TRACKING FUNDING FOR VAW RESEARCH IN LMICS: RESEARCH REPORT
Acknowledgments

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We hope this work will be used alongside our priority setting studies and funding ethically guide to advocate for more and better resources for research on VAW in low- and middle-income countries.

# Acronyms

AWID .................... Association for Women’s Rights in Development  
BIPOC .................... Black, Indigenous, and other People of Colour  
CSO ....................... Civil Society Organisation  
CRS ....................... Creditor Reporting System  
DAC ....................... Development Assistance Committee  
EU ......................... European Union  
GBV ....................... Gender-Based Violence  
HIC ....................... High Income Country  
IATI ....................... International Aid Transparency Initiative  
IPV ....................... Intimate Partner Violence  
LGBTIQ+ .................. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer persons  
LMIC ..................... Low- and Middle-Income Country  
NGO ..................... Non-Governmental Organisation  
NPO ..................... Non-Profit Organisation  
ODA ....................... Official Development Assistance  
OECD ..................... Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
PNG ....................... Papua New Guinea  
RVAW ..................... Research on Violence against Women  
SVRI ..................... Sexual Violence Research Initiative  
UN ......................... United Nations  
USD ....................... United States dollar  
VAW ....................... Violence against Women  
WHO ..................... World Health Organisation  
WRO ...................... Women’s Rights Organisation
# Table of Contents

**Executive Summary** ................................................................................................................. 6

**Introduction** ............................................................................................................................ 10
Aims and Objectives ......................................................................................................................... 11
Team and Advisory Structures ........................................................................................................ 11

**Methods** .................................................................................................................................. 12
Study Parameters and Limitations ................................................................................................... 12
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) database .................. 13
Globally disseminated survey ......................................................................................................... 16
Case studies ................................................................................................................................... 17

**Findings** .................................................................................................................................. 19
How much funding is going to research on VAW in LMICs? .......................................................... 19
Who is funding research on VAW in LMICs? ................................................................................... 25
Who is receiving funding for research on VAW? ........................................................................... 28
What type of research is funded? ....................................................................................................... 29
Challenges of funding research in LMICs ........................................................................................ 31

**Discussion** .............................................................................................................................. 37
On tracking funding flows ............................................................................................................... 37
On how much funding goes to research on VAW .......................................................................... 38
On research in LMICs ....................................................................................................................... 38
On how the socio-political context of a country impacts aid flows ................................................ 39
On the relationships between donors and grantees ....................................................................... 40

**Recommendations** .................................................................................................................. 41
Develop a baseline of funding flows to research on VAW and make a better case for investment in research ........................................................................................................... 41
Research funding for VAW needs to be decolonised, localised and promote diversity .......... 43
Fund the dissemination of research and initiatives pertaining to its up-take .................................. 45
Fund better .................................................................................................................................... 45

Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................... 46

References ..................................................................................................................................... 47
List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Trends in ODA funding to developing countries under purpose code 15180 .................... 19
Figure 2: Channels of ODA to developing countries under purpose code 15180 ........................ 20
Figure 3: Proportions of 2019 VAW funding ............................................................................ 20
Figure 4: Uploading and updating of grant funding on global aid databases ................................. 22
Figure 5: Intention to increase funding towards VAW research ................................................. 23
Figure 6: Funders’ opinions on the need to increase VAW research ............................................ 24
Figure 7: Top donor countries for VAW research ...................................................................... 25
Figure 8: Top donor agencies for funding VAW research ............................................................. 26
Figure 9: Opinions on source countries for VAW research funding ............................................. 29
Figure 10: Key funders on VAW research .................................................................................. 27
Figure 11: Key recipients of funding for VAW research ............................................................... 28
Figure 12: Funders’ key focus areas for VAW research ............................................................... 29
Figure 13: Grantees’ key focus areas for research ..................................................................... 30
Figure 14: Views on whether funders dictate research priorities ................................................ 32
Figure 15: Views on if grantees have a sense of ownership of their research ............................... 32
Figure 16: Views on the necessity for continued VAW research ................................................... 33
Figure 17: Grantees’ barriers in accessing funding for VAW research ......................................... 34
Figure 18: Views on whether grant making towards VAW has equity and diversity problems .... 35

Table 1: Funders’ approximate investment in VAW research ....................................................... 23
Table 2: Grantees’ estimation of funding received for VAW research ......................................... 24
Executive Summary

Background

Violence against women (VAW) is a global phenomenon that undermines the fundamental human rights of women, causes irreparable physical and emotional harm, even death, and impacts individuals and communities. While the prevalence of VAW has been widely acknowledged - with the introduction of international and country-specific condemnations and law reform - the question is whether the investment into addressing VAW and understanding what works and what doesn’t matches its severity and ubiquity.

Existing literature indicates that, despite the prevalence of VAW, it is often deprioritised as a funding issue (Equality Institute, 2019). Furthermore, where funding is being provided, research and programmes addressing VAW are disproportionately funded, conceptualised and carried out by institutions in high-income countries (HICs) (Amarante, et al 2021; Olufadewa et al 2021; Chersich et al 2016). This ultimately means that low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), who are largely donor dependent, are beholden to wealthier countries, with a resultant scarcity of knowledge production from and for LMICs in addressing country-specific VAW issues.

Moreover, little consideration appears to be given to both the importance of and the investment in research as essential to addressing VAW. To effectively prevent and respond to VAW, dedicated qualitative and quantitative research is required to understand the phenomenon, building an evidence-base to underlie efficacious interventions. The research funding ecosystem for research and development is highly inequitable, favouring HIC based researchers and this situation is not helped by the fact that investments in research and development by LMICs governments are low (Erondu et al, 2021).

The question is then, does the status of funding for research on VAW mirror the status of funding for research and development in LMICs more broadly? This study thus seeks to provide an overview of the funding flows allocated towards research in the field of VAW in LMICs from key donors as well as national governments. In doing so, the study underscores the inequitable distribution of resources and the lack of prioritisation of VAW - and research in particular - as a funding issue.
Objectives
The specific objectives of the study are to:
• Provide an overview of the funding flows for research in the field of VAW in LMICs from key donors in the field.
• Provide an overview of the extent to which national governments in LMICs are supporting research on VAW through budgetary allocations.
• Identify the key areas for which research donors and national governments in LMICs are providing funding (i.e. whether the focus is on criminal legal strategies, response, or prevention).
• Propose possible strategies to improve access to funding for research on VAW in LMICs through partnerships and cooperation between donors, governments, researchers, and practitioners.

Methodology
To accomplish the study’s objectives, a multi-pronged research methodology was adopted, including both qualitative and quantitative research methods, namely:
• A keyword-search analysis of the global Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Creditor Reporting System (CRS) database, documenting the resources allocated to LMICs towards the purpose code “ending violence towards women” (15180) by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries and other donors (including private and multilaterals);
• A globally disseminated online survey targeted at both donors and researchers; and
• Four case studies of the funding ecosystems in South Africa, Colombia, Papua New Guinea, and Lebanon, where ten research interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in each country.

Study Limitations
The task of tracking investment in research on VAW in LMICs is mammoth and complex. As such, certain self-imposed parameters were put into place, for example, putting in clear parameters for how “research” and “violence against women” were defined. In addition, timelines for survey and other research data including budgets, interview questions, and OECD data, was limited to 2016-2020, and the governmental administrative data was limited to the 2019/2020 financial year. A very important limitation of this study is the OECD database itself. Although a useful tool, it is not sufficient on its own to track funding for research on VAW. Other challenges include the difficulty in working out funding for research versus funding for programmes as funding for research is often not reported on as a separate data item for many funders, researchers and practitioners. Finally, the qualitative findings are based on a very small sample size, limiting generalisability of the findings.
Findings

1. How much money is going into VAW?
In 2019, an estimated total of 1.365 billion USD was disbursed by DAC countries for activities (3,853 activities) identified as or containing an English, French or Spanish term referencing “violence against/towards women’ under purpose code 15180. Of the 3,853 activities in 2019 which refer to violence against women, 399 individual activities referred to research on VAW. Thus an estimated 76,962,249 USD was disbursed to research on VAW in 2019 or just 0.05% of total ODA.

While the opaqueness of the OECD database means that it is difficult to track funding for VAW research, the above trend was largely confirmed by the case studies and survey. Key informants were in general agreement that the VAW space is under-funded, with research being especially underfunded with marginal allocations to VAW research by international and domestic philanthropy.

2. Who is funding research on VAW?
All the data sources confirmed what the existing literature indicates, that funding for VAW research comes mainly from HICs and from a small number of donors. The interviews also revealed that little funding came from national governments. In Lebanon and Papua New Guinea, for example, no government funding was being invested in research due to the socio-economic circumstances of both countries.

