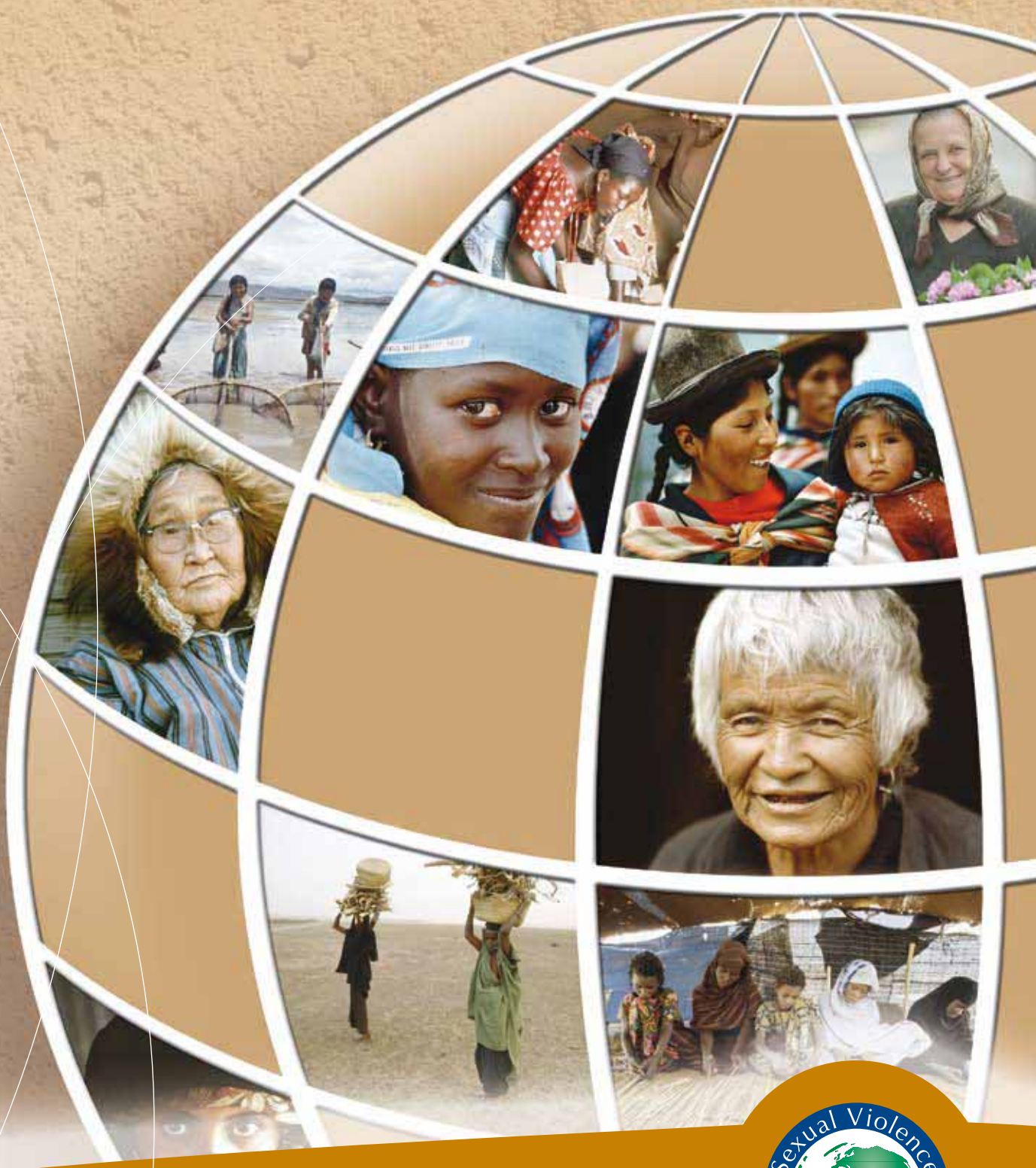

Sexual Violence Research Initiative

Annual Report 2007

Sexual violence is a global issue that requires coordinated evidence-based responses

Aim

The Sexual Violence Research Initiative aims to promote research on sexual violence and generate empirical data to ensure that sexual violence is recognised as a priority public health issue.

Objectives

1. Increase awareness of sexual violence as a priority public health problem through evidence based communication and information;
2. Strengthen the support and funding-base for research on sexual violence;
3. Build capacity in sexual violence research; and
4. Improve knowledge of sexual violence internationally to influence policy and service delivery.

