SVRI Forum 2019
Time is now

Conference Report
Cape Town, South Africa
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SVRI
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Sexual Violence Research Initiative

With over 7500 members the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) is the largest global network for advancing research on violence against women (VAW), violence against children (VAC) and other forms of violence driven by gender inequality. Our work clusters around four pillars: Building evidence; strengthening capacity; promoting partnerships; and, influencing change to ensure policy and programmes are evidence informed, sustainable at scale and rooted in strategic partnerships that will drive action at local levels. All work undertaken and supported by SVRI strives to be feminist-centred, rights-based, innovative, collaborative, equitable and held to the highest ethical standards.

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10 years have passed since the first SVRI Forum was held in 2009 in Johannesburg. We have seen immense growth in attendance at each Forum, with just under 200 delegates at our first Forum in 2009 and 761 attending in 2019. Over the years, SVRI Forum has developed into the go-to place for cutting-edge, innovative research and the place to network, nurture and establish partnerships in the field to prevent and end all forms of sexual violence. In more recent years it has also become an important place for healing, acknowledging that working in the field can cause serious emotional distress.

In addition to celebrating 10 years of holding SVRI Forums, 2019 holds another major milestone for the SVRI. After wide consultation and lengthy discussions, SVRI graduated from a project of the South African Medical Research Council, our home since 2013, to a newly formed non-governmental organisation. We were proud to launch our new logo and SVRIs Strategic Plan, 2020-2014 at SVRI Forum 2019.

SVRI is grateful for our members, who through research, teaching, practice or funding have contributed to building and advancing the field. We feel honoured by the trust you have put on us and your support, which has allowed SVRI Forum to grow and for SVRI to set itself up as an independent NGO. We are proud of our members’ efforts and work to improve the lives of women and children around the globe. We see SVRIs independence and SVRI Forum 2019 as a celebration of our achievements as well as a space to incubate new ideas, create new networks, build on existing ones and to jointly explore current and future research directions.

SVRI Forum programmes are designed to foster discussions and debates around themes and key discussions underway in the field. SVRI Forum is an opportunity to strengthen existing collaborations and to create new ones both within and across disciplines to advance the research agenda and strengthen how we respond and prevent violence. SVRI Forum 2019 offered delegates a variety of networking events, self-care and well-being activities, learning opportunities and of course a programme showcasing what is new in the field.

Convening SVRI Forum is no small task. Many people contributed time, resources and ideas culminating in an event we are all proud of. Thank you to all our sponsors, partners, workshop facilitators, session chairs, presenters, delegates and guest speakers. This event would not be possible without you.

Claudia Garcia-Moreno, SVRI Forum 2019 Scientific Chair
Elizabeth Dartnall, SVRI, Executive Director
“This was my first time at SVRI and it’s been a privilege to be here alongside such committed, knowledgeable, courageous leaders in this field. I’ve been so energised by the fascinating presentations, and by the spirit of openness, innovation, critical inquiry and solidarity.”

“I love, love, love the SVRI Forum! It’s my favourite conference of all time. Thank you!”

“SVRI was a truly inspiring conference for anyone working for gender equality. The amazing growth in evidence of effective complex programming that works is critical at a time when the backlash against women’s rights is seeing challenges to fundamental human rights norms and gender equality the world over.”

“It was so well organised, usually, conferences are so inhuman. I never once felt tired or worn down. People were kind! The plenary sessions were so good. There was so much quality research to fill the mind! I’ve gone home with a list of new colleagues who can work with us. There was not enough time. It was the best conference I have ever attended, and I felt included. I am an SVRI-er from now on.”

“The organisation, atmosphere, knowledge/experience sharing were second to none. All sessions started punctually and were delivered to the highest level possible. It was a unique adventure which I hope to live again soon. I made wonderful friends and was able to place my research into a broader context of global health.”

“The event was great – I had a really good time. I’m excited, I’ve got in touch with so many people to collaborate on projects and write papers, so many things – it’s wonderful. I feel indebted for such an opportunity.”

“I loved the representation of diverse women, the range of research presented, and how the conference centred survivors. The conference was incredibly powerful.”
About the Forum

SVRI Forum 2019 was held from 21-25 October 2019 in Cape Town, South Africa, bringing over 760 participants from different regions across the world to share, learn and connect.

SVRI Forum is an abstract-driven event. 726 abstracts were received and sent out for external peer review – each abstract was reviewed by at least two reviewers. This effort was supported by 121 reviewers from across the world, resulting in 319 abstracts selected for inclusion in the SVRI Forum 2019 programme.

The Forum offered a variety of events including:
- Pre-conference workshops: 10 workshops were offered and attended by 300 participants.
- High quality scientific programme: including 5 high-level guest speakers, 221 oral presentations and 98 dynamic Four Minute Presentations. 83% of presentations were on research in LMICs.
- Participant driven events: 21 events were held by various organisations.
- Well-being and self-care activities: these included counselling services by Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust, a dedicated room for reflection, two lunch-time events on empowerment.
- Exhibitions and interactive walls: The conference had 18 exhibition booths, two art exhibitions by local South African artists and two interactive walls, a Research Wall supported by UNOCHA and a Well-being Wall.
- Networking: Forum 2019 hosted 4 networking events. These included the Welcome Cocktail and Gala Dinner, a “speed networking” event and a “sharing our stories” breakfast with leaders in the field. A networking booth was sponsored by SAMRC Corporate where delegates could sit down and have informal discussions.