3. Who is receiving funding?
According to the OECD database, under purpose code 15180, the top five ODA recipient countries in 2019 were: Uganda, Bangladesh, India, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Myanmar. The full list indicates that 27% (20.94 million USD) of the identified disbursements were received by Least Developed Countries, 12% (20.94 million USD) by Middle-Income Countries, and 7% (5.16 million USD) by Upper-Middle Income Countries.

Funders surveyed suggested that the key recipients of their funding towards research on VAW span a wide range of organisation types, with the most common being: national women’s rights organisations, national NGOs, national research institutions, academic institutions in LMICs, and international NGOs. For respondents who selected “other” as an option, the following grant recipients were specified: the UN system (especially WHO and UN Women); grassroots organisations and civil society organisations; and individual consultants.

4. What type of research is funded?
While funded research spans a range of focus areas, most key informants indicated in their survey responses that they mostly fund or receive funding for research on approaches to preventing VAW. These findings resonate with the findings from the Global Shared Research Agenda, which suggest that VAW prevention and intervention research is viewed by the field as the most needed at this point (SVRI & EQI, 2021).

Recommendations

The funding ecosystem needs an overhaul. It is encouraging that an increasing amount of funding is being allocated towards addressing VAW. However, much more funding needs to be invested in learning what works and what doesn’t, guided by research priorities using participatory methods, conducted in LMICS by LMIC researchers (SVRI & EQI, 2021) and informed by ethical funding practices (Mago & Dartnall, 2022).

1. Develop a baseline of funding flows to research on VAW and make a better case for investment in research:
   • Create spaces and opportunities with governments, donors, philanthropic organisations and civil society organisations to find ways of putting tracking mechanisms in place to identify disaggregated data.
   • Advocate for research on VAW to be included in the planning processes of governments, donors and philanthropic organisations.
   • Advocate for research on VAW to be included in national action plans on VAW and ensure this is adequately resourced.

2. Research funding for VAW needs to be decolonised, localised and promote diversity:
   • Donors, philanthropic organisations, and governments investing in research must promote diversity and equity in terms of who receives funding to do research as well as in terms of what is being researched.

3. Fund the dissemination of research and initiatives pertaining to its up-take
   • Consider the question, “Why are we collecting, analysing and publishing data?” In answering this question, create a funding web of what is needed to ensure this is achieved and advocate for these resources.

4. Fund Better:
   • The SVRI’s ‘Funding Ethically: Better funding for violence against women and violence against children research in lower and middle-income countries’ is a framework for how to fund better. Donors should engage with it as a blueprint for how to fund research on VAW.
Introduction

Violence against women (VAW)\(^2\) is a fundamental violation of women’s human rights, causes irreparable physical and emotional harm, even death, and has devastating consequences for individuals and society. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that globally 27% of women experience physical and/or sexual abuse by a partner, and 6% of women suffer non-partner sexual violence at some point in their lives (WHO, 2021). Not only is VAW an unquestionable human rights violation, it also reflects a society encumbered by entrenched gendered power imbalances.

While funded primary prevention and response interventions are critical to assist women, it is of the utmost importance that the best available evidence informs these interventions. Research devoted to understanding, preventing and responding to VAW is critical to ensuring that interventions reflect a nuanced, contextual, evidence-based approach. The funding dedicated to such research and the access thereof is essential. It not only indicates issue-prioritisation but also crucially capacitates actors in the field to produce tangible interventions and programmes that sustainably and measurably protect, empower and assist women and reduce VAW in our societies (SVRI & EQI, 2021). It is therefore important to map and analyse the status of funding for research on VAW.

Existing literature on funding for research on VAW shows there are significant challenges and gaps in our current knowledge of the money being invested into such research (SVRI & EQI, 2021). The body of literature on VAW has undoubtedly increased exponentially over the last three decades. However, most reports have focused on funding for programmes and have centred on specific situations or areas of intervention such as VAW prevention in humanitarian settings (Marsh & Blake, 2019; EQI, 2019). Information at a global level on the funding streams, amounts, focus and recipients of funding for research on VAW in LMICs is extremely limited (Amarante, et al 2021; Olufadewa et al 2021; Chersich et al 2016). There is very little information readily available to map what kind of research on VAW is funded, how decisions are made about funding priorities, and whether there is an equitable distribution of funding.

The need for funding towards gaining a comprehensive understanding of VAW, including its prevention and mechanisms of response, has never been more urgent. Much greater attention, investment and action by governments, donors, civil society and the private sector is required in understanding what works and what doesn’t to prevent VAW and provide adequate services for survivors. The recently published Global Shared Research Agenda is an important tool to help guide funding of research in the field (SVRI & EQI, 2021).

This report seeks to map and understand the current streams and gaps in funding, highlighting the inequitable distribution of resources to develop and promote an effective strategy that will ultimately provide ethical, sufficient, and sustainable funding for research on VAW that benefits LMICs.

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\(^2\) SVRI understands violence against women as including all women in all of their diversity.
Aims and Objectives

The meta-analytic questions which this study seeks to address are: (a) What is the extent of funding for research on VAW in LMICs? (b) Where does it come from? (c) What and who determines research priorities? and (d) How is research used to advance efforts to address and prevent VAW? In answering these, we seek to provide an overview of the status of funding for research on VAW in LMICs, highlight inequities in the distribution of resources, and propose strategies to overcome unequal access to funding for research on VAW.

The specific objectives of the study include the following:

• To provide an overview of the funding flows for research in the field of VAW in LMICs from key donors in the field;
• To identify the key areas for which research donors and national governments in LMICs are providing funding (e.g. whether the focus is on criminal legal strategies, response, or prevention); and
• To propose possible strategies to improve access to funding for research on VAW in LMICs through partnerships and cooperation between donors, governments, researchers, and practitioners.

The study findings will be used for advocacy purposes to raise awareness on, among others: funding gaps in the field; inequitable access to funding for researchers in LMICs; donor accountability; grantee-donor relationships; the policy prioritisation of VAW; and the use and need for research as an effective mechanism to address VAW. Ultimately, the aim is for the study to contribute to the development of sound, independent and actionable research agendas led by researchers, activists, programme implementers and policy makers in LMICs.

Team and Advisory Structures

The following structures were established to guide the study (see Appendix A for details):

• Project Team - led by a team of consultants and the SVRI.
• Research Advisory Group - comprised of highly skilled experts in the field. The Research Advisory Group provided invaluable support in advising on the scope of the study and research methods, sourcing material for the literature review, linking us to other related stakeholders, disseminating our survey via their networks, and providing input on our preliminary findings.
• Expert Consultations – Individuals who provided advice, reading material, and informed the way in which we both thought about and approached the study.
Methods

Funding for research on VAW is available from multiple sources, including national government expenditure, bilateral aid, multilateral aid, international NGOs and private foundations. The largest amount of funds emanates from foreign aid, tracked in the form of official development assistance (ODA).

This report is based on the integration of several information sources, utilising a multi-pronged methodological approach, including both quantitative and qualitative research methods, to map and analyse the key funding sources. This includes:

- An analysis of the global Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) database, documenting the resources allocated to LMICs towards ending violence towards women;
- A globally disseminated survey targeted at both donors and researchers; and
- Four case studies of the funding ecosystems in South Africa, Colombia, Papua New Guinea and Lebanon where we conducted ten research interviews with key stakeholders in each country. This served to illuminate the study’s findings in reality.

Study Parameters and Limitations

The task of tracking investment in research on VAW in LMICs is mammoth and complex. The research methods used allowed for the collection of data across multiple platforms and through relevant stakeholders, a snapshot into investment in research on VAW. To ensure the task was achievable within existing timelines and resources, several parameters were agreed upon with the guidance of the Research Advisory Group.

For practical purposes, the study narrowed down the definitions of both “research” and “violence against women.” Concerning the latter, we included intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, femicide, harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage; sexual harassment; and the secondary impact of VAW. With regards to the type of research falling within the scope of the project, the following substantive research areas were included:

- Quantitative and qualitative approaches to understanding the causes, consequences and costs of VAW, including research focused on the broad range of physical, emotional, and economic costs.
- Quantitative and qualitative efforts to understand the functioning and effects of criminal legal system sanctions, including studies that track rates of arrest, prosecution, conviction, incarceration and the extent to which these fulfil legal requirements and to which they meet the needs of survivors.
- Quantitative and qualitative studies that document and assess the range of physical and mental health services provided by the health and social welfare sectors and the extent to which they meet the needs of those affected by VAW.
• Quantitative and qualitative efforts to understand the nature and impact of structural and upstream approaches to preventing VAW to potentially include social protection programmes, investments in girls’ education, economic empowerment, provision of general mental health services, urban design, etc.
• Quantitative and qualitative efforts to understand the nature and impact of VAW prevention interventions including: community education and mobilisation, group education, communications for social change approaches etc.
• Studies that examine the legislative and policy implications of approaches to VAW in terms of assessing the efficacy thereof.
• Prevalence studies that document the incidence of VAW.
• Studies that assess the extent of government funding for prevention and response.
• Monitoring and evaluation projects relating to the above categories (with the exclusion of practice-based knowledge).