Contacts

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Photo: UNDPI Photo Library

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Photos: UNDPI Photo Library

A Message from the Chair and Co-Chair

Sexual violence is a profound human rights violation which has the potential to impact severely on the mental and physical health of survivors, both in the short term and over time. It is an epidemic fuelled by gender inequality and remains one of the least researched and understood forms of gender-based violence. Research is critical in assisting us to strengthen existing intervention and prevention programmes for sexual violence and to develop new, more effective responses. The Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) was established to address this gap. The SVRI does this by building networks and capacity in research on sexual violence, sharing information and promoting evidence-based communication. Our website and listserv are the central mechanisms we use to achieve our goals and they also form the heart of our global exchange with our members.

2007 has been a key growth year for the SVRI. We have put immense effort into strengthening our webpage and expanding our membership. We have created tools pages on our website, where researchers can download questionnaires and other resources to support their research activities. We also continue to provide credible and reliable information to our members on a bi-weekly basis via our listserv. The SVRI listserv is now home to over 1070 members worldwide. We held our first training workshop this year, in New Delhi, India. It was a partnership between the SVRI, the FRONTIERS Programme of the Population Council and the Global Forum for Health Research. Through this workshop we built capacity, and strengthened and facilitated the creation of new networks for research on sexual violence. We will continue to work actively with our partners and foster new collaborations that will serve our members and the aims of the SVRI.

This year also saw the publication of a desk review and briefing paper on medico-legal responses to sexual violence. The evidence garnered through this and related work points to a need for a radical reorientation of health care for survivors of sexual assault towards meeting their psychological, social and physical health needs in services staffed by appropriately trained providers. The SVRI has a key role to play in advocating for a global shift in how health services respond to survivors of sexual violence. We also completed a review on sexual violence against women and children in China which was presented at a global conference in Beijing.

The strength of the SVRI lies in our vast global network, committed staff and highly skilled Coordinating Group who provide technical support and guidance for the work of the SVRI. We would like to thank them, along with our members and funders for their ongoing commitment and passion to the work of the SVRI.

Dr M.E. Khan and Professor Jill Astbury
SVRI Chair and Co-Chair

Photos: UNDPI Photo Library

A Message from the Secretary

Our achievements in 2007 have helped us advance our goal of creating an independent and viable SVRI, which is meaningfully positioned to advance the global research agenda on sexual violence. In the upcoming year, we will promote and encourage research that translates knowledge into effective interventions and programmes for survivors of sexual violence. We will continue to expand our reach by building on existing partnerships and creating new ones. We will grow and strengthen our listserv and website in order to continue providing our members with credible, reliable and up-to-date resources that will assist them in undertaking rigorous, ethical and rights-based research. We will strongly advocate the use of evidence in decision-making, policy development, and service provision for health services for the survivors of sexual violence.

We will do this and continue to do this with the support of our Coordinating Group, members and funders. I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank our partners, stakeholders and Coordinating Group members. Your considered, thoughtful, insightful inputs and involvement with the SVRI lend rigor and integrity to our products and activities.

A heartfelt thanks to you all.

Professor Rachel Jewkes
SVRI Secretary

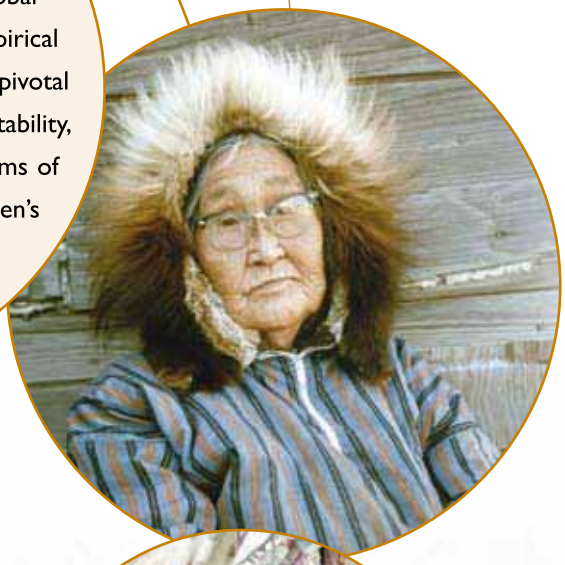
Photo: UNDPI Photo Library

SVRI Today

The SVRI contributes to eliminating sexual violence by simultaneously addressing the lack of research on the different aspects of sexual violence as well as drawing the attention of a wide range of people, including policy makers and the media, to this important public health and human rights issue. We are building an experienced and committed network of researchers, policy makers, activists and donors who ensure that the many dimensions of sexual violence are addressed from the perspective of different disciplines and with a multi-cultural outlook. Our central function is to strengthen the research skills of our members and website users, and their capacity to undertake meaningful, policy and advocacy relevant research. We are achieving this in a number of ways but, most notably by:

- Developing an interactive website on sexual violence research (www.svri.org) which includes country pages, tools, measuring instruments, funding information, links and other resources on sexual violence;
- Creating a network of experienced and committed researchers, policy-makers, activists and donors via the SVRI listserv;
- Building and strengthening the evidence-base for sexual violence research by calling for proposals, providing technical assistance, forging partnerships, publicising research priorities and promoting sexual violence as a key focal area among donors; and
- Building capacity for research on sexual violence through workshops, conferences and meetings.

