Background

With more than 7,000 members from over 130 countries, the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) is a global network that promotes research on violence driven by gender inequality in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The SVRI works towards its vision of a world free of violence against women and children by building the evidence base for gender-based violence (GBV) research, strengthening research capacity of members, promoting partnerships across the field, and influencing change within the realms of funding, policy and practice.

In 2014, the SVRI Grant was established to fund research focusing on violence against women (VAW). The grant’s success led the SVRI to partner with the World Bank Group in 2016 on the Development Marketplace Award for Innovation in the Prevention and Response of GBV. Grants range from $40,000 to $100,000 USD over a one- to two-year period. To date, the SVRI has received over 1,095 proposals.

This brief provides an overview of SVRI grant-making based on an analysis of all proposals received and grants awarded between 2014-2019.
BUILDING EVIDENCE

SVRI grant-making has enabled the support and funding of 50 innovative research projects in 30 countries, infusing more than $5 million USD into the field of GBV research. The SVRI is proud to issue grants to unique projects that might not otherwise have received funding, such as secondary data analysis, adding in qualitative questions or an additional arm to a study or research on methods. In funding a broad range of methodologies, the SVRI is contributing to the technical development of the field of GBV research.

Projects are in LMICs and are selected through a rigorous peer review process. Applications from any and all geographic regions and income classifications are accepted, with priority awarding of grants given to researchers based in LMICs. 70% of all proposals received by the SVRI / WBG to date have come from researchers based in LMICs.

To ensure the development of contextually relevant research and GBV prevention and response programmes, we prioritize funding for research done in the global south, led by researchers in the global south.

Distribution of applications received according to world region under research is depicted in the following graph:

The number of grants issued to projects operating in Africa is consistent with the number of applications received with the same regional focus. 40% of grant-winning applications are focused on Africa compared to 44% of total applications. On average, the SVRI receives 2.32 times more applications focusing on Africa than the next most numerous region.

A breakdown of SVRI Grant winners by research region of focus is as follows:

- 40% - Africa
- 20% - Middle East and North Africa
- 10% - Latin America and Caribbean
- 10% - East Asia and Pacific
- 10% - South Asia
- 10% - Europe and Central Asia
Overall, SVRI grant-making has trended towards awarding grants to projects addressing a smaller scope of violence, rather than the broader umbrella of GBV. 31% of all SVRI grant winners focused on intimate partner violence (IPV), nearly 3 times the proportion of total applications addressing IPV. Other forms of violence that are addressed through SVRI grant-making include GBV, VAW, sexual intimate partner violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and early marriage.

![% of grant winners by form of violence addressed 2014-2019](image)

**WHAT WE LIKE TO SEE IN PROPOSALS**

We like to see:

- Consortium led research that for example involves researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.
- South-South (LMICs) or Southern led research partnerships with roles and responsibilities outlined.
- Research guided by local project advisory boards.
- Proposal is informed by current evidence; clear research question supported by sound methodology and has policy potential.
- Research that will help advance our knowledge on VAW prevention and response.
- Ethical issues thoughtfully considered and ethical approval has been or is being sought.
- Clear research uptake plans with different products for different stakeholders.
- Well-written, concise abstract that properly represents the research project.
- Logical and clear budget accompanied with a sound budget justification.
GRANT OUTPUTS AND IMPACT

The SVRI’s investments into innovative research in the field of GBV prevention and response has led to a myriad of outputs and impacts. SVRI grant winners continue to invigorate the field of GBV research with their creative and ground-breaking projects. 87% of grant winners surveyed that applied for additional research funding were able to successfully leverage their receipt of an SVRI Grant in order to acquire said funding. Furthermore, 92% of surveyed grant winners have reported forging relationships with local government agencies, practitioners, universities, and other researchers, an integral step in the dissemination of GBV research.

Since 2014, Grant Winners have disseminated their research through the production and sharing of project outputs, including: 71 posters, 41 presentations, 40 blog posts, 31 briefing papers, 27 project reports, 22 peer-reviewed journal articles, 21 research reports, and 7 project videos.

These outputs ensure dissemination of SVRI-funded research across a wide variety of platforms and audiences. 100% of grant winners surveyed believed that their project has made or will make a difference to improving the evidence base of GBV research.

“The SVRI grant is broadly raising awareness about the global value of addressing GBV. It is also seeding interest among other groups to follow suit and fund multi-site projects that prioritize the importance of preventing violence against women and girls.” (Grant Winner)
“SVRI has given us the financial enabling to further test the impact of our interventions on IPV. Without this grant, it would not have been possible.”

(Grant Winner)

EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH FUNDED

Showcasing innovative research:

- The promise of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for scaling up VAWG prevention: More than 45% of the Mexican population is under 25 years of age and the country has relatively high school attendance, so school-based comprehensive sexuality education can reach large numbers of youth. Researchers from the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Mexfam are using research to show how CSE can be used effectively to reduce intimate partner violence.

- Increasing access to VAWG services through the health sector: The Dilaasa crisis intervention centre is a health sector response model to violence against women and children that is being scaled up in 11 public hospitals in Mumbai, India. Researchers from CEHAT are using the unique opportunity to study the factors that influence scaling up an intervention, helping to ensure essential care reaches more women and children.

- Podcasts for social norm change: A multi-disciplinary team of physicians, academics, practitioners and journalists from Addis Ababa University School of Public Health, Women and Health Alliance International Ethiopia, Fondation Hirondelle, and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, are exploring using podcasts to change attitudes to intimate partner violence among Somali refugees in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia. The researchers are training men and women in refugee camps in digital storytelling and podcasting. Refugees are being empowered to develop podcast content that they believe will transform gender norms and behaviours in their community. These podcasts allow people to share their own stories, as well as create opportunities for community-based dialogue.

- Power of cash transfers for reducing IPV: In collaboration with the World Food Program, researchers from the International Food Policy Research Institute found that when cash or food transfer programs in Bangladesh were paired with behaviour change communication providing empowerment and reducing women’s isolation, a significant reduction in intimate partner violence can continue even after transfers end.

Women taking part in a weekly group meeting in Bangladesh.
Mohammad Aminul Islam Khandaker
CONCLUSION

Research made possible through SVRI grant-making has increased awareness of GBV around the globe, informing progressive policy implementations and the betterment of so many women’s lives. It is the hope of the SVRI that our grants continue to inspire researchers to create innovative solutions for GBV prevention and response services for years to come. The inclusion and amplification of diverse voices will lead to an increasingly robust field of GBV research, as well as the empowerment of evermore communities on this crucial issue.

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