The survey and other research data (including budgets, interview questions, and OECD data) collected was limited to the past 5 years (2016-2020), and the governmental administrative data was limited to the 2019/2020 financial year. This served to limit the scope of inquiry and amount of data to be analysed. That being said, the data sourced during this time provides a snapshot of the status of funding towards research on VAW.

Due to Covid-19, all data collection was done online. Another general limitation is that the project is limited to English, the language fluency of the research team. Therefore, there was a strong reliance on English research. This was ameliorated by the inclusion of team members who speak Spanish and could conduct interviews with non-English speaking interviewees. The survey tools were also translated into both Spanish and French.

We found the inability, at times, to delineate data in terms of funding for research and funding for programmes to be a significant limitation. Most research is not reported on separately, but forms part of overall programme activity. At times, it was also difficult to distinguish research from data collected for the monitoring and evaluation of programme activity. To undertake this task would require the efforts of economists working over a longer-term period to search through and clean up the OECD database. Further limitations are detailed under each method used to gather data. Where possible, to address limitations, we engaged with the Research Advisory Group and other expert role-players to advise on the research methods.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) database

The practice – and duty – of HICs providing development aid to developing countries is not new and dates back several decades, with international cooperation codified in numerous treaties. Yet, the provision of development aid has not been sufficiently monitored and transparent. In response, the OECD created a central
database tracking and measuring the funding flows of ODA.³

To track funding for research on VAW, relevant data from the 2019 OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) database was extrapolated and analysed. This database uses a standard methodology and agreed definitions, and is a unique source of official, and comparable statistics on aid resource flows to developing countries. It offers a tool that makes it possible to track funding for research on VAW via a dedicated funding purpose code titled “ending violence against women and girls” (15180)⁴. The OECD data analysis was largely limited to the use of specific filters, to the exclusion of other categories of information:

- **Sector**: Ending violence against women and children. Aid reported under this purpose code is included in the data collected using the ‘gender equality policy marker’, a statistical tool recording development activities that target gender equality as a policy objective (OECD, 2016).
- **Flow**: Official Development Assistance
- **Amount type**: Constant Prices
- **Flow type**: Gross Disbursements

Notably, the dedicated purpose code for ending violence against women and girls is a useful starting point for tracking funding for this purpose but is far from sufficient. Among others, the data has the following limitations:

- Although most of the major donor countries have taken up the use of the purpose code, certain donor countries (notably France) appear to not yet have done so.
- The data does not reflect donors’ core contributions to multilateral organisations, such as UN Women (Jaeger, et al 2020).
- Key emerging donors who are not official OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members, such as China, do not report to the global database. Therefore, their contributions towards development aid are not officially counted and recorded.
- There are gaps and inconsistencies between publishers’ data practices (IATI, ND) such as the OECD purpose code not being used consistently. While reporting to the purpose code has increased since its introduction, a substantial amount of GBV-related funding is not tagged with the purpose code, despite donors having allocated money to relevant projects (Jaeger, et al 2020). Moreover, while certain projects are categorised under multiple purpose codes, others are not coded at all. This makes it necessary to look beyond the dedicated purpose code to identify the range of projects that have the goal of ending violence against women and girls.


⁴ Purpose code 15180 definition: This encompasses a broad range of forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence including but not limited to: intimate partner violence (domestic violence); sexual violence; female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); child, early and forced marriage; acid throwing; honour killings; and trafficking of women and girls. Prevention activities may include efforts to empower women and girls; change attitudes, norms and behaviour; adopt and enact legal reforms; and strengthen implementation of laws and policies on ending violence against women and girls, including through strengthening institutional capacity. Interventions to respond to violence against women and girls/gender-based violence may include expanding access to services including legal assistance, psychosocial counselling and health care; training personnel to respond more effectively to the needs of survivors; and ensuring investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of violence.’ OECD (undated) ‘DAC and CRS code lists’ Available at: http://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/dacandcrscodelists.htm [accessed 13 January 2021].
A recent attempt to track ODA allocated towards GBV responses suggests that a clearer picture of current spending can be produced by combining data from the new purpose code together with a keyword search methodology (Chicet & Thomas, 2020). Consistent with this, the present report supplements project data categorised under purpose code 15180 with a keyword search through the long description field of all aid projects in the dataset.

To determine the extent of funding for research on VAW in LMICs, a systematic search was conducted of the 2019 OECD store of activity-level data on development and humanitarian resources. An ‘activity’ is any individual piece of development or humanitarian work, the scope of which is defined by the organisation publishing the data,5 but including ‘projects and programmes, cash transfers, delivery of goods, training courses, research projects, debt relief operations and contributions to non-governmental organisations’.6 Relevant activities were identified using the methodology detailed below, which extracts from the OECD CRS database for the year 2019 all those items which, according to donor categorisation and description, meet the following criteria: fall under purpose code 15180 OR include a keyword related to gender-based violence AND includes a keyword referring to research.

**Step 1:** Download activity-level data on all aid projects in the database for the year 2019, the most recent year with complete data coverage.7 This comprises data for over 290,000 funding activities.

**Step 2:** Of the 290,000 identified funding activities, extract all those activities categorised under purpose code 15180, plus all those in which the long description field contains at least one of the following key terms:
- GBV
- Gender-based violence
- Gender based violence
- Violence sexiste
- Violencia de genero
- Violence against women
- Violence contre les femmes
- Violencia contra las mujeres

**Step 3:** Extract from these all the activities in which the long description field contains at least one of the following key terms:
- Research
- Study
- Recherche
- Etude
- Estudio

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7 Available at: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3 [accessed 6 June 2021].
It is important to note that this is an imperfect methodology for determining the extent of funding for research on VAW. It relies entirely on the completeness of a single field of data. Some of these are extensive and contain detailed narrative descriptions, while others consist of nothing more than the project title. Furthermore, although the title and description of some of the identified projects do suggest a predominant focus on research on VAW, in other cases there is only passing mention of gender or of any research function – which would unlikely pass the muster relevant for the present study in terms of a dedicated allocation of resources towards VAW research. Therefore, on the one hand, there are many projects of possible interest that do not fall under the dedicated purpose code, while on the other, funding activities of possible interest may have been excluded because of failing to mention research in their descriptions.

Ultimately, there is no simple way to determine the extent of VAW funding for the purposes of research. Some VAW projects may be primarily and explicitly focused on research, but many more likely include some knowledge generation sub-components. Keyword searches are blunt instruments and are entirely reliant on the level of and language used in project descriptions. Therefore, the present method provides only an estimate of the lower bound funding for research dedicated towards addressing VAW.

**Globally disseminated survey**

To deepen our understanding of the global funding landscape relating to VAW research, two surveys were developed and widely disseminated online through Survey Monkey. They were tailored to elicit responses from funders and grant recipients from HICs and LMICs alike. The survey questions focused on: funding sources (ODA, philanthropic, national government); amounts of funding received/invested in research on VAW; duration of grants; thematic focuses of funded research; donor pressures and requirements; research advocacy; and longitudinal shifts towards funding research on VAW over time. The surveys were available in English, French, and Spanish.

To identify potential participants and ensure a wide reach, the project team used social media and reached out to those in our professional networks. Crucially, the team also gained assistance from the Research Advisory Group and SVRI in distributing the surveys to their networks and connections.

**Funder survey:** The survey disseminated to funders received 13 responses in total (11 in English, 2 in Spanish, and 1 in French). Respondents represent the broad spectrum of funders within the funding ecosystem: 5 funders categorised themselves as a private foundation; 2 as a development agency; and the other respondents identified themselves respectively as a government department, international NGO, national NGO, women’s fund, bilateral organisation, and United Nations entity.
Grant Recipients Survey: The survey disseminated to grant recipients received 47 responses in total. A broad range of organisations was represented: 15 categorised their organisation as national NGOs, seven identified as national women’s rights organisations, and six as international women’s rights organisations. “Other” specified organisations were two non-profit organisations, two consultants, a feminist advocacy network, a civil society-led research institution, a community-based NGO, and a non-governmental global network.