"The comprehensive and serious research-based content of SVRI's work needs and deserves global exposure. Indeed, the importance of empirical research and academic documentation are pivotal in moving forward actions and accountability, cross sectors, for women and girl victims of sexual violence." Coordinator Women's United Nations Report Network.



Photos: UNDPI Photo Library

A Brief History of the SVRI

Since its earliest meeting in 1997, the Global Forum for Health Research has discussed violence against women and more specifically sexual violence, reflecting their concern both with the severe health risks consequent to such violence and the violations of human rights. The Global Forum recommended that a consultation be organised to bring together relevant partners to discuss the problem and plan for future action.

As a result, two conferences were held. The first consultative meeting on sexual violence was held in Melbourne in May 2000. At this meeting, which was attended by representatives from all regions of the world and several networks of organisations working on sexual violence, it was agreed that a global initiative on sexual violence research was urgently needed. Thus, the Sexual Violence Research Initiative began to take shape.

The Melbourne meeting resulted in the participants appointing a Coordinating Group to move the initiative forward. A listserv of participants and others, was established and further discussions about the research agenda were held via an e-mail forum.

These discussions were concluded in time for the International Conference on Health Research for Development in Bangkok in October 2000, where further meetings on the nature of the SVRI and its research priorities were organised and attended by over 60 delegates from many countries and regions.

With financial support from the World Bank through its contribution to the Global Forum for Health Research, the SVRI was formally established in 2004 and was officially launched at Forum 10 in Cairo, 2006. The SVRI was initially hosted by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Department of Gender and Women's Health, before moving to the Medical Research Council's Gender and Health Research Unit in South Africa in 2006.

SVRI Presentation
Forum 10, Cairo Egypt

Performance and Progress in 2007

SVRI Website: a learning and resource tool for researchers

www.svri.org

The SVRI website continues to be a central resource for SVRI members. Over 2007, the SVRI website has grown considerably and is now home to over 109 country pages, various research tools and guidelines, resources on specific issues, links to funders and a calendar of events. The website is updated weekly. All SVRI products, once finalised, are put up on the website. We also provide resources in other languages, where available, in order to broaden our reach.

The SVRI website has been awarded 'Health on the Net' (HON) accreditation which assures our visitors that we comply with the HONcode standard for trustworthy information on health. For more information on HON visit: http://www.hon.ch/HONcode/Conduct.html

The figure below provides a summary of the number of visitors/ hits the website had during 2007. These figures reflect a marked increase in traffic on the SVRI website from 2006. A proper evaluation of the site will be undertaken in 2008.

Country Pages

The SVRI country pages provide our members and website visitors with access to country specific reports, journal articles, recent news articles and links.

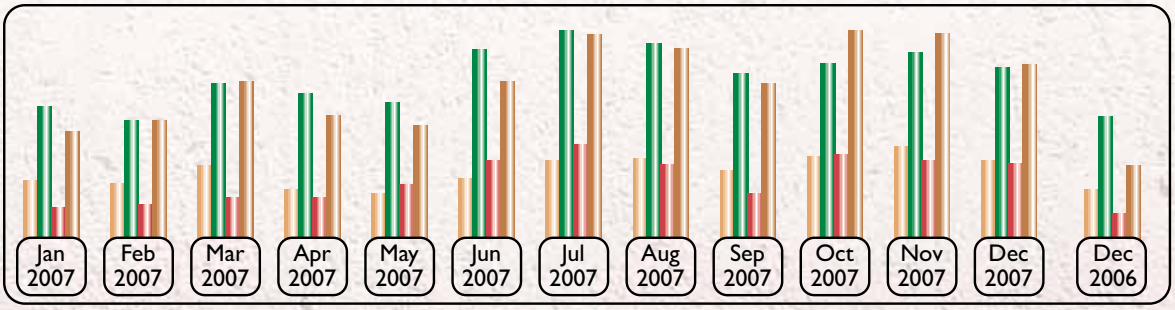
http://www.svri.org/countries.htm

Donor Links

The SVRI donor links page gives researchers easy access to funders who fund research in the area of sexual violence.

http://www.svri.org/funding.htm

Webstats January – December 2007



Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits
Dec 2006	1277	3188	6750	19528
Dec 2007	2041	4539	20242	46610
Nov 2007	2468	4918	21031	55086
Oct 2007	2169	4701	23045	57795
Sep 2007	1823	4351	12812	41243
Aug 2007	2161	5198	19998	51270
Jul 2007	2038	5726	25495	54882
Jun 2007	1600	4989	21038	42263
May 2007	1259	3624	14302	30737
Apr 2007	1317	3874	10996	33253
Mar 2007	1954	4097	11440	42123
Feb 2007	1472	3122	9549	31906
Jan 2007	1580	3561	8918	28410
Total	**21882**	**52700**	**198866**	**515578**

SVRI Listserv: a forum for global exchange

http://www.svri.org/activities.htm#email

The SVRI listserv is a moderated forum with over 1070 members from over 80 different countries and forms the heart of our global exchange with our members. Our membership has grown 36% since January 2007.