Find SVRI Forum Images in these places: Gallery Page, Facebook page photo album, Graphic Harvesting photographs and the Forum 2019 Highlights Video.
Art, kindness and wellbeing @ SVRI Forum

 Speaking Our Truth Exhibition (www.sarahisaacsphotography.com)
Photographer Sarah Isaacs (herself a survivor) captured the images and stories of women who shared their experiences of abuse, sexual assault and harassment. For the first time these images and stories were presented as an exhibition at the SVRI Forum 2019. It was also the first time for her to receive feedback from men. She thinks the issue of GBV is largely theoretical for most men. The question is how to get men to actually step into the shoes of womxn, to feel their fear and vulnerability. Storytelling is one way - hearing and recording survivor stories and voices is crucial for GBV prevention, and the reason is twofold:
• Sharing one’s story is a vital tool for shedding the victim shame that almost always surrounds GBV. This empowers survivors to listen to and support other survivors creating a healing knock on effect. Research suggests that while female survivors internalise their shame, male survivors tend to act it out by perpetuating the abuse. That was the case with Sarah’s perpetrator, who was himself molested as a boy. It’s therefore crucial that more men start to share their stories so that they can start their healing process before hurting anyone else.
• Storytelling is one of the most powerful ways of creating empathy. How will society take the prevention of GBV seriously when they are blind to the harmful effects it is having on so many of us? Without storytelling, research is meaningless since we are not listening to the voices of those who the research is supposed to help. GBV prevention is not a theoretical issue. It speaks to the very core of what it means to be human.

 Clan-destine Art and Photo Exhibition (https://ghi.ngo/)
The Gateway Health Institute in Johannesburg, South Africa works with LGBTI people since 2017 and sees art as a way to create awareness about the LGBTIQ+ issues in Africa. Clan-destine – the lived realities of African LGBTIQ+ is an exhibition of art and photography. In 2019, the exhibition travelled to Durban, the Human Rights Festival in Johannesburg and the World Justice Forum in the Hague before showcasing the work at the SVRI Forum 2019. Counie Low, the Executive Director said, the art work created great responses and thinks the exhibition was a great fit for the SVRI Forum 2019 as “it adds flavour to stuff that is sometimes just academic.” He wishes there would be more organisations that use art as it is such an effective communication tool.

 The BRAVE Room
A first at the SVRI Forum 2019 was the BRAVE room, a contained safe space for delegates to take time out, reflect, relax and breathe or turn to for emotional support after engaging with presentations or to process any research presented at the Forum. Experienced counsellors from the Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust were available to facilitate this process. It was open to anyone attending the conference, as well as translators, support staff, and conference presenters.
SVRI Forum 2019:
What we learned

Two hundred and twenty-one oral presentations, 98 Four Minute Presentations and 21 participant driven side events were delivered over the five days of the Forum. With so much going on it is a mammoth task to distil key new findings shared. This report provides a flavour of what was shared, organised by the nine SVRI Forum themes: Social change, Leave no-one behind, Violence against women and achieving the SDGs, Linkages between VAW and VAC (including CSA), Methods and measures, Scaling up of interventions, Changing social norms and shifting gender inequities, Addressing poverty and gender inequality through economic empowerment and New technologies.

Messages that resonated throughout the event were:
• We know more about the size of the problem and risk factors for VAW than ever before.
• We know that violence is preventable, and we know that we can reduce violence over relatively short periods of time.
• We have interventions which have been found effective in reducing violence.
• We are deepening our understanding on which components of interventions are effective and for whom.
• We are learning more about scaling up and what it costs to do so.
The driven research and advocacy. The Forum brings together policy-makers and connects stakeholders to advance the research agenda and strengthen how we respond to and prevent violence. The SVRI Forum 2019 programme was designed to foster discussions and debates around key themes in disciplines to advance the research agenda and strengthen how we respond to and prevent violence.

Developing an understanding of a shared global advocacy agenda for the prevention of violence against women and girls was a central discussion at the Forum. Forum delegates attended both as activists and researchers and discussed how best to address a lack of systematic advocacy around the evidence. Research from the Equality Institute presented at SVRI Forum found that over the past 5 years only 0.002% of Overseas Development Aid was invested in the prevention of violence against women and girls. VAWG prevention and response work requires more investment. Demonstrating that what we do has impact and developing a shared advocacy agenda is essential for mobilising these resources for more research and scaling up of effective programmes.

Emily Esplen from DFID spoke about how evidence is political and challenged us to question how we ensure the politics of our research is represented when we present our findings and to consider whose knowledge counts. Two pre-conference workshops shared skills on the importance of practice based learning and how to capture these lessons (workshop by the Prevention Collaborative), and feminist research that is co-created, participatory and women-centred (workshop facilitated by COFEM).

Activists spoke eloquently of the importance of both during the Opening Plenary – The time is now: uniting activism and research. Watch the Forum Opening Plenary here. Whilst a presentation from #TheThriveStudy showed us that using social movement framing in social media advertising can increase women’s interest and participation in sexual violence research.

TWEET

How do we mobilise men for effective movement-building? @MichaelGLFlood presented on the Working Together with Men project which used strategies to educate, train and mobilise men as violence prevention advocates. See more here. #SVRIForum #16DaysCampaign #TimIsNow #MeToo #SocialChange #EndVAW
Leave no-one behind

Leaving no-one behind is an SDG 2030 pledge. In a research context this means: gathering data on gendered violence among disadvantaged groups and disaggregating analysis to understand the impact of various vulnerabilities; doing research that supports and informs good policy making to address inequality; and, providing tools and methods to understand and track progress to achieving equality. Diverse voices need to be heard in research and programmes working to address violence against women across populations in situations of vulnerability, including persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, older persons, indigenous peoples, LGBT+, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants were showcased at the event.