Some limitations should be noted. Firstly, there were 13 responses from funders and 47 responses from funding recipients, making for 60 participants in total. This is a relatively small sample size from which to draw conclusions about the funding landscape on a global scale. In addition, the organisations and individuals approached and those to whom they forwarded the links to the surveys may not be representative of all role-players involved in research on VAW. Secondly, a more serious challenge, which was raised by several respondents, was that they could not provide the required information. Some did not have access to the information because they were relatively new to their organisations, others noted that their data was not disaggregated in such a way as to make it possible to isolate funding for research. In addition, a few were uncomfortable about publicly disclosing information which was not already in the public domain. At the same time, respondents’ answers to the open-ended questions made it clear that they brought considerable expertise and passion to the subject.

Case studies

Four in-depth country case studies were conducted, to provide a snapshot of funding streams to research on VAW at a country level. For strategic and accessibility-related reasons, South Africa, Colombia, Papua New Guinea, and Lebanon were selected as the case study countries. The case studies seek to provide a thematic picture of the following:

a. What kinds of research are government and donors investing in (as well as the amount of money invested);

b. The research work undertaken by research institutions and civil society organisations;

c. How power relations are negotiated between donors and grant recipients, as well as the partnerships between researchers in HICs and LMICs;

d. How research findings are used to advance change; and

e. How LMIC advocates can have greater influence and ownership over these processes.

As one element of the in-country case study research, investments by donors and national governments into research on VAW were tracked, with a focus on who receives funding and what type of projects are prioritised. Where possible,
administrative records such as budget reviews, estimates of national expenditure, annual reports, annual performance plans and strategic plans, as well as quarterly and annual financial statements were used as source documents for following this paper trail. National government expenditure was assessed at two levels: (a) monies allocated to support research institutions in undertaking research on VAW; and (b) money spent by governments in doing their own research on VAW. Money allocated by international and national donors towards research on VAW was examined by reviewing and cross-referencing the administrative documents of donors, CSOs, and academic institutions.

In addition to the document analysis, in-depth interviews were conducted with key organisations and individuals working within the VAW landscape in the case study countries, including: key staff from international, regional and national civil society organisations; government funded research entities; donors; and academic institutions. To ensure confidentiality - considering the sensitive nature of the information shared - key informants will remain anonymous. Due to issues of access, purposive sampling was used. In short, respondents who were accessible were selected for interviews. Snowball sampling was then employed as respondents referenced other relevant stakeholders to be interviewed. Ten interviews were conducted in each case study country, which informed the social and thematic context of the discourse. Using thematic analysis (with a combination of deductive and inductive coding), key themes were extracted from the transcripts of the interviews.

Unfortunately, due to the complex and sensitive nature of the task, in most cases we were unable to extrapolate the necessary information from administrative records. Similarly, the information gathered through the key informant interviews was largely insufficient for the purposes of providing exact budgetary amounts allocated towards VAW research. Key informants were largely unable to determine the amount allocated to research to VAW because research was mostly embedded within overall programme activity and not reported on separately. Ultimately, the qualitative findings from the key informant interviews became the most substantial aspect of the case studies, providing essential insight into the context and discourse surrounding funding for VAW research.
Findings

How much funding is going to research on VAW in LMICs?

OECD data

Even though data on aid spending is limited, making it difficult to track funding flows to VAW programming and research, it appears that funding categorised under purpose code 15180 has almost quadrupled since it was introduced in 2016. Since 2016, DAC country disbursements to developing countries under the purpose code 15180 amounted to 103.4 million USD, with a further 30.2 million USD allocated through multilateral agencies. In 2019, this rose to 345.6 million USD and 186.2 million USD respectively (Figure 1). However, it should be noted that it is unclear to what extent this represents a real increase in funding dedicated to ending VAW, versus an increase in donor countries’ use of the new purpose code. The disbursements come from various sources, including multilateral organisations, the public sector, private sector, and public-private partnerships.

Figure 1: Trends in ODA funding to developing countries under purpose code 15180 (2019 USD millions)

In 2019, a total of 142,600,000 USD was channelled through NGOs and civil society, while just 10,199,000 USD – or just under 2% of the total disbursement under the 15180 purpose code – was channelled through teaching institutions, research institutes or think-tanks. This seems to indicate a low prioritisation of research. Figure 2.
Due to potential inaccuracies inherent in a sole reliance on the 15180 purpose code, all the activities categorised under purpose code 15180 were combined with all those in which the long description field contained an English, French, or Spanish term with reference to VAW. Through this search we identified 3,853 disbursements to VAW activities in 2019 to a total of 1.365 billion USD. This represents 0.9% of total ODA disbursements in 2019. We then searched within these disbursements for any activities that referred to research resulting in the identification of 399 funding activities, with a total value of 76,962,249 USD. In other words, of the 3,853 activities in 2019 which refer to violence against women, representing disbursements totalling 1.365 billion USD, only in 10% or 399 individual activities, representing 6% of the disbursements or over 76 million USD, does the description field also refer to research. This represents just 0.05% of total ODA in 2019. Figure 3.
Case Studies

The amount of money allocated towards research in our case study countries varied, though all reflected the trend of very low investment on VAW research. The OECD data generated through purpose code 15180 revealed the following allocations by DAC countries for the year 2019:

- **Lebanon**: DAC country ODA to Lebanon under the purpose code has shown an inconsistent trend. It totalled 578,000 USD in 2016, rose rapidly to 8.88 million USD in 2018, before more than halving again, to 4.36 million USD in 2019. Disbursements through multilateral agencies categorised under this purpose code were just 1,800 USD in 2016. By 2019, this had increased to 651,000 USD. This made for a combined total of 5.01 million USD disbursed under this purpose code in 2019. Of the 5.01 million USD under this purpose code disbursed in 2019, just 197,000 USD (3.9%) was channelled directly through teaching institutions, research institutes, or think-tanks.

- **South Africa**: DAC country ODA to South Africa categorised under purpose code 15180 has risen from 217,000 USD in 2016 to 1.76 million USD in 2019. Disbursements through multilateral agencies have also risen, although more modestly, from 141,000 USD in 2016 to 318,000 USD in 2019. This makes for a total of 2.07 million USD disbursed to South Africa under this purpose code in 2019. Of the 2.07 million USD disbursed under this purpose code, 334,000 USD (16%) was channelled through teaching institutions, research institutes or think tanks in 2019. Notably, this is a far larger share than for any of the other case study countries. This is possibly a reflection of the South African government’s recognition of the importance of research and development for growth and their commitment to providing infrastructure for science, technology and innovation (Ramoutar-Prieschl R. & Hachigonta S. 2020).

- **Colombia**: DAC country ODA to Colombia under purpose code 15180 has risen dramatically in recent years. It has more than quadrupled since 2016, from 670,000 USD to 2.91 million USD in 2019. Disbursements through multilateral agencies have been much smaller throughout the period but have risen almost sevenfold, from 12,000 USD in 2016 to 78,000 USD in 2019. This made for a combined total of $2.99 million in ODA disbursed to Colombia under this purpose code in 2019. Of the 2.99 million USD received towards ending VAW, only 13,000 USD (0.43%) was channelled through teaching institutions, research institutes or think tanks.

- **Papua New Guinea**: In 2016, DAC country ODA to Papua New Guinea categorised under purpose code 15180 was 783,000 USD. This rose and fell over the next two years, before increasing massively in 2019, to 8.19 million
USD. Disbursements through multilateral agencies rose much more modestly from 100,000 USD in 2016 to 175,000 USD in 2019. The combined total for 2019 was 8.37 million USD. Of the 8.37 million USD received towards ending VAW, none (0%) of the disbursements was channelled through teaching institutions, research institutes or think tanks.

The OECD data was largely supported by our key informant interviews in the case study countries, which showed that both international and domestic philanthropy towards research on VAW remains an under-funded and under-resourced space. However, this is largely anecdotal evidence; all key informants had trouble in estimating funding going to research on VAW, as highlighted by the following extract from an interview:

So basically, I am a project lead of three projects, and under these projects I have certain staff working with me and I have a budget that is approved for my projects that are interlinked together as one pot. And then I have to assess what percentage of their time is being allocated to work on the various elements of my projects, such as research. I don’t know, I’m just throwing numbers - two hundred thousand dollars a year? And then you have to work out what percentage of time the staff member is putting into research. I think it may be doable, but I am going to be very honest with you, it’s going to take a lot of time....I seriously don’t have the time to do that. I mean, do you mind if we skip this question - this particular element of trying to get to a number?