The listserv provides members with a useful platform for sharing information about activities, best practices and information resources.

Two updates are circulated to members weekly. These include a compilation email on relevant sexual violence research resources, and a 'Sexual Violence in the News' update.

The voluntary reflections from members on the SVRI listserv provided in the circle, highlight the value of the SVRI updates and 'Sexual Violence in the News' circulars.

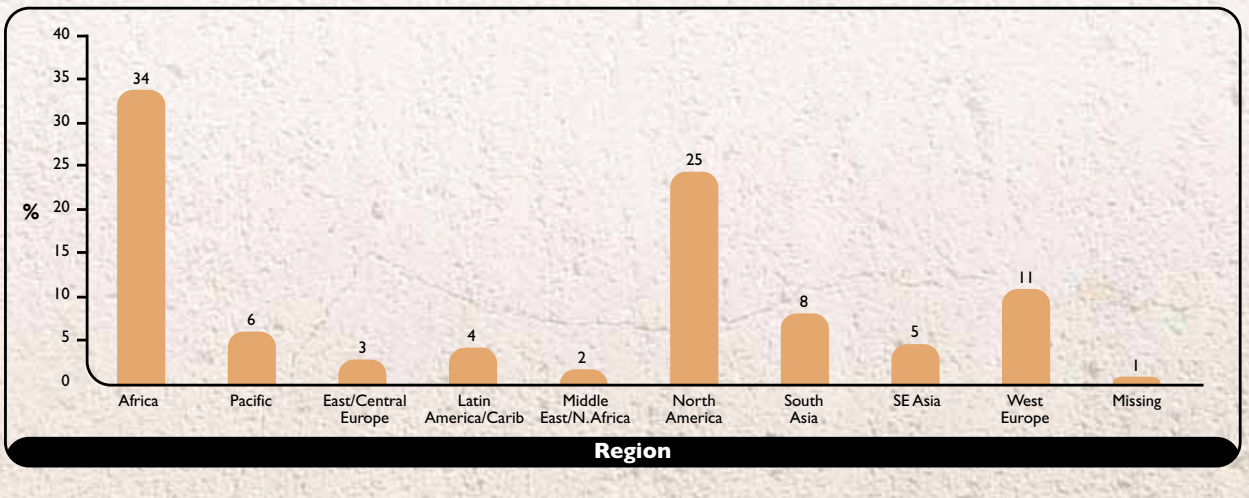
Our members benefit from this service by receiving quality digested materials on sexual violence that they can use in their research, and by being able to access skilled experts to support them in their research efforts.

The graph below provides an overview of the SVRI listserv membership by region, and shows that we are achieving our goal of increasing representation from developing countries.

SVRI Member comments on the SVRI listserv

- 'SVRI is a wonderful resource and I look forward to receiving the updates.'
- 'The updates are so informative. It is the most useful and well constructed list I have ever belonged to!'
- 'We truly value your newsletter and work, especially since you connect sexualised violence as a public health issue.'
- 'This is a great resource. I am a recent subscriber and have been very impressed. Thanks for all your great work!'

SVRI List Membership % by Region December 2007



SVRI Resources and Publications: strengthening the evidence-base to inform research on sexual violence

http://www.svri.org/publications.htm

There is increasing recognition of the pervasiveness of sexual violence across the world, yet it remains the least researched of all forms of gender based violence. Most of the published research on sexual violence has been undertaken in a very small number of countries, and mostly in developed nations. Research on sexual violence that is rooted in evidence, has a developing country focus and aims to prevent sexual violence and strengthen our responses to survivors is essential.

In 2007 the SVRI worked to strengthen the evidence-base and inform research on sexual violence. We have done this in a number of ways including, the publication of desk reviews on: the uses and impact of medico-legal evidence to rape and; assessment instruments used to study healthcare-based interventions for women who have experienced sexual violence; the development of briefing notes and fact sheets finalising work which aims to better understand providers' experiences of sexual assault care, and work with local partners to support country-level evidence-base(s).