Studies as part of the DFID-funded What Works to Prevent VAWG programme looked at the relationship between disability, including visual and hearing impaired and physical mobility, and VAW. One study found that women with disabilities are two to four times more likely to experience any form of IPV than women without disabilities and that disability also increases a woman’s risk of rape.

People who identify as LGBT+ also experience disproportionately high levels of sexual violence. For example, a US study showed that 83% of transgender women report any form of GBV in their lifetime. Whilst an analysis from Brazil showed that one homicide caused by LGBT+ phobia occurs every 23 hours and that the life expectancy of trans women and / or men is 35 compared with cisgender men and women which is around 77 years. In spite of these high levels of violence, studies show that the LGBT+ populations are often assaulted by the people meant to serve them. A study from El Salvador documented the types and impact of violence perpetrated by public security forces against gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, calling for closer partnerships between GBV and HIV services and the need to develop culturally competent and supportive services provided through different platforms and responsive to needs of all survivors.

Sex workers also experience high levels of violence both in their workplaces and at the hands of the justice sector. Gender diverse sex workers are especially at risk. Gender diverse sex workers in a study from Jamaica reported high prevalence of violence across multiple sources (clients, police, intimate partners). A multi-sectoral collaborative project between communities, sex workers and justice sector role players in Eswatini reported a reduction in violence exposures, highlighting the importance of multi-sector partnerships and educating sex workers on their rights.

These studies highlight the linkages between intersectionality and violence. Work in this field is growing. Moving forward, future studies must be done in partnership with people living at the intersections and ensure they have a visible leadership role in developing programmes, interventions, and research studies. To create meaningful programmatic guidance, we need better research and information that takes into account diversity of disability, that disability status changes with context and over time, and the various types of disability most commonly associated with VAWG: depression, PTSD, chronic pain and illness, and traumatic brain injuries.

TWEETS

The #SVRIForum theme #LeaveNoOneBehind showcased diverse voices, research & programmes working to address VAW across marginalised populations. In Brazil, an Open Online Course about the National Policy on Health for LGBT was recently launched: https://www.svri.org/forums/forum2019/Presentations/The%20National%20Policy%20on%20Health%20for%20LGBT%20in%20Brazil%20Canavese.pdf
Co-founders, Mendy Marsh and Emma Fulu launched the VOICE at SVRI 2019. VOICE is a new global organisation that amplifies the voices of local women- and girl-led organisations and networks, promoting their leadership and their solutions to address violence against women and girls in humanitarian crisis. The launch included an interactive session with delegates using the polling platform slido to add to the conversation.

How can we ensure the realisation of trans women’s human rights? We need to: Advocate for anti-discrimination & gender-identity laws/policies; and train healthcare providers & police to deliver non-discriminatory, gender-affirming services.

Are we doing enough for *D/deaf women and girls? @JazMann7 from @DeafKidzIntl reflects on his #SVRIForum experience https://www.svri.org/blog/are-we-doing-enough-d-deaf-women-and-girls #SVRIForum #16DaysCampaign #TimeIsNow #LeaveNoOneBehind #EndVAW
RESPECT ROADSHOW

The World Health Organisations (WHO) and UN Women used SVRI Forum as an opportunity to share their new framework for guiding policymakers on programmes and policies that work to prevent violence against women. Seven strategies are summarised by the acronym R.E.S.P.E.C.T., with each letter representing one element of the strategy, as follows:

R – Relationship skills strengthened.
E – Empowerment of women.
S – Services ensured – including health, police, legal, and social services.
P – Poverty reduced.
E – Environments, including schools, public spaces and work, made safe.
C – Child and adolescent abuse prevented, while nurturing family relationships.
T – Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms about gender and gender equality.

The framework summarises emerging evidence on the effectiveness of prevention interventions across these seven strategies, and emphasises the importance of addressing gender and power relations, keeping communities at the centre of programming, and using participatory approaches. It also provides blueprints to decision-makers for building political commitments, investing in the work of women’s organisations, strengthening laws and policies to address violence and promote gender equality, and allocating resources to programmes that further address these issues.

Changing social norms and shifting gender inequalities

Violence against women is deeply rooted in harmful gender norms and attitudes. Therefore, research and programmes must continue to focus on addressing these root causes, which stem from gender inequality and other forms of oppression and marginalisation.

Without changes in norms, laws and other interventions to reduce and prevent VAW can prove ineffective. Transforming gender norms and power relations is one of the most effective ways of tackling violence against women. The DFID-funded What Works programme conducted a study in the Central Region of Ghana and found that building respect for women, acknowledging domestic partnership and promoting shared decision-making are essential elements of programmes that seek to disrupt authoritarian patriarchies and prevent male perpetrated IPV.

The REAL Fathers initiative in Uganda shared findings from a parenting intervention on sustaining violence prevention one-year post intervention. It found that the 7-months fatherhood mentoring programme can reduce IPV and violence against children both in the short and long term.