Surveys

Funders’ perspectives:

It should again be noted that the OECD database is an imperfect method for accurately tracking funding flows. This was supported by the responses from funder survey participants to the question on whether they upload and update their funding on global aid databases, to which the majority answered no. Figure 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you upload and update your grant funding on global aid databases, such as IATI and OECD?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>YES</strong> 23% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NO</strong> 69% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8% Declined to answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In the context of the interview, the respondent was referring to the different salaries bands of different staff members working on research and how it is difficult to estimate this cost in monetary terms.*
Therefore, a key question asked of the donor survey respondents was to provide an approximation of the amount of funding that they have invested into addressing VAW and specifically research over the last five years (2016-2020). Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF FUNDER</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>RESEARCH ON VAW FUNDING 2019-2020 (USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral Organisation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Agency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100 220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Department</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unable to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International NGO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National NGO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33 893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Foundation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8 002 034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Entity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unable to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Fund</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 145 353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Funders’ approximate investment in VAW research**

When asked about their intentions in relation to funding research on VAW in the next two years, 5 of the 13 respondents said that they intended to increase the amount, 5 said it would depend on the socio-political context, and 3 said that they did not intend to increase the amount. Figure 5. This is somewhat surprising, as a later Likert Scale question indicated widespread agreement among funders that more research on VAW is needed and that funding towards research on VAW does not currently meet the need. Figure 6.
Grant recipients’ perspectives:

The grant recipient survey respondents were also asked to estimate the funding for research on VAW received in the last year (2019-2020). Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF ORGANISATION</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>RESEARCH ON VAW FUNDING 2019-20 (USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Inst. in a High-Income Country</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 981 999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Inst. in a Low- to Middle-Income Country</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>424 248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Based NGO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Advocacy Network</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Women’s Rights Org.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 883 519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National NGO</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>817 889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National or local government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>351 944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Women’s Rights Org.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>312 176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>7 797 775</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Grantees’ estimation of funding received for VAW research
From the table above, we see that for grant recipients based at academic institutions, funding for VAW research seemed to represent all or nearly all of their VAW funding. This makes sense, given the nature of their work. In other cases, it was a small fraction. It is noteworthy that academic institutions in high-income countries and international organisations received the larger share of funding for research on VAW.

**Who is funding research on VAW in LMICs?**

A common finding across all the data sources is that *funding for research on VAW comes mainly from HICs and from a small number of donors.*

According to our OECD database analysis, the top bilateral donors towards VAW research are Sweden (accounting for 55% of the total with disbursements of 42.46 million USD), Canada, United Kingdom, United States, Norway, Switzerland, Spain, and Australia. Figure 7.

![Figure 7: Top donor countries for VAW research](image_url)
The top donor agencies reflect this pattern and are indicated in Figure 8 below:

![Top donor agencies for VAW research chart]

In response to a Likert Scale question, both funders and recipients were largely in agreement that funding towards research on VAW comes largely from HICs, with 89% of researchers and 92% of funders either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Figure 9.

![Funding towards research on violence against women largely comes from High-Income Countries chart]

**Figure 8: Top donor agencies for funding VAW research**

**Figure 9: Opinions on source countries for VAW research funding**
The key funders were identified by grantee survey respondents as primarily being international non-governmental organisations (20), followed by private foundations (10), and government departments (8), with smaller numbers of the other types. “Other” specified funding sources were own savings/funds (2) and educational institutions (2), as well as the single cases of the European Union, UK research funders, United Nations Office for Human Rights/Monusco, and “Poder Judicial”.

Figure 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is the key finder(s) that you received grants from towards research on violence against women?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Research Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research Institution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: Key funders on VAW research

Key informants in all the case study countries, corroborated these findings. According to a key informant from Lebanon:

**Unfortunately, most of our funding is from the Global North. Even research – it’s all funded by the Global North.**

The interviews also revealed that little funding came from national governments. Even in the instances where governments were putting money into research on VAW, these contributions were mostly insignificant and ad hoc in the sense of not being linked to an overall plan for research on VAW. This was the case even where research was prioritised in government plans, as in all four of our case study countries. Moreover, as revealed by key informants from all the case study countries, national government grants are usually dedicated to direct service provision or salaries, as opposed to research.

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9 In South Africa, ‘Research & Information Management’ is one of six pillars in the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence & Femicide. In Colombia, the 2021 budget of the Women’s Secretariat of Medellin notes that there is a need to qualify information analysis and knowledge management processes that guide decisions in relation to VAW. Papua New Guinea’s National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV (2016-2025) includes an outcome of facilitating in-depth, ongoing research on VAW. In Lebanon, The National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2011-2021) includes a provision on the need to generate scientific data on the scope and extent of GBV, the form it takes and its geographical distribution.
Who is receiving funding for research on VAW?

According to the OECD database, under purpose code 15180, the top five ODA recipient countries in 2019 were: Uganda, Bangladesh, India, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Myanmar. The full list indicates that 27% (20.94 million USD) of the identified disbursements were received by Least Developed Countries, 12% (20.94 million USD) by Middle-Income Countries, and 7% (5.16 million USD) by Upper-Middle Income Countries.  

In our survey, funders suggested that the key recipients of their funding towards research on VAW span a wide range of organisation types, with the most common being national women’s rights organisations, national NGOs, national research institutions, academic institutions in LMICs, and international NGOs. For respondents who selected “other” as an option, the following grant recipients were specified: the UN system (especially WHO and UN Women); grassroots organisations and civil society organisations; and individual consultants. Figure 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who are the key recipients of your funding towards research on violence against women?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Women’s Rights Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Institutions in LMICs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Research Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Women’s Rights Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Institutions in HICs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National or Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith-Based Organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to key informants from South Africa, a small number of well-established organisations are the ones who largely receive funding to conduct research on VAW - “There’s kind of a credibility that comes with a longstanding institution that makes it much easier to raise funding.” This points to the importance of collaborations and partnerships in helping organisations who want to develop their research capacity, particularly those working at local level with marginalised groups of women.

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What type of research is funded?

The funded research spans a range of focus areas. Survey responses from donors indicated that the key focus areas of the research funded are on preventing VAW and impact evaluations of VAW prevention interventions. A significant number of respondents also selected “other”, specifying the following focus areas: research on the adaptation of programmes for the prevention of violence against women and girls (VAWG); VAW in armed conflicts; and inter-sectional approaches in responding to VAWG (indigenous, disabled, Afro-descendant, girls and adolescents, and the LGBTI community). Figure 12.

![Figure 12: Funders' key focus areas for VAW research](image)

Like donor respondents, the grantee survey respondents also reported the key focus of research was on **approaches to preventing VAW**. For those respondents who selected “other”, key focus areas included: access to justice for victims of VAW; research methods related to VAW; sexual, reproductive, and menstrual rights; understanding violent experiences; protocols for care in indigenous populations; masculinities; the impact of COVID-19 on children; the impact of natural resources and climate change on VAW; and the impact of food security and survival in relation to VAW. Figure 13.
Survey respondents were also asked about the biggest knowledge gaps in relation to VAW. These covered quite a broad range. Twenty-seven of the 47 selected funding/cost analysis of violence against women, and 25 selected structural/upstream approaches to preventing VAW. Interviews with key informants also highlighted several gaps that exist within research on VAW. These covered a broad range, but largely included:

- VAW and its intersections with political/social/economic realities (e.g. COVID-19, poverty, refugees, conflict);
- The root causes and structural drivers of violence and ways to address these;
- The efficacy and impact of interventions and scaling up solutions;
- The translation of research into public policy;
- Institutional, structural and state violence;
- Prevalence data;
- Funding and costing of VAW; and;
- Prevention interventions in different settings.

These findings resonate with the findings from the Global Shared Research Agenda, which suggest that VAW prevention and intervention research is viewed by the field as the most needed at this point (SVRI & EQI, 2021.).
Challenges of funding research in LMICs

Both the survey and interviews with key informants identified several challenges in the funding ecosystem relating to research on VAW:

1. Doing research in humanitarian and development settings

We asked key informants about the challenges faced in doing research on VAW. The single biggest challenge to emerge was the difficulty entailed in conducting research in countries in development and humanitarian settings. This includes countries that are currently in a conflict setting, a post-conflict setting, or battling economic and social issues such as high levels of poverty and inequity. Many obstacles derive from this primary challenge. In trying to secure interviews, the reality of the situation in our case study countries became clear as respondents struggled to find time for the interview in light of other demands on their time. Moreover, key informants noted that research seemed to be a low-level priority for both the government and donors considering other issues. In Lebanon, this was exacerbated by the collapse in the banking system, which resulted in a situation where there were significant impediments to the practicalities of receiving funding. Similarly, in Colombia, respondents noted that the peace and post conflict agenda captures maximum political interest and financial resources, which ultimately leads to a deprioritisation of research on VAW. This is reflected in the following extract from an interview with a researcher in Lebanon:

“Even for donors, it’s worth stating that, you know, they really are not interested in, or committed to even understand the idea of an academic institute or research and how we might actually be relevant in building and shaping young women leaders…….They really are just interested in, ‘Are you on the ground cleaning up after the blast?’ And so the fact that they fail to understand that this is a hub for feminist knowledge to galvanise action….Those things don’t feature as important for them. And I think that’s part of the short-sighted and very narrow understanding of funding that donors have.”