A number of key resources and publications have been the result of these activities. Details of these publications are provided on the next page:

Photo: UNDPI Photo Library

Desk Reviews

The Uses and Impacts of Medico-Legal Evidence in Sexual Assault Cases: A global review by Du Mont, J. & White, D., Sexual Violence Research Initiative, World Health Organisation, 2007:

This review provides a global overview of the uses and impacts of medico-legal evidence in cases of sexual assault on adolescents and adults. The report documents the historical and contemporary medico-legal responses of sexual assault victims, broadly describing the professionals, protocols and procedures involved in the collection and processing of medico-legal evidence. Findings are presented from studies that have evaluated the legal impact of such evidence on sexual assault cases, and factors that may create barriers to its successful use in criminal justice proceedings are discussed. The review identifies salient knowledge gaps and offers research recommendations for addressing them. Available online at: http://www.svri.org/medico.pdf

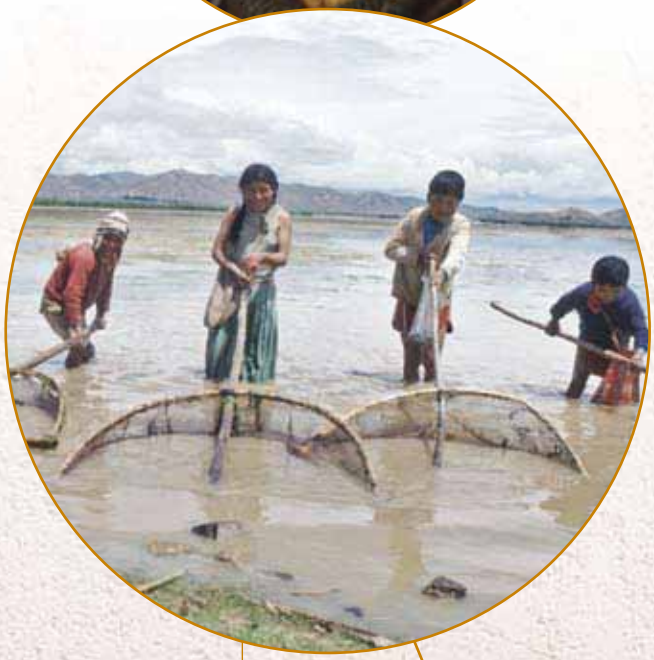
Sexual Violence against Women and Children in China by Chan K.L., Sexual Violence Research Initiative, Medical Research Council, 2007:

This review, commissioned by the SVRI, was used to inform the SVRI roundtable at Forum 11, the annual conference of the Global Forum for Health Research held in Beijing, China. This review documents current literature on gender-based violence with a particular focus on sexual violence and assault in China, including mainland China and Hong Kong. It also serves to promote evidence-based research agendas. This review is available on our website in English and the executive summary is available in Chinese. The full document is available online at: http://www.svri.org/chinese.pdf, and the executive summary in Chinese is available online at: http://www.svri.org/chinesesummary.pdf

Assessment Instruments Used To Study Healthcare-Based Interventions for Women Who Have Experienced Sexual Violence, Martin S.L., Young S., Billings D.L., Sexual Violence Research Initiative, Medical Research Council, 2007:

The SVRI commissioned colleagues from IPAS, the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill School of Public Health and the Research Triangle Institute to develop a webpage for assessment instruments used to study healthcare-based interventions for women who have experienced sexual violence. The purpose of this webpage is to provide visitors with a comprehensive package of programme evaluation tools and methods for sexual violence projects and services. By making such materials available to service providers, managers, researchers, policy makers and activists, among others, evaluation can be more easily incorporated into project and programme plans. Rather than starting from scratch, researchers may draw on the tools from projects conducted throughout the world and can adapt them to the needs of their own programmes and services. The contents are drawn from published articles in peer-reviewed journals that report findings from evaluations of healthcare-based services for women victims/survivors of sexual violence. This webpage can be visited online at: http://www.svri.org/evaluation.htm

Photo: UNDPI Photo Library



Ethics and Research on Perpetration of Sexual Violence:

Research on perpetration of sexual violence poses distinct ethical dilemmas and should not be undertaken without careful forethought, preparation, attention to motivation, ethical considerations, dissemination, and where possible, support. As such, the SVRI commissioned colleagues from Linköping University and Bradford University to draft a paper on the ethics of doing research on perpetration of sexual violence. The paper highlights that experience and reflection on the ethics of sexual violence research relates more to research with survivors than it does to research on perpetration. Even when they do address the latter, they rarely discuss the practical and ethical guidelines for doing such research. Given these gaps and the importance of such guides in supporting ethical research on the perpetration of sexual violence, the SVRI plans to facilitate an expert consultation in 2008. The aim of this workshop will be to bring together key researchers and experts on ethics and the law in the area of research on perpetration of sexual violence to finalise these ethical guidelines.