Engaging men in transforming social norms remains an important part of the work towards achieving gender equality. Joni van de Sand shared evidence, lessons learned and critical perspectives on engaging men and boys within a feminist framework and explained how the Men Engage Alliance is moving from engaging men in development (MID) to Men/Masculinities in feminist activism/agenda (MIFA).

Transformative work is based on community mobilisation, engaging and encouraging the community to effect change. A study of a pilot project in Nigeria (with a 27% prevalence rate of FGM/C), funded by AmplifyChange (UK), found that young people’s innovative application of a non-judgmental, open dialogue engagement with key influencers and gatekeepers at community level works in changing harmful social norms such as female genital mutilation/cutting.

The session on faith-based interventions concluded that these interventions are important to shift harmful social and gender norms related to intimate partner violence and family planning because faith is an important part of most people’s identity. At the same time, a lot of work still needs to be done to understand and unpack the nuances and complexities to avoid reinforcing harmful norms and practices.

A study in Uganda conducted by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine looks at the differences in men’s and women’s perceptions of household decision-making and its association with intimate partner violence. This study found that men’s but not women’s perceptions of household decision-making related to money and making large purchases were associated with IPV in the relationship.
There is a need to invest in gender norm transformation and understanding the mechanisms of change.

Key findings from the DFID funded What Works programme for the first time began to unpack the design features of successful interventions. Noting that not every intervention, used in every setting works! Careful adaptation and testing are needed for new interventions and promising models not yet proven effective.
Achieving the SDGs

For the first time global development goals include the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and of harmful practices as central to the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls (SDG5), as well as an end to all forms of violence, exploitation, and trafficking of children (SDG16). There is also increasing recognition that many of the other SDGs cannot be achieved without addressing violence against women. Violence against women costs countries billions and keeps women and children in poverty (SDG1). It causes death, disability and affects the health and well-being of women and children (SDG3). Violence can limit girls’ access to education (SDG4), and women and girls in many settings risk being raped and sexually assaulted when trying to access clean water and sanitation (SDG6). Violence limits women’s ability to actively participate in public life and spaces (SDG11) and continues to be perpetrated with impunity in almost all countries (SDG16). SVRI Forum 2019 provided a space to share feminist research methods, analysis and approaches for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Several studies and initiatives on measuring SDGs and progress toward achieving them were presented. The kNowVAWdata Initiative highlighted challenges with monitoring SDG Goal 5 indicators on violence against women and shared experiences from the Asia-Pacific region. It pointed out that overall prevalence rates hide huge variations. Effective monitoring needs to look at severity and frequency of violence and levels of ‘gendered’ violence. Context is key and measurement of violence against women must be rigorous, ethical, safe and effective in contributing to social change. Not all countries have reliable, comprehensive national prevalence data on VAW.

A systematic review and reanalysis of national prevalence estimates of intimate partner violence in the Americas found that 24 countries had an eligible national survey, four countries had national surveys in development and seven countries had no surveys. It suggests greater geographic coverage, better quality and continued data collection to monitor the prevalence of IPV and to increase availability of prevalence estimates across countries. Another review noted the lack of reliable data from the Arab region and found that 70% of women attending healthcare settings in the region reported experiencing some form of IPV in their lifetime.

Experiences of conducting national prevalence surveys in Viet Nam, Mongolia, and Bhutan were shared. In Viet Nam, one of the lessons learned on the journey from data to action to impact is the importance of engaging potential data users throughout the entire process. Equally important is high political will and data demand, proactive involvement of the Women’s Union and local leaders, technical support of development partners and engaging media. In Mongolia, 10 one-stop centres have been established to support victims of VAW. The survey findings from Bhutan found that violence against women is common, but that it is a hidden problem and that the majority of women are reluctant to seek help, and often only do so when the situation is very serious.

The cross-cutting issue of VAW and gender inequality within the 2030 Agenda is being addressed through integrating VAW prevention into sectoral SDG programmes such as climate change mitigation, livelihoods strengthening, economic empowerment, education sector, or social cohesion work in Bhutan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Uganda. In Indonesia, Peru, and Moldova, teams are exploring innovative financing and localising VAW prevention plans within local development agendas and action plans in order to address multiple development goals within local contexts.

TWEET

SVRIForum theme- #VAW & achieving #SDGs ensured that Forum 2019 provided a space to share feminist research methods, analysis & approaches for achieving the 2030 Agenda. What are some of the challenges with monitoring #SDG Goal 5 indicators on #VAW? Read more about the South Asia experience at: https://www.svri.org/forums/forum2019/Presentations/Challenges%20with%20monitoring%20SDG%20Goal%205%20indicators%20Jansen.pdf
Linkages between VAC and VAW, including child sexual abuse

Research and knowledge sharing are essential for understanding the drivers of VAC, the links between VAC and later violence perpetration and victimisation, the contexts within which VAC flourishes, and to identify ways in which we can bring about sustained social change to end all forms of violence against children.

The shared risk factors, intergenerational effects, common consequences and levels of co-occurrence between violence against children and violence against women has led to calls for closer collaboration between these two fields. Evidence of the intersections, strategies and frameworks for strengthening collaboration and programming was presented at SVRI Forum.

For example, colleagues from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) presented data from the Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) and spoke about the importance of data to drive action to prevent violence against children and youth. The CDC and partners have completed, planned and repeated VACS in 22 countries interviewing over 80,000 youth. The data are being used to inform strategies such as INSPIRE and catalyse action on multiple levels.