2. Who defines the research questions?

One of the key challenges in relation to research on VAW is about who gets to define research priorities. In response to the statement, ‘Funders dictate grantees’ research priorities’, most grant recipients either agreed (40%) or strongly agreed (34%). In contrast, donors were largely neutral (58%), with 25% of donors agreeing with the statement. This indicates that funders may not be aware of the extent to which they are dictating grantees’ research priorities, or that grantees’ may not be aware of how flexible funders are in fact willing to be. Figure 14.
The interviews with key informants mirrored this finding, with most researchers indicating that while they had control over the research methods, they had less control over the areas of focus, given that most responded to calls for proposals. This is illustrated in the following extract from a key informant based at a university:

“Research proposals are tailored to the fund itself, and I think this is a major drawback. Funders have a certain agenda and they want the research to fulfil that agenda when it should be more tailored to the needs of the country or the needs of the people you want to help.”

Of interest is the fact that even though almost all funding comes from HICs, and despite the view that funders dictate grantees’ research priorities, grantees reported a sense of ownership of their research. In response to the statement, ‘Grantees have a sense of ownership over their research,’ 52% of grantees either agreed or strongly agreed. Figure 15.
3. Research embedded within other projects

The interviews with key informants revealed that funding for research on VAW is mostly embedded within broader programmes on GBV/VAW, that is, research is rarely funded as an activity on its own. This is encapsulated in an extract from an interview with a researcher based at a university:

“So we kind of embed it [research] in the projects that we’ve got that we know we’ll have funding for. So it’s a little bit opportunistic in that sense. So we’re not ever the ones able to dictate the agenda, in part, because we just are trying to manipulate, not to go where the money is as much as to manipulate the pockets of money, to be able to suit what we need, you know. So if there’s a call for proposals, we will embed research into that. But to be honest, I want to say that the research is the last thing that donors want to support. They’re quite reluctant to add that in.”

This links with the debate around the necessity of ongoing research in the face of pressing immediate issues that arguably require service delivery and on-the-ground interventions. This emerged in all the case studies.

That being said, both funders and grantee survey respondents responded similarly to the statement ‘There is no more need for research on VAW’: the overwhelming majority of both either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Figure 16.

![Figure 16: Views on the necessity for continued VAW research](image)
4. Diversity and equity

Diversity and equity emerged as issues to take into account in funding research in two key ways. The first pertains to the inequity in allocating funding, granting opportunities in general, and in platforming the work of researchers from HICs when compared to researchers from LMICs. The second key issue is that, at times, there is inequity in investing in the capacity of practice-based knowledge practitioners when compared to researchers working in academic settings.

Inequity between researchers from HICs and LMICs

Key informant interviews noted that researchers from HICs receive more funding, are given more opportunities to present their work (especially at a global level), are better resourced to access funding and skills development, and are better able to network with those who control resources. In addition, researchers from LMICs are at a disadvantage both in terms of the resources available to them to conduct research and to access funding. One example of this revealed by the survey is that there is widespread agreement between funders and grantees that grant-making towards research on VAW has a diversity and equity problem. Our survey showed that onerous application requirements, limited organisational capacity, and tight turnaround times between calls and deadlines are major challenges in accessing funding for researchers in LMICs. Less resourced organisations, including those dealing with or representing marginalised groups of women, have a harder time in dealing with these challenges. Of the 47 grantee respondents, 21 indicated that onerous application requirements are a barrier to accessing funding. Figure 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What barriers, if any, have you experienced in accessing grant applications / funding for research on violence against women (RVWA)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onerous application requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 17: Grantees' barriers in accessing funding for VAW research
Additional barriers to accessing funding were identified in the “other” response set. These included: a lack of information on or access to calls for projects or grants; donor focus on other priorities (including armed conflict in the country); challenges in conducting financial transactions and receiving funds from abroad; funders’ narrow definition of VAW; a lack of independence, with donor interests taking precedence over local programming; and tough competition for limited funds. Interestingly, funders were significantly more critical in terms of diversity and equity in grant-making. 82% either agreed or strongly agreed that this was a problem in terms of HICs being better able to access resources, while only 62% of recipients did so. This may be because the funding recipients who responded to this survey were more likely to have received funding, and therefore less likely to view this selection process as problematic. Figure 18.

Key informant interviews also noted that linguistic and capacity barriers were significant obstacles to conducting research in LMICs. For instance, many funding proposals are in English and many organisations (especially those based in LMICs) are not fluent in it. While they may have a good idea for a proposal, often the way in which it is communicated in English detracts from its merit.

A further key issue to emerge was the fact that researchers in HICs are, at times, encouraged to partner with researchers in LMICs. Often, there are skewed power dynamics within these partnerships. The following extract from an interview with a researcher encapsulates this:

“Many of the UK and US researchers….write to funders to say ‘We do global research.’ So they go and work in South Africa, Kenya, Uganda. But they need a local partner to make sure they get to our participants, to the people. You have to be very careful. We have become very vigilant and we don’t easily go into partnerships unless it’s an equal partnership.”

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11 Of the 47 grantee respondents, 22 were headquartered in a low-income country, 14 in a middle-income country, and 11 in a high-income country.
5. Practice-based knowledge

Many key informants (whether donors, practice-based knowledge practitioners, or researchers), felt that practice-based knowledge had a critical role to play in the research ecosystem. However, they explained that there was a need to invest more in building capacity to do data collection and research in non-government and women’s rights organisations – since funders were more likely to want to invest in and use the skills of more formally trained researchers. Given the role that practice-based knowledge plays in enhancing our understanding of VAW, collaborative work and skills transfer (that works both ways) between researchers and knowledge-based practitioners is important.\(^\text{12}\)

6. Grant lengths

All key informants said that grants were mostly short-term in nature, ranging from four months to three years, with a three-year grant for research being relatively rare. One participant framed the shortcomings of short-term funding as “having to expand like an accordion to suit donor requirements and then shrinking back to nothing when the project is done.”

A related challenge with short-term grants identified by key informants was that the research produced could be piecemeal, conducted in response to an identified need, but was usually a ‘quick’ study, limited in scope. According to a key informant from Papua New Guinea,

“One of the issues that we find in applying for funding generally around violence against women and girls is that everyone wants to fund short-term project-based work. And because of the complex and ongoing nature of the problem, you really need long term operational funding to make a difference.”

In other words, there is often a mismatch between the scope of what is required in terms of the complexity of the research question and the timelines for the study. This means that there is little space for undertaking longitudinal research and / or developing a longer-term research strategy. Moreover, increasingly often, funding recipients are accepting short-term, multiple grants, each requiring their own unique accounting and reporting specifications. This places immense pressure on the recipients, and the learning curve and administrative processes take away time from the substantive work.

Both researchers and knowledge-based practitioners expressed that they would like to be able to secure research funding that is flexible, over a longer period of time and able to cover related costs such as operational costs.

\(^\text{12}\) Practice-based knowledge refers to “the cumulative knowledge and learning acquired by practitioners from designing and implementing diverse programmes in different contexts, including insights gained from observations, conversations, direct experiences and programme monitoring.” The Prevention Collaborative (2019) ‘Elevating Practice-Based Knowledge to Improve Prevention Programming: A Prevention Collaborative Paper’.
**Discussion**

**On tracking funding flows**

The lack of available data on aid spending makes it difficult to track funding flows to both programming and research on VAW. This lack of accountability of donors, including governments, makes it difficult to track accurate disbursements and, as such, determine the prioritisation of research.

Since the introduction of the dedicated “ending violence against women and girls” OECD purpose code, there has been a dramatic increase in the total amount of funding categorised under the code. This is a positive development, which in part may reflect the increased policy focus on VAW in recent years, as well as the increased adoption of the new purpose code. However, as revealed by our findings (which showed a significant discrepancy of estimates based on different search methods), the OECD database cannot be used on its own as a tool to track funding to VAW research. This is for multiple reasons including that not all donors active in the VAW research ecosystem record their data on the OECD database, and those that do, are not doing it consistently. Submitting this data according to the database’s stringent requirements is an onerous process, with little or no reward. Yet, failure to report has serious implications, including: hampering donor accountability; making it challenging to determine, track, and conduct effective advocacy for funding priorities; and making it more difficult for potential grant recipients to identify the organisations offering VAW funding. The under-utilisation and misuse of the donor database ultimately results in an inaccurate portrayal of the prioritisation and distribution of funds towards VAW, and investment in research on VAW.