Briefing Notes and Fact Sheets

To encourage the use of evidence for policy and programme development, during 2007, the SVRI published the following research, policy briefs and fact sheet:

Research Summary - The uses and impacts of medico-legal evidence in sexual assault cases: a global review. Du Mont J. & White D., Sexual Violence Research Initiative, 2007: this brief provides policy makers, researchers, funders and others with a summary of the findings of the SVRI desk review on the uses and impacts of medico-legal evidence in sexual assault cases. Available online at: http://www.svri.org/mlResearchBrief.pdf

Fact Sheet - Sexual violence and HIV, prepared by AfroAIDSInfo Portal and Sexual Violence Research Initiative, 2007: This fact sheet provides an overview of sexual violence and how it connects with HIV. Available online at: http://www.svri.org/factsheet.pdf

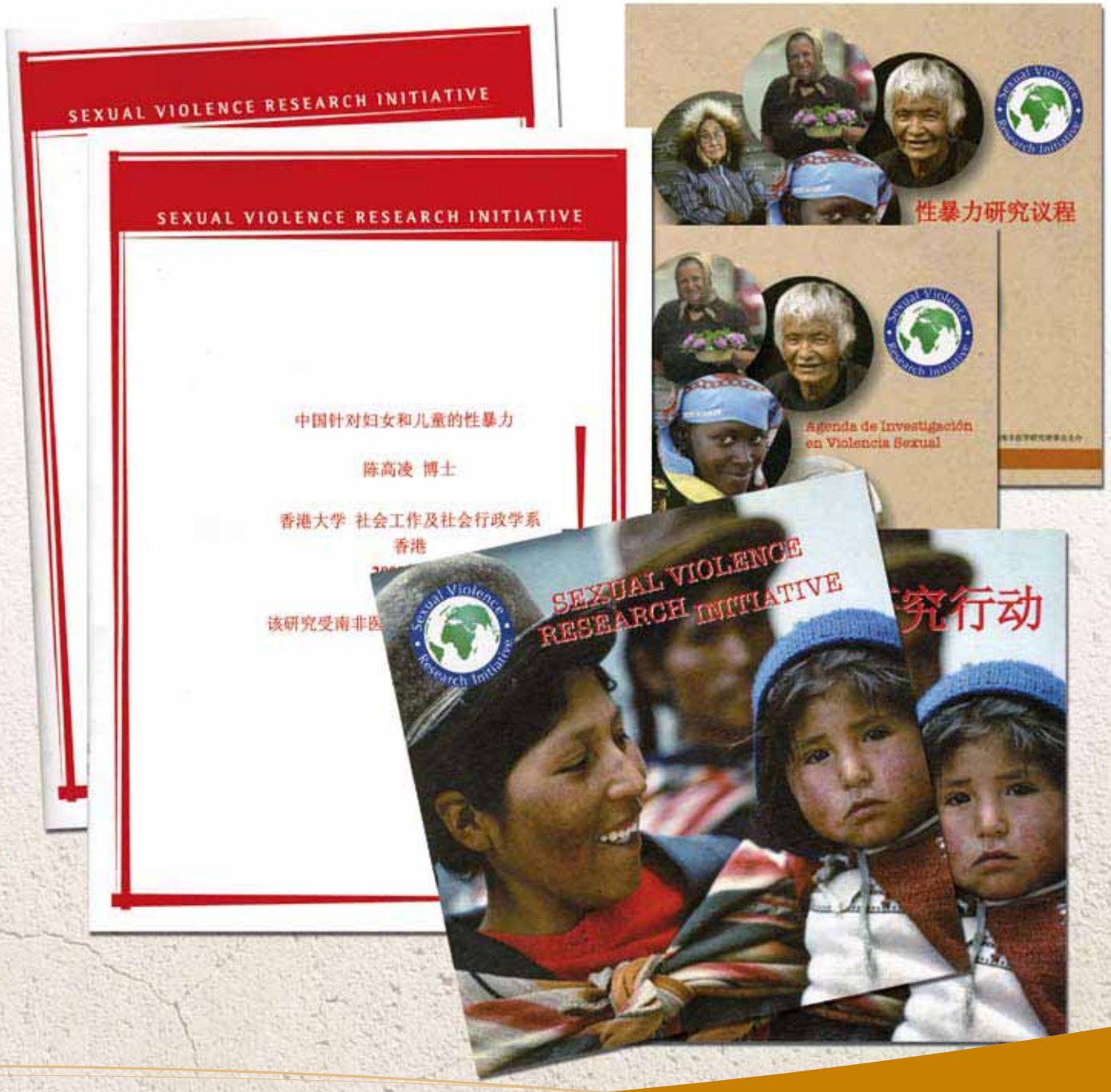
Photos: UNDPI Photo Library

Other Materials

Sexual Violence Research Agenda:

The SVRI has published a research agenda for sexual violence. The agenda was informed by a review of published literature on sexual violence, a series of SVRI facilitated international expert meetings and discussions as well as recommendations arising from the World Report on Violence and Health (WHO). The research agenda on sexual violence provides researchers with a tool to advocate for research on sexual violence and provides a guide for the creation of more detailed evidence-based research agendas in specific topic areas. The research agenda is available online at: http://www.svri.org/agenda.pdf

During 2007 we translated the Research Agenda and Brochure into Spanish and Chinese.