A presentation from South Africa shared the innovative Dialogue Forum For Evidence Based Programmes to Prevent VAC and VAW highlighting the importance of relationships between stakeholders and these relationships are vital to addressing the adaptation and implementation gap.

Insights from case studies in Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, and Viet Nam found that while there are many challenges, there are also key opportunities for integrating VAC and VAW policies, services, and programmes. A general lack of quality services and programming for both VAC and VAW and particularly few adolescent-friendly policies, services, or programmes were key challenges. On the other hand, secondary analysis of existing datasets to understand VAC-VAW intersections, programming around parenting and school-based interventions, working on specific common goals, and building better understanding between the fields in order to drive greater cooperation and collaboration were identified as key opportunities.

There were also several presentations focusing on intervention development and adaptation to address early childhood violence. Key learnings from the DFID-funded What Works project found that effective interventions with children have the following key characteristics:
- Focus on empowering children
- Must be developmentally appropriate
- Interventions need to be delivered over a long period of time in order to provide children with adequate time to process and learn new ideas
- Programmes should be designed to address multiple drivers of violence
- Methods must be participatory (play-based where possible)
- Programme content must include building gender equity, developing healthy relationship and communication skills, and fostering positive interpersonal relations.
Engaging primary school children through participatory community mapping to examine safe and unsafe routes between home and school in a rural South African community found that children are exposed to sexual violence, sexual harassment and assault; and, they view sexual aggression as being normal and part of their community. The participatory approach generated discussions with the children about risks and steps they could take to manage or reduce that risk. The conversation helped to improve understanding of personal safety and rights. This was further developed into planning routes to school which might be safer and using practices such as a ‘walking bus’ to improve the safety of children on the journey.

Right to Play implemented in public schools in Pakistan since 2008 has engaged more than 400,000 children to reduce peer violence and depression and found that the intervention effectively reduced violence among children and improved mental health.

Results from a South African study on Early Book-Sharing showed that children who were involved in this intervention showed less aggressive tendencies and a more positive outlook compared to children in the control group.

Kivulini Women’s Rights Organisations adapted SASA! to mobilise political support in the community for the National Plan of Action in Tanzania. It reported that traditional leaders denounced FGM as unacceptable and more than 2370 vulnerable girls were spared from FGM. Women and men report that the value of girls and their education has increased in the community as result of SASA!

A review of Stepping Stones revealed the challenges of adapting materials to Stepping Stones with Children and found that programmes targeted at girls and young women should involve all sectors of the community in social norms change. It further recommended to resist the drive for short-term results of quantity over quality and that a child-centred, human-rights approach should also be holistic.

Raising Voices shared learning points from adapting the Good School Toolkit from primary to secondary schools and recommended:
• to be ready for it to take time,
• to begin with learning and listening,
• to reflect deeply on the core principles,
• to adapt approaches developed for resource poor settings, and
• to be open and flexible as new contexts may allow to go even further with the original principles.

These presentations indicate great potential for measuring VAC-related outcomes within VAW prevention programmes as well as adapting existing models for use with younger beneficiaries. However, they also indicate the need for more comprehensive data to understand the nature and drivers of VAC and innovative solutions to address the multiple intersections between VAC and VAW through integrated services and programmes.

TWEET

Patriarchal family structures, gender & power dynamics contribute to child homicide. We must better understand intersecting experiences of violence in the household. See the South Africa presentation: https://www.svri.org/forums/forum2019/Presentations/Intersection%20Between%20Violence%20Against%20Women%20and%20Children%20Dekel.pdf #SVRIForum #16DaysCampaign #TimeIsNow #VAW #VAC #Linkages @MRCza
Research methods and measures

Strengthening the field through discussing, debating and sharing research tools, methods and measures is a core agenda of the SVRI Forum. SVRI Forum 2019 provided an opportunity to discuss and debate new and innovative ways to measure VAW, hierarchies of knowledge, practice-based learning, sticky ethical issues, and monitoring and evaluation of interventions.

There are a growing number of intervention evaluation studies so it is important to reflect on the outcome measures used to assess different facets of IPV outcomes. Many studies have used measures adapted from the WHO Conflict Tactics Scale, but there are multiple ways to code the items from this tool such as to identify any experience of violence at all in a binary variable or the severity or frequency of violence in a continuous variable that could also weight each act of violence differently. Further, some studies may choose to analyse reductions in IPV (among women who have experienced this violence) while others may analyse the number of new incidents of IPV among women who have not experienced such violence before. Comparing analysis approaches allows us to understand different aspects of intervention effects; namely, is the intervention effect the same across all types or acts of violence and is the intervention preventing or reducing violence (or the severity of violence). It is recommended that in future trials researchers report on new cases of IPV as well as reduction and cessation of IPV.

Another area of discussion was on how different aspects of relationships and individual beliefs are conceptualised and measured. For example, the links between economic insecurity and IPV are complex and operate at the individual, relational and societal level and there appear to be multiple interactions and feedback mechanisms between levels. This complexity provides a challenge to measurement and analysis in order to understand how economic empowerment and IPV prevention interventions work in combination. A study in Uganda described developing and piloting a Male Provision Belief Scale (MPBS) to assess how young women’s internalised beliefs about men’s roles as providers may relate to risk or harm for them (specifically transactional sex and HIV risk). They found significant associations between the MPBS scores and sexual risk behaviour and justification of VAW among young women.