An Oxfam report analysing donors’ use of the OECD gender policy marker finds that “about a quarter of projects were mis-marked with the incorrect policy marker, therefore calling into question if the funding amounts reported are accurate representations of gender equality funding” (Essick & Grabowski 2020:3). This has implications not only for the tracking of gender equality projects - which would undeniably include VAW programme and research - but the efficacy of these projects and their ability to have a tangible impact.

In addition to the issues with reporting to the online databases, it became apparent through the interview process that key informants - both funders and grant recipients - had trouble in providing accurate disaggregated budget information relating to VAW research within their organisations. A key reason is that oftentimes the costs dedicated to VAW are not standalone line items but are instead integrated into other existing budget allocations, such as those for sexual and reproductive health or gender equality. Furthermore, even when allocations towards VAW are made obvious, it is not immediately clear what the intention of the investment is (e.g. research, direct service provision, programme support, etc.). Our findings
show that research is often used as a preliminary undertaking to formulate policy positions, concretise advocacy objectives, and advance an advocacy agenda.

Therefore, research is seldom a stand-alone project, but rather embedded within other projects. Views as to why stand-alone research is not prioritised include that:

a. Rigorous research is seen as complex, time consuming, and expensive;
b. Governments and policy-makers view research versus service delivery as a binary rather than being mutually supportive; and
c. Research and knowledge production was often not linked to action.

Essentially, the data speaks to a project-based, short-term approach to research, within which it is de-prioritised as part of other activities.

Therefore, it is uniquely challenging to ascertain whether and how much funding is being invested in VAW research specifically.

On how much funding goes to research on VAW

A common finding across all our research methods was that funding for research on VAW is disproportionately low, comes mainly from the Global North and from a few donors.

While an injection of funds is called for, even if we see an increase in donors’ contributions towards VAW work, one must be cognisant of an emerging concern that these funds are not being used effectively. A 2014 WHO report notes that despite an increased investment in violence prevention, many of the programmes are not being implemented at scale to achieve significant and sustainable reductions in violence (WHO, 2014). Similarly, with regards to research specifically, Shroff et al. (2017) find that in LMICs, decision-making is rarely informed by evidence. Not only is there a paucity of evidence, but where the evidence does exist the capacity of decision-makers to process and use the evidence is weak compared to HICs. “The overall result of this is a vicious cycle of low demand for evidence to inform policies, its inadequate generation, and its low utilisation in policy- and decision-making” (Shroff et al. 2017). Therefore, not only is funding insufficient, but the implementation of funded programmes and research seems to be inadequate.

On research in LMICs

Existing literature indicates that both programming and research addressing VAW are disproportionately funded, conceptualised, and carried out by institutions in HICs (D’Aiglepierre & Botton, 2020; Ijsselmuiden, et. al. 2012; Kok, et al. 2017; Ghaffar, et. al. 2008; COHRED, 2017; Bearn, et. al. 2017). Too often, researchers and advocates living in and working to understand and address VAW in LMICs do not have the power to determine what gets studied, how it gets studied, who leads studies, nor how study findings contribute to change. They have often been
relegated to the role of mere data collectors and project implementers, with little to no involvement in agenda setting, the research design or analyses (Belizán, 2017). According to a key interview informant in South Africa,

“The researchers of the North are desperate to find people in SA or in other African states that they can partner with and the majority of that money goes to them...we are just data collectors, that’s all we are...They don’t want our intellectual input, not really. They might put you on the paper and add you in somewhere, but you’re not going learn anything because it’s their perspective.”

This is amplified by the fact that publication and language bias further limits LMICs researchers’ ability to publish their work – particularly as HIC English language scholars dominate academic publication (Amarante, et al 2021; Olufadewa et al 2021; Chersich et al 2016).

On how the socio-political context of a country impacts aid flows

The socio-political context of a country determines aid and philanthropic activity and the amount of money allocated to research on VAW. The following measures are used to determine the flow of philanthropic aid: ease of operating, tax incentives, cross border flows, political environment, and the socio-cultural environment (public values, beliefs, trust, and practices towards philanthropic organisations). Many of the key informants in our case study countries voiced that in the context of a developmental and/or humanitarian crisis, research was not a priority when faced with ‘bread and butter’ issues. According to a key informant from Papua New Guinea,

“Because there is such a glaring gap in availability of services, and there’s a glaring gap in awareness, you know, so then we tend to then prioritise immediately responding at the expense of investing some money in understanding the problem [research], and being able to, probably, generate more knowledge and understanding even as we are implementing. So, I would say that it is an oversight which comes with limited resources and against a huge need and huge gaps in response.”

The effect of the socio-political context on funding for VAW was consistently raised in the case studies. In South Africa, where issues such as HIV and poverty are dominant, the government was forced to respond to pressure for greater investment in VAW following civil society marches in 2018 and 2019. In Colombia, the nationwide protests over pandemic-related tax increases tapped into long-simmering fury over police violence amid growing inequality and disparity with distinct gendered implications, ultimately leading to an internationally supported peace deal. In Papua New Guinea approximately 50.8% of the population were living below the Working Poor Poverty line of 3.20 USD per day between 2019 and
2020 (UNDP, 2020) and 95.8 percent of the population have no access to state social protection or labour programmes. The state’s ability to fund public programmes is seriously limited (UNDP 2020) let alone research. In Lebanon, following the port explosion, the World Bank assessed the damage to gauge the effects of the blast on residents, assets, infrastructure, and service delivery. Damage was estimated to be in the range of 3.8 to 4.6 billion USD,\(^*\) with losses to financial flows of about 2.9 to 3.5 billion USD, leading to a budget deficit with serious consequences for services in relation to VAW. For example, skilled researchers were leaving the country and others were struggling to cope financially, with civil society respondents explaining the complexity of receiving aid and paying staff in the context of the collapse of the banking system. All our key informants in Lebanon noted that the government had no money for research on VAW and little to nothing for VAW services.

Whilst COVID-19 has meant that some funding has been directed at research on the impact of the pandemic on VAW (18% of the grantees in our survey indicated that funding was being made available to this research), there seemed to be a broader consensus that funding has, in fact, been shifted away from VAW. Both funders and recipients in the survey largely agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted funding to COVID-19 issues generally which are not necessarily related to VAW or being conducted through a gendered lens. Interestingly, more recipients either strongly agreed or disagreed with this statement, perhaps reflecting the fact that their perspective on overall funding availability is highly sensitive to whether they have come across relevant calls and succeeded in accessing funds.

Ultimately, the socio-political issues that are perceived as being ‘top priority,’ attract aid.

**On the relationships between donors and grantees**

While the interviews show that grant recipients mostly have good relationships with donors, most key informants noted that the priorities of donors often dictated the research agenda, governing the decisions about what kind of research is supported. A key informant from Lebanon expressed this as,

>“Funders have a certain agenda and they want the research to fulfil that agenda when it should be more tailored to the needs of the country or the needs of the people you want to help.”

This raises questions as to what exactly influences donors in their priority-setting? There is much research indicating that it is not based on consultation with those directly affected by the research (SVRI & EQI, 2021; Donya Razavi, et. al. 2019; Cartier, et. al. 2018; Kapiriri, 2018).

\(^*\) Available at https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview
The consequence is that the research methods and outcomes of knowledge produced become incomplete; they are more of a response to concerns of actors in developed countries and are not necessarily indicative of the socio-economic needs and priorities of the communities (Kok, et al. 2017; D’Aiglepierre & Botton, 2020; Ali, et al. 2006). This can lead to long-term harms, contributing to the existing systematic patterns of disadvantage among those most marginalised (Wild & Pratt 2017). Participatory approaches are important for developing research agendas to ensure the inclusion of diverse voices in the identification of these agendas.\textsuperscript{14}

Where there is a disconnect between the priorities of funders and the affected communities, or an exclusion of national stakeholders, there tends to be a lack of local ownership and buy-in of the research produced (Costello & Zumla 2000; Beran, et al. 2017). According to a researcher in South Africa,

\textit{“this idea that research should sit isolated on its own is one of the reasons why there is such low research uptake. Research has to be embedded in process, and that process has to involve multiple sectors.”}

Not only is participatory research crucial in terms of promoting feminist funding principles, but it prevents the furtherance of extractive research, and ensures that the research will have practical implementation and impact (Mago & Dartnall, 2022).