Networks and Partnerships: increasing awareness of sexual violence as a public health issue

http://www.svri.org/partnerships.htm

Globally, great strides have been made in increasing awareness of the impact of sexual violence on public health and the multiple human rights that it violates. But, the challenge of raising the profile of the issue with many donors and research institutions remains. The SVRI is committed to strengthening the support-base for research on sexual violence. We are also committed to raising the profile of the impacts of sexual violence by participating in international meetings, publishing newspaper articles, promoting and strengthening networks, entering into partnerships that assist us to extend our reach and developing and promoting an evidence-based research agenda.

Sexual Violence Research Initiative in the News

Group Calls For More Research On Sexual Violence

PRETORIA, 5 February 2007 (IRIN) - Though sexual violence affects millions around the world every year, deeply entrenched cultural taboos and a lack of political leadership have historically left the issue largely unrecognised in government boardrooms, health ministries, and scientific research. But that may change, as an emerging global initiative argues sexual violence is a legitimate public health and human rights issue that warrants its own research, prevention, and interventions.

http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=69940

Networks and Collaborative Partnerships

SVRI Coordinating Group:

Members of the SVRI Coordinating Group represent the SVRI internationally and advocates for more research and funding in the area of sexual violence in the many meetings they are invited to attend. The SVRI Coordinating Group represents the following organisations, networks and global regions.

Name	Institution	Region/representation
Professor Jill Astbury	School of Psychology, Victoria University	Oceania
Professor Mary Anne Burke	Global Forum for Health Research	Funder
Dr Nata Duvvury	International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW)	Asia
Dr Mary Ellsberg	Inter-American Alliance for Gender Violence Prevention and Health, InterCambios; PATH	South America
Dr Claudia Garcia-Moreno	WHO Department of Gender, Women and Health	Global
Alessandra Guedes	Consultant	South America
Dr M.E. Khan	FRONTIERS Programme, for the Population Council	Asia
Dr Nduku Kilonzo	Liverpool VCT, Care & Treatment (LVCT) Kenya	East and Southern Africa
Professor Mary Koss	Restore Programme, University of Arizona	North America
Dr Tandiar Samir	Centre for Development Services, Near East Foundation, Egypt	North Africa
Dr Ia Verulashvili	Women's Center, Georgia	Eastern Europe

Targeted Partnerships:

In 2007 the SVRI entered into specific partnerships with the AIDSPortal and AfroAIDSInfo portal.

AIDSPortal: The AIDS Portal is a network partnership between the DFID Global AIDS Policy team and the UK Consortium on AIDS and International Development, which currently links over 1100 practitioners and policy makers worldwide. The partnership between the SVRI and AIDSPortal, has to date, focused on developing an interactive online page around the intersections between sexual violence and HIV, and assisting the Aids Portal to host online discussions on relevant topics. We also share links and resources. The online library of resources related to sexual violence and HIV can be found at: http://www.aidsportal.org/overlay_details.aspx?nex=53

AfroAIDSInfo (AAI) Portal: The AfroAIDSinfo project is an internet portal of the Medical Research Council South Africa and is a natural partner for the SVRI. The aim of the AAI is to disseminate important information on HIV/AIDS to researchers, the health professionals, the public, infected individuals, educators and policy-makers. Carefully selected editorial and information links are published on the portal in an ongoing effort to educate and continuously inform each of these audiences and to assist them in the fight against HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. The partnership between the SVRI and AAI has assisted AAI to strengthen HIV and sexual violence related resources. During 2007, the SVRI and the AAI also developed a fact sheet on HIV and sexual violence and we continue to share links and resources.

Their website is: http://www.afroaidsinfo.org

Providing Platforms for Networks to Develop

SVRI Activities at Forum 11:

Forum 11 provided the SVRI with an opportunity to share our work, expand our networks and interact with researchers, policy makers and others. Key activities of the SVRI at Forum 11 included a market stall in the Forum 11 Market Place, facilitating a satellite meeting for researchers interested in sexual violence in China, and a roundtable session on violence against women in China. The roundtable provided a platform for local researchers to work together on addressing the research agenda for research on sexual violence in China and to network and create partnerships to take the work forward.

SVRI Roundtable, Forum 11

Building capacity in sexual violence research

http://www.svri.org/activities.htm#cap

An integral part of the SVRI vision is building capacity among researchers to undertake research in the area of sexual violence and to promote networks among researchers undertaking sexual violence research globally. We are achieving this goal through a number of different mechanisms, from facilitating workshops, creating pages on the website for research tools and other specific areas, developing guidelines and responding as a help-desk via the SVRI listserv, to requests from members for information and support.