Another key theme in research methods is ethics and safety and there are many guideline documents for various types of VAWC research available. The Global Women’s Institute shared reflections from the field on how to minimise harm to the respondent and the researcher. Selecting and training interviewers well is an important measure to ensure women’s safety. The presentation highlighted the need for special considerations for researching violence against women in conflict and humanitarian settings.
Two studies found that recommendations of existing guidelines and research protocols on ethical conduct often differ from reality. Research by the Equality Institute and other partners in the Asia Pacific region looked at challenges of conducting ethical and rigorous research on violence against women in small, isolated, high-prevalence communities. They recommend the development of guidelines for these specific settings to supplement the WHO guidelines and to build a Community of Practice (COP) of researchers who work in these settings. The Southern African perspectives on the ethics of sexual violence research recommends to prioritise person-to-person relationships and consider local ethical frameworks.

The Gender violence in the Amazon of Peru (GAP) Project applied Participatory Action Research, co-creating ethical frameworks for community-led approaches to GBV prevention: critical bioethics in practice. The learning from this project offers important insights into conducting research with people in extreme settings where there is a lack of services or infrastructure to ensure local support mechanisms are developed and the importance of investing in participatory ethics guidance.

There was a group of presentations that highlighted the importance of addressing vicarious trauma among staff working on VAW and VAC issues as a key component of ethical practice. An application of Vicarious Trauma Guidelines found that 50% of service workers had significant levels of vicarious trauma and burnout. Preventing vicarious trauma cannot be left to self-care alone, but it is essential to build institutional and project-level care into systems. A qualitative study with frontline research staff in Eswatini found that there is a strong component of emotional labour required of researchers, but that this skillset can also make them vulnerable to vicarious trauma. Further, the nature of the work requiring long hours, confidentiality, and the short-term contracts with few opportunities for career growth and stigma associated with the topic of the work all added to vicarious trauma risks. In professional counselling roles, there is a requirement for supervision and debriefing but there is no equivalent requirement for researchers. There need to be specific efforts to proactively prevent and address vicarious trauma and burnout that are embedded within the research project and management in order to support all staff.

TWEET

#MethodsAndMeasures is a core agenda of #SVRIForum & SVRI as we aim to strengthen the VAC & VAW field. How can deepen our understanding of the impact that our interventions are having? @Question_power presented on IPV outcome measures: https://www.svri.org/forums/forum2019/Presentations/Exploring%20IPV%20outcome%20measures%20Heise.pdf

#16DaysCampaign #TimeIsNow #Research #Methods #Measures #EndVAW
Scaling up of interventions

With the rush to implement evidence-based solutions, there is a risk of privileging the few interventions that have been evaluated in spite of our limited knowledge about what makes an intervention effective and whether their effectiveness can be maintained in different settings or at a different scale, and our limited understanding of the long-term impacts of interventions. Further, evidence is mounting that even those interventions found to be effective don’t have positive impacts on all participants. This issue needs additional research and consideration of implications for scale up. Panels, workshops, and presentations at SVRI Forum took a deeper dive into mechanisms of change, platforms for scale-up, practice-based learning and strategies for integrating prevention and response interventions within existing services and programmes implemented by multiple sectors.

Lessons learned across multiple trials on what approaches, methods, and key components are essential for effective programming provide important guidance for scale up. Also important to consider are often unpublished learnings around what does not work or what does harm; the field needs to consider how to share these learnings widely. An analysis of two trials in South Africa found that “light touch” interventions do not work and may even do harm in that violent men could increase their violent behaviour.

Costing evaluations are important components to inform scale up. Lessons learned from costing two interventions addressing sexual and gender-based violence included that costing is not an easy and simple endeavour; it takes time and resources but it can yield important insights for scaling interventions. It suggested to share costing data with partners for sustainability and scale and to analyse costs to refine scale up packages.

The Community for Understanding Scale Up (CUSP) is a group of organisations committed to collectively learn, synthesise, and share information and experiences to inform ethical, effective, and sustainable intervention scale up. They shared six insights for adapting and scaling various approaches:

- Insight 1: Prioritise accountability to communities
- Insight 2: Fully understand the principles of, and align with, the values of the methodology
- Insight 3: Maintain fidelity to the structure of the original methodology
- Insight 4: Ensure adequate time and funding
- Insight 5: Involve originators
- Insight 6: Re-examine the role of government and INGOs/IDCs in effective and ethical scaling

In addition, the presentation shared a useful checklist of considerations for the planning, values, training, and fidelity aspects of adaptation and scale up.

A presentation on combining human-centred design and costing with an evidence-based approach to design violence prevention interventions for scale emphasised the need for integrated, continuous learning processes throughout all development and research phases in intervention work as well as flexible models and costing work that allow for estimations of costs related to different types of scale.

TWEETS

Costing of programmes is not as easy as it sounds...There is no universal tool & interventions are complex. Costing takes time & resources to do it well but it can yield important insights for scaling normative interventions. Read more on the Passages presentation: [https://www.svri.org/forums/forum2019/Presentations/Costing%20social%20norms%20interventions%20Quirke.pdf](https://www.svri.org/forums/forum2019/Presentations/Costing%20social%20norms%20interventions%20Quirke.pdf) #SVRIForum #16DaysCampaign #TimeIsNow #Costing #EndVAW @Passages_Project @USAID

#SVRIForum theme #ScalingUp took a deeper dive into mechanisms of change, platforms for scale-up, practice-based learning & strategies for integrating prevention & response interventions. See the Practice-Based Knowledge workshop hosted by @Prevent_Collab at: [https://www.svri.org/forums/forum2019/Presentations/Elevating%20Practice%20based%20Knowledge%20within%20Prevention%20Programming.pdf](https://www.svri.org/forums/forum2019/Presentations/Elevating%20Practice%20based%20Knowledge%20within%20Prevention%20Programming.pdf) #16DaysCampaign #TimeIsNow #EndVAW
Addressing poverty and gender inequality through economic empowerment

Agenda 2030 cannot be achieved without addressing both poverty and violence against women (VAW). Poverty is a key driver of VAW and VAW increases poverty. Women who are poorer, experience higher food insecurity and have less access to education and work and are more likely to experience violence in their intimate relationships. Women’s economic empowerment is therefore essential to reducing VAW, advancing women’s rights and building economically stable communities.

