ensure that male involvement efforts empower women and girls<sup>10</sup>. We must keep on marching.

**Embrace diversity:** The importance of continuing our efforts to make SVRI Forum a space of diversity and ensure researchers from low and middle-income countries attend and meaningfully participate was underscored. SVRI currently does this through awarding bursaries, supporting research led by colleagues from low and middle income countries and encouraging northern researchers to ensure their southern based partners attend and present at the SVRI Forum. Through the Forum, SVRI supported over 50 people from low and middle-income countries to attend, whilst partners including PAHO, World Health

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<sup>5</sup> <http://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/COFEM-2-PAGER.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2017-07-21/SVRI\\_SB\\_BeingHeard\\_LR.pdf](http://www.svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2017-07-21/SVRI_SB_BeingHeard_LR.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://gender-based-violence.jliflc.com/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.svri.org/forums/forum2017/Satellite/PreventionCollaborative.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.svri.org/forums/forum2017/Presentations/20%20September/17.%20Panel%20Going%20to%20Scale%20-%20Leme/CUSPSVRIsept2017.FINAL.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [http://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Paper-1-COFEM.final\\_sept2017.pdf](http://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Paper-1-COFEM.final_sept2017.pdf)



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Organisation, Population Council, Oak Foundation, World Childhood Foundation, ensured attendance of people from Brazil and the Latin-America and Caribbean, Africa, Eastern Europe and elsewhere could attend. We will endeavour to continue to create opportunities for colleagues researching in low and middle-income countries to attend and present at SVRI Forum, especially young researchers, and researchers working on under-researched topics and communities: LGBTQI; disability; ethnic minorities.

On the topic of diversity, Manisha Mehta (Wellspring Advisors), on the closing panel, reminded us that diversity is not only about colleagues working in the field – it also means reaching out to movements and fields that intersect with violence against women and violence against children, like land and property rights, environmental issues, reproductive rights, and racial justice. We have a lot to learn from these social justice movements and from other fields, and, conversely, they have a lot to learn from us.

**We can't rest now:** We were repeatedly reminded that as a field, we know a lot, but we can't rest now. The field is still in its infancy – we are at the frontier of building new knowledge. Manisha Mehta also emphasised this – in her words, “While we know more about what works than ever before<sup>11</sup>, we often don't know why they work, or how our programmes create change.” Manisha noted that at this point in the field, it is not enough to scale up one or two programs that we know work. Instead, we should be asking ourselves: “What do we know about the fundamental principles of what is working in terms of prevention and response? How do we scale up these principles? How do we use these principles to innovate in responding to different contexts?”

**Create a culture of innovation and openness:** Very few presentations spoke about interventions and programmes that failed. Failure is not always bad. Failure of our intervention to work, or of our programme to achieve its desired outcome also can provide valuable new knowledge. We need to be willing to share and learn from failure. Airing our failures is not easy, but if we do not, we are likely to repeat them. We must share what did *not* work and discuss what really is required for long-term change. We must continue to nurture a culture of innovation and openness to new ideas and approaches.

**Embracing new and different forms of knowledge:** As noted earlier, SVRI Forum 2017 programme saw a few presentations using mixed-methods and unconventional methods – but not enough. There was a loud call from participants and presenters on the need to develop new and innovative ways to evaluate and test programmes and to value different forms of data and data collection. Whilst RCTs are important, they are not the only approach available to us. Other forms of research and knowledge generation we can use include: practice-based learning, participatory methodologies and mixed methods approaches. At the same time, remembering the strengths and weaknesses of different research

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<sup>11</sup> Download conference presentations here: <http://www.svri.org/forums/forum2017/programme.htm>



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methodologies and identifying ways to bring different methods together for a deeper understanding of violence against women and ways in which we can respond and prevent it, is critical.<sup>12</sup>

**Drawing out the ‘so what?’ factor for research:** In general, presenters often did not draw out the implications of their findings for the field in their presentations. As we generate and build knowledge through our research, we must consider what our findings mean for programs, for policies, for further research, for advocacy. We do this research because we want to improve the lives of women and girls. This passion must be reflected in how we present our research findings. We must always be thinking about ways to share this knowledge so that people can engage with it and apply it practically.

**More long-term studies:** Finally, more longitudinal studies are essential to check if the claims we are making on what works are sustained over the long term and to assess what is needed to ensure the gains we are making are maintained.

## AWARD WINNING PRESENTATIONS

New and innovative research and ideas presented at SVRI Forum were celebrated.

- Maree Crabbe won best researcher prize for her presentation [on Why Pornography is a Violence Prevention Issue We Can't Ignore](#).
- Sophie Namy won runner up research presentation for her work [on Potential Pathways for Prevention: Understanding the Intersections of Violence against Women and Children in the Family](#).
- Participation and young people was a key theme of SVRI Forum 2017. Two young people [CJ Hamilton](#) and [Kirsche Walker](#) won the runner up award for a presentation by a young researcher. Their presentation was on making the case for involving young people in research on sexual violence and cumulative learning from examples of participatory research.
- Alys McAlpine and Sheru Muuo won the best research presentation by young researchers for their presentation on [the challenges of conducting research in refugee camp settings](#).
- Awards were also given for best science pitch presentations both overall and for young researchers. Winners of these were: Icela Zavala for best science pitch presentation; with Phiona Koyiet won the runner up award. In the younger research science pitch category, Priscila Parada won the best science pitch from a young researcher and Ishra Nazeer won the runner up award. The topic of their presentations ranged from [cyberbullying](#) (Ishra); [ending violent relationships](#) (Priscila); [supporting men to manage common mental health problems](#) (Phiona) and [prevention of dating violence](#) (Icela).

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<sup>12</sup> Ruark, A. and R. Fielding-Miller, *Using Qualitative Methods to Validate and Contextualize Quantitative Findings: A Case Study of Research on Sexual Behavior and Gender-Based Violence Among Young Swazi Women*. *Global Health: Science and Practice*, 2016. 4(3): p. 373-383.



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## SVRI FORUM – THE FUTURE

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SVRI Forum is an essential space for innovation and growing the field. As we begin planning for SVRI Forum 2019, based on delegate feedback, Coordinating Group discussions involve much thought and debate around how to achieve the following:

- Use SVRI Forum as a space for structured debate and reflection on key issues.
- Allow more time for questions, synthesis and debate.
- Work with presenters to reflect on their work and make the linkages to policy and programming.
- Continue to ensure diversity of conference delegates, presenters and quality of presentations.
- Promote networking, strengthen connections and welcome newcomers.
- Share SVRI principles and develop a conference etiquette guide.
- Strive for a balance between prevention and response presentations at SVRI Forums.
- Promote self-care and prevent emotional burnout.
- Keep the momentum going – explore ways to promote good science, embrace activism and nurture solidarity between Forums.



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We continue to reach out to SVRI members, partners and Forum participants to help us grapple with these issues and ensure SVRI Forum 2019 and all future Forums are a vibrant, meaningful space for all. **So please send us your feedback and suggestions to the email address listed below.**

## JOIN US @ SVRI FORUM 2019

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SVRI Forum 2019 will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, 21-24 October 2019. Join us to share your new ideas, innovations, learn from others, achieve personal and professional development, build new networks and reconnect with old friends and colleagues, and help build on lessons learned from SVRI Forum 2017. See you there!

For more information or to share your thoughts on SVRI Forum email us at

[svri.forums@mrc.ac.za](mailto:svri.forums@mrc.ac.za)

Stay up to date with news and updates for the SVRI Forum 2019 by subscribing to the SVRI [Update](#), visiting the SVRI Forum 2019 [website](#), and following us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