\section*{Recommendations}

Many of our recommendations dovetail that of a study on ethical funding for VAW and VAC research in LMICs.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Develop a baseline of funding flows to research on VAW and make a better case for investment in research}

While our findings show that support for research on VAW from both governments and donors appears to be disproportionately low compared to the scale of the problem, they also show that it is hard to track funding flows. We found the inability, at times, to delineate data in terms of funding for research and funding for programmes to be a significant limitation. To this end, there is a need to develop and improve upon mechanisms to track funding flows. The first step here would be to generate baseline data against which it is possible to measure progress made on investing in research. Tangential to this is the need for governments, donors and philanthropic organisations to understand the importance of investing in research. For those working in the area of VAW, it would seem that the case for greater investment is obvious. However, given that just under 2\% of ODA disbursed under purpose code 15180 was allocated to research on VAW and that the case study interviews also showed that VAW research was under-resourced, there is a need to market a business case for increasing investment in research on VAW.

\textsuperscript{14} See: Global Shared Research Agenda methodology. http://www.svri.org/documents/global-shared-research-agenda-vawg

Generating baseline data

- Generating baseline data on tracking the amount of money invested in research on VAW will require that donors, philanthropic organisations, governments, civil society organisations and academic institutions put in place mechanisms that enable the disaggregation of data to gauge how much money is invested in research. It will also require work on developing shared definitions on research, monitoring and evaluation and practice and how to operationalise these for inclusion in the OECD database.

- The disaggregation of data should include the development of a repository that records all projects, including information about the funder; the project including relevant issues, sectors, and what is being funded; the allocated project amounts; timelines and the total budget.

- Ideally, tracking mechanisms should be set up at micro, meso and macro levels. This entails setting up tracking mechanisms at the level of individual organisations such as NGOs, WROs or research institutions; putting in place mechanisms that make analytic work possible at country level; as well as improving upon the mechanisms set up at a global level such as the OECD database and encouraging consistent use of the relevant purpose codes.

- The development of tracking mechanisms should include accounting and reporting arrangements. These should be set up in such a way that they do not require complex operational procedures that become burdensome in terms of administrative capacity.

- To make the data useful for those with more specialised interests than simply broad categories of funding, the narrative reporting of funding activities should be encouraged. Descriptions should reflect not only the broad overall focus but also all the major project components. This will make it possible to conduct more complete keyword searches, leading to more informed analysis and greater accountability.

Key Advocacy Point

Create spaces and opportunities with governments, donors, philanthropic organisations and civil society organisations to find ways of putting tracking mechanisms in place to identify disaggregated data.

Making a case for investing in research on VAW

- Research is essential to understand and determine the magnitude of a problem such as VAW, as well as to serve as an evidence-base that crucially underlies comprehensive and effective prevention and response interventions.

- Integral to the development of a case for increased investment in research on VAW is the fact that low spending and short-term, disconnected programming and
research on VAW can end up being higher in cost and lower in dividends. Critical here is changing expectations of immediate research results to more long-term outcomes (including structural and social norm changes). Ultimately, to tackle the immense problem of VAW, especially in LMICs where its prevalence and impact are severe, there needs to be an injection of long-term funding into research on VAW. This should come from both international donors and national governments and include dedicated monitoring of the ethics, rigor and implementation of research projects.

• Importantly, if donors, philanthropic organisations and governments are to invest more in research on VAW, it must be incorporated into planning, budgeting, and reporting frameworks. If investment in research is not planned for, it will not be budgeted for. Moreover, “if the interventions that have been budgeted for and funded are poorly designed or implemented, increased funding will produce minimal benefits.” (KPMG, 2016).

• While our case study countries had national action plans for prioritising research on VAW, none of them were: 1) Investing much in such research and 2) Making data on the expenditure on research on VAW transparent. Policy frameworks that include research on VAW as a priority must therefore include budgets allocated to this area of work.

Key Advocacy Points

1. Make a case for why it is necessary to invest in research on VAW.
2. Advocate for research on VAW to be included in the planning processes of governments, donors and philanthropic organisations
3. Advocate for research on VAW to be included in national action plans on VAW and ensure that this is adequately resourced.

Research funding for VAW needs to be decolonised, localised and promote diversity

The balance of power between donors, researchers and communities participating in the research must be held in sight. Within the language of a ‘knowledge economy’ and ‘knowledge capitalism’, this power analysis must be built into the funding ecosystem’s approach to investing in research in LMICs. Intersectional research on VAW was identified as a need across the various qualitative data sources (i.e. surveys and key informant interviews). Accountability to research participants also emerged as a key theme. Linked to this, was the need to ensure that researchers in LMICs lead research in LMICs and that their work is amplified
and used in contributing to knowledge generation globally. Two key issues emerge here. The first is in ensuring that funders promote diversity and equity in terms of who receives funding to conduct research; and the second pertains to ensuring that funding is going to research on VAW that facilitates an intersectional and contextually relevant understanding of VAW as a social, economic, and policy issue (both in terms of prevention and service provision). This will allow for greater empowerment and local ownership of research and outcomes, which should ensure greater uptake and implementation.

**Promote diversity and equity in who receives funding to conduct research**

- Funders should invest in building research and organisational development skills in LMICs, including local organisations, and should include funding for collaboration and skills transfer through consortium building and research partnerships.

- Equitable research partnerships between donors, researchers and practice-knowledge practitioners are critical to produce knowledge that shapes how we think about VAW and how to address it (Raising Voices & SVRI, 2020). Academic research and practice-based knowledge both play a critical role in the research ecosystem (Weber, et al. 2014). Incentivise research collaborations between, academics, civil society organisations and policy-makers with a view to combining academic expertise with field experience and policy imperatives. The challenges and benefits of these partnerships must be examined (especially when these entail collaborations between researchers from HICs and LMICs) (ISS Blog, 2021). Funding should also be prioritised for trans-national work between LMICs.

- Funders should seek to ensure that in addition to ensuring greater funding flows to research led by researchers in LMICs, research initiatives that include and are led by socially marginalised groups, such as BIPOC researchers and researchers with disabilities, are supported.

**Fund research initiatives that seek to view VAW through an intersectional lens**

- Funding allocated to research on VAW should consider the intersections between gender and other forms of identity.

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**Key Advocacy Point**

Donors, philanthropic organisations, and governments investing in research must promote diversity and equity in terms of who receives funding to do research as well as in what is being researched.

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16 Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Colour
Fund the dissemination of research and initiatives pertaining to its up-take

Most respondents emphasised that research should not be done for the sake of it – the value of research is in how it is used. For this reason, integral to all research projects, should be a focus and thinking-through of how the research will be disseminated, shared, and used. Key issues to consider here include the following:

• Donors should support plans to disseminate research findings and ensure its uptake. This work should ideally be included in research budgets.

• The dissemination of research material should include feedback to research participants in ways that are conducive to sharing information in an accessible manner. Our findings show that this includes both the language in which it is shared and the format (for e.g., in certain instances it might be more effective to produce a short video of key findings that can be disseminated using technology such as cell phones).

• Opportunities for engagement with key role-players (such as policy-makers, government departments, communities etc.) should be set up to discuss the research findings and potential ways in which it can be used.

• Most of our research participants recommended that research on VAW should be inextricably linked to advocacy campaigns.

Key Advocacy Point

Consider the question, “Why are we collecting, analysing and publishing data?” In answering this question, create a funding web of what is needed to ensure that this is achieved and advocate for these resources.

Fund better

Funding for VAW/VAC research in LMICs should be strongly guided by SVRI’s recently completed guidance that focuses on how to fund and defines better funding as “funding that is grounded in feminist principles, acknowledges, and addresses power dynamics, involves honest, transformative relationships between donors and grantees and creates accessible and equitable processes that support priority-driven and impactful research in LMICs conducted by LMIC researchers.”

Conclusion

In spite of the challenges of tracking funds for research on VAW in LMICs, the multiple data sources all support the finding that funding for research on VAW is disproportionately low in relation to the scale of the problem. Research devoted to understanding, preventing, and responding to VAW is critical to ensuring that interventions reflect a nuanced, contextual, evidence-based approach. The need for funding towards gaining a comprehensive understanding of VAW, including its prevention and mechanisms of response, is essential to drive change. Much greater attention, investment and action by governments, donors, civil society and the private sector is required. Sufficient funds must be channelled towards multi-sectoral development initiatives and policy-making aimed at eradicating VAW and assisting survivors. Chief to this is the necessity of resource allocations towards research that will guide these interventions and have them accurately reflect the contextual needs of women as well as society’s failings in empowering and protecting them.
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## Appendix A

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