Different approaches to economic empowerment were showcased at SVRI Forum, such as cash transfer programmes, micro-financing and variations of these, including building resilience and life-skills and ensuring programmes include some form of behaviour change communication and gender transformative intervention.

Looking at cash transfers – in line with the literature - Forum presentations affirmed the power of cash transfers in reducing IPV. In Mali, a government led cash transfer programme with men led to a reduction in physical IPV, emotional IPV, and controlling behaviour in polygamous households (access full paper here). A study from Bangladesh found that cash transfers when coupled with a behaviour change communication programme reduced physical IPV with sustained impacts four years post the intervention (full paper online here). The use of cash transfers in humanitarian settings to address poverty and IPV was also found promising. For example in Raqqa, Syria the use of cash transfers in emergency settings reduced GBV; whilst in Liberia, a cash transfer programme that included a gender transformative component (Girl Empower) increased the effects of child marriage prevention and safer sexual experience by almost 50% and the impacts persisted one year after the intervention ended. Ensuring that economic transfers are done safely was discussed in a presentation on the development of a toolkit to address the protection risks and barriers to cash in Cameroon and Afghanistan.
A study from the Southern African Development (SADC) region reported on economic transformation and a decrease in experiences of violence among women over a period of 12 months. A microfinance programme in South Africa found an increase in different types of IPV among some groups of women including an increase in physical and sexual IPV among women with limited incomes, and increase of emotional and economic IPV among women taking on new loans. A Tanzanian study found a decrease in IPV among women with higher incomes but an increase of IPV among women whose income is higher than that of her partners.

The DFID-funded What Works programme shared evaluations of strengthening livelihoods and other forms of economic empowerment. They found that unresolved trauma or food insecurity may act as barriers to engaging in gender transformative programmes, limiting the effect of livelihood programmes on IPV like the Stepping Stones / Creating Futures and Women for Women International interventions. These studies highlighted the importance of context and concluded that it may be more effective to intervene with families rather than couples in highly patriarchal societies.

As IFPRI colleagues note, “Despite some initial insights, the effects of economic programming on GBV remain poorly understood overall. This is partially due to an overreliance on correlational evidence, as well as to the disciplinary divide between development economists (who typically evaluate economic programming) and public health experts (who typically study GBV). Meanwhile, however, economic interventions are highly promising if effective, as many are already implemented at scale in LMICs. Thus, there is a compelling need for more evidence.” (Source: http://www.ifpri.org/blog/how-economic-security-linked-gender-based-violence-new-insights-sexual-violence-research)

Key findings emerging from SVRI Forum on the role of economic empowerment in addressing IPV and other forms of violence against women:

- Economic empowerment coupled with gender transformative programming can reduce IPV. But the mechanisms of change that work to reduce IPV are not well understood
- Questions remain on how best to adapt economic empowerment interventions for young women in fragile and vulnerable communities, including women living in urban informal settlements; and around a minimum economic gain needed to help women transform their relationships
- Applying a gender lens and GBV measures to research and work done on large economic empowerment and government led programmes is needed.
New technologies

Mobile phones and apps are increasingly being considered as the new mechanism for delivering GBV interventions to both general and at-risk populations. SVRI Forum 2019 shared insights in this new frontier and other tech-based developments.

Claudia Garcia-Moreno presented a systematic review of 171 apps addressing violence against women, highlighting advantages and disadvantages. More research is necessary to better understand this new form of combating GBV through intervention studies, continued monitoring of the app-market and qualitative interview studies.

For mobile technology to be effective it needs to integrate online and offline interactions and human engagements to truly amplify these solutions. For these interventions to be successful, they must be heavily tailored to the target respondents. A randomized controlled trial evaluation of myPlanKenya, a community-partnered technology for partner violence prevention and response found that downloading the app with a community health volunteer is more effective than women downloading and learning on their own. It showed that after three months, women reported higher levels of safety preparedness, decreased levels of decisional conflict; increased levels of resilience; and decreased levels of physical and sexual violence. A study in Honduras is testing the effect of ZonaSegura, a youth-centred mobile solution to address teen dating violence.

Technology can support more gender-equitable behaviour. The evaluation of the Modern Men Challenge, an SMS intervention to prevent violence against women in Liberia, found the text messaging system to be an important tool to connect with men in a post-conflict, low-income setting.

There are still significant gaps in data on the prevalence and impact of online violence and abuse against women and limited research has been carried out on the experiences of women in Africa and Asia. A study on ending online violence and abuse against women’s rights activists found that online violence and abuse against women is common and gendered and highlights the silencing effect of online violence and abuse against women’s rights activists in Zimbabwe, Nepal and Kenya. 71% of survey respondents reported that the threat of online violence and abuse affects their social media participation. They shared implications for women’s rights and movement-building.