"It was wonderful to be there at Manesar to learn a lot of new things and the issues associated with sexual violence. It was a nice experience for each and every one of us to have been brought together as a family. Yes it is a family of minds working on sexual violence. Let this family work together to address gender violence. Those were five productive and memorable days, which may result in many rewards and networks in future."

SVRI Workshop Participant, September 2007.

Regional Capacity Building

Promoting and Strengthening Research Skills/ Networks on Sexual Violence, New Delhi, India, 24-28 September 2007: As part of our regional capacity building efforts, the SVRI facilitated a 5 day workshop in New Delhi, India from 24 - 28 September, 2007. The workshop was a collaborative activity between the SVRI, Global Forum for Health Research and the FRONTIERS Programme of Population Council. The aim of the workshop was to strengthen research capacity among SVRI members; to develop evidence-based, locally relevant research agendas in the area of sexual violence; and to promote research on sexual violence through the creation of regional research networks and research proposals. Key objectives of the workshop were to:

- review findings of SVRI commissioned desk reviews on women's responses to sexual violence and medico-legal responses to sexual violence;
- identify gaps and regional research priorities with a view to formulating an emerging research agenda;
- promote the creation of local research networks informed by evidence-based, regionally relevant research priorities; and
- strengthen research capacity among workshop participants with particular emphasis on formulating policy relevant research questions, developing research proposals that meet ethical and scientific guidelines and creating research teams and networks.

Nineteen participants from across the world came together to discuss and share their ideas and experiences regarding research on sexual violence. Work on concept notes and research projects is ongoing. The model used for this workshop will be replicated through a project funded by the Hewlett Foundation in Nairobi in 2008.

Photo: UNDPI Photo Library

SVRI Workshop Participants
India, September 2007

SVRI Help Desk:

The SVRI periodically provides researchers with feedback on their research protocols, assists them by guiding them to relevant resources and information, and regularly fields information requests.

Photos: UNDPI Photo Library

Governance and Planning

http://www.svri.org/group.htm

The day to day activities of the SVRI are managed by the SVRI Secretariat which comprises the Secretary, Programme Officer, a part-time Administrator and Researcher. Professor Rachel Jewkes is the SVRI Secretary who oversees the overall outputs of the SVRI and liaises with the Secretariat and the Coordinating Group. Liz Dartnall runs the SVRI on a daily basis with the support of Lizle Loots, a MRC Researcher in the Gender and Health Research Unit and Engela Gerber, the Gender and Health Research Unit Administrator.

The work of the Secretariat is guided by a Coordinating Group of 11 members who provide overall guidance to further the work of the SVRI, coordinate its activities and oversee the functioning of the Secretariat.

The Coordinating Group consists of researchers, practitioners and advocates from a range of sectors and geographical requests. The Coordinating Group meets once a year to review the work of the SVRI and maintains regular contact between meetings to ensure smooth functioning of the SVRI. The 2007 Coordinating Group meeting was held on 26-29 July 2007. During 2007 we had two members cycle off the Coordinating Group and the process for soliciting new nominations to fill vacant spaces on the Coordinating Group was undertaken. Four new members were selected through a competitive process. For information on the Secretariat and the Coordinating Group visit: http://www.svri.org/group.htm

The SVRI has also established an executive committee who meet more regularly to ensure the smooth running of SVRI activities. Monthly written reports are circulated to the Coordinating Group. This further serves to ensure proper monitoring of progress and meaningful participation of the Coordinating Group in SVRI activities.

The SVRI has adopted Rules and Regulations which guide our work.

Statement of Finances

The total income for the SVRI in 2007 was US$301,277. US$119,796 was for core expenditure, including the management of the website and listserv and US$181,481 covered other activities and products.

Funds were received from the World Bank, channeled through the Global Forum for Health Research, and the World Health Organisation. Contributions by way of staff, photographs, technical advice and support came from the Medical Research Council; Department of Gender and Women's Health, World Health Organisation; School of Psychology, Victoria University; International Center for Research on Women (ICRW); Inter-American Alliance for Gender Violence Prevention and Health, InterCambios; PATH; FRONTIERS Programme for the Population Council; Liverpool VCT, Care & Treatment (LVCT) Kenya; Restore Programme, University of Arizona; Centre for Development Services, Near East Foundation, Egypt; the Women's Center, Georgia and the UNDPI Photo Library.

Thanks goes to the Global Forum for Health Research for funding this publication, for their ongoing commitment to the SVRI and for promoting research in under-resourced and neglected research areas.

Photo: UNDPI Photo Library

Global Forum
for Health Research
HELPING CORRECT THE 10 | 90 GAP

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Photos on cover: UNDPI Photo Library

MRC
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