The results of an online survey by the New Zealand Office of Film and Literature Classification conducted with 2071 young people aged 14 – 17 years show that pornography and online behaviour is a violence prevention issue that cannot be ignored. The data provides a compelling rationale for violence prevention initiatives to address the influence of pornography.
COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND WOMEN’S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS TO ADVANCE TECH-BASED DEVELOPMENTS

The presentation of the feasibility study of an online-based decision and safety planning application for Brazilian women living with domestic violence serves as a great example of a successful collaboration between a women’s right organisation and an academic research centre. The Federal University of Parana (UFPR) and the House of the Brazilian Woman of Curitiba’ (CMBC) embarked on a participatory-action research. The CMBC, a safe house for women, providing various services such as shelter, psycho-social, health and court support, shelter under one roof, was the place of the study. The study actively involved staff and women residing in the shelter to discuss and develop a version of the app tailored to the Brazilian context. The presentation at the SVRI Forum 2019 was delivered jointly by the researcher and two women from the shelter, highlighting the importance of elevating women involved in research from subject to active participant. They concluded their presentation with a call to continue inviting more presenters from poorer countries.
What’s next?

The vast learnings and incredible energy shared at the 2019 Forum need to be harnessed to inform what we do next. Here we share some of the key themes from Forum presentations and discussions to take us forward.

• We need to shore up political support for the research and remain true to our feminist roots
  o We must be accountable to work already being done on the ground, by women’s movements, and our research must be firmly based on feminist principles – that it is co-created and women-centred
  o How do we communicate our findings that inspires action?

• We need more and longer term, flexible and core funding
  o More funding is needed for the adaptation of interventions for marginalised groups and under-researched populations including people with disabilities, LGBTI, and geographical regions
  o Research and programme funding mechanisms should allow for flexibility and adaptivity and provide for capacity strengthening, continuity and scale, and allow for time to show and sustain impact.

• We need to identify and address hierarchies
  o When talking about regional under-representation in research we must also be mindful of the English language and northern based publication bias that exists in the academic literature and systematic reviews – which we must work hard to redress
  o We need to ensure that we embody the principles and values of the work we are doing and be mindful of power dynamics within all stakeholders linked to projects and programmes to ensure that our ways of working are not inadvertently replicating patriarchal norms through control, domination, and exploitative hierarchies

• We need to drive research forward on key priorities
  o We need to conduct more research on the pathways of action to understand how violence is reduced through specific interventions and policies
  o We need to analyse who interventions work for and who they don’t work for, and why
  o We need to understand the long-term impacts and sustainability of outcomes of interventions
  o Funding is needed for research and learning around scaling up of interventions, what this looks like in practice and who is best placed to do this. Is it, for example, government? Large infrastructural programmes? Local NGOs?
  o We need to share what doesn’t work just as much as what does work
  o We need to understand how we maintain effectiveness and intensity of our interventions at scale
  o We need to balance our reliance on the existing but limited evidence base of effective interventions and scaling these up, with continuing to innovate and test new theory-driven solutions because even the most effective interventions to date don’t completely eliminate VAWC. What solutions will move us closer to the zero target?
  o We need to better understand sexual harassment in various contexts and how to effectively address it
  o Use existing frameworks to guide our research and actions e.g. RESPECT and INSPIRE

• We need to reach out to more sectors and explore new partnerships and integrative programming
  o Other sectors often see VAWC as a risk, but addressing VAWC can be reframed as an opportunity to have beneficial and accelerative effects to other outcomes
  o Find the links between existing VAW and VAC frameworks such as RESPECT and INSPIRE
  o We need to strengthen and better understand the role of the legal and justice sector in driving down levels of violence so that their role and contributions can be strengthened and broadened beyond response

• We need to put Kindness at the heart of all we do
  o We were constantly reminded that we do this work because we care, and because we care we may work harder, take time away from our families and forget self-care. We need to remind ourselves of the importance of ensuring that we take care of ourselves, our colleagues and be kind and as generous to each other as we are with our project partners and beneficiaries.
More voices talking about SVRI Forum

Blogs

Are we doing enough for *D/deaf women and girls? Jaz Mann (DeafKidz International)
SVRI Forum – ‘Networking working’, Willie Manson (Stop It Now! Scotland, Lucy Faithfull Foundation)
SVRI Forum 2019: Perspectives from a young researcher, Manuela Balliet (LSHTM)
Sexual Violence Research Initiative: Top 5 trends to help make violence against women and girls preventable, Katherine Nightingale (Care International)
Four ways to act NOW, Jessica Zimerman and Diego Antoni (UNDP)
The Time Is Now! Preventing Violence Against Women and Children Requires Quality Evidence, Alessandra Guedes, Lusajo Kajula and Amber Peterman (UNICEF)
How is economic security linked to gender-based violence? New insights from the Sexual Violence Research Initiative Forum 2019, Amber Peterman, Shalini Roy and Meghna Ranganathan (Cash Transfer and Intimate Partner Violence Research Collaborative)

Forum in the news and online

More efforts are being made to stop the violence against women that plagues South Africa. One forum for sexual violence meeting in Cape Town this week had social activists, policymakers and government leaders talking. Courtesy #DStv403 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Vnv_6RBqio&feature=youtu.be


Forum highlights video

#SVRIForum 2019 highlights at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWLSH5zJAYs