



Research is not separate from the struggle to end violence: Harnessing evidence as a tool for justice and change

As we enter the [16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence](#) in 2025, we are reminded not only of the urgency of ending violence against women and violence against children but also of the growing backlash against science, evidence, and the very idea of truth. Around the world, facts are challenged, research is politicised, and hard-won knowledge is dismissed or distorted. The backlash against science has been accompanied by the withdrawal of funding from research studies around the world.

In this environment, standing firm in our commitment to **rigorous, ethical, evidence building that is grounded in local contexts is an act of resistance**. At SVRI, we believe that collective progress depends on defending the foundations that make change possible. Research is this foundation: it is both our anchor and the North Star that guides us.

Why does research matter in our fight to end violence?

Every policy we draft, every programme we deliver, and every demand we make to governments and institutions rests on the foundation of evidence. **Research is not a parallel track to activism—it is activism.**

Research exposes harmful norms, documents lived experiences and impacts, reveals which interventions work and which ones don't, and gives legitimacy to the advocacy we carry into political spaces. Without evidence, our calls for change risk being dismissed as anecdotal or incomplete. With it, we speak with the authority of data, rigour, and the voices of survivors and communities behind us.

When we stop investing in evidence, we stop learning—and when we stop learning, we risk using ever scarcer resources on services, policies and programmes that may be of no benefit to communities, or even worse, can cause harm.

“When we stop counting, we stop seeing – a reminder that evidence is not just data; it’s visibility and accountability.” (Elizabeth Dartnall, Executive Director, SVRI)

Don't we already have enough evidence?

In the last few decades, researchers from around the world have tirelessly worked to expand and strengthen the evidence base on violence against women and violence against children. We now know a lot about the size of the issue and have a deep understanding of the underlying drivers of violence.

We also have evidence showing that certain forms of violence, such as intimate partner violence, can be reduced through specific interventions. For instance, we now have compelling evidence that working with couples in relationship and parenting programmes can drive lasting change and break cycles of violence in households. Similarly, we know that interventions using cash transfers are helpful in reducing IPV.

However, there is much that we do not fully understand, including *why* these interventions work, their effectiveness in *different contexts* and *how* to scale them effectively. There are also critical evidence gaps that need to be addressed and these have been highlighted by several topic and region specific [priority setting exercises](#) that SVRI has co-facilitated in collaboration with many partners and through participatory and inclusive consultation with the field.

Furthermore, the world is not static and nor is violence: as political and technological forces shift, the manifestations of violence do as well. Old interventions may fail in new contexts. New forms of harm, such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), have emerged, demanding that the evidence base evolves alongside these realities.

For all these reasons, the SVRI believes that a thriving research ecosystem is not a luxury; it is fundamental to designing responses that are relevant, culturally grounded, equitable, and effective.

What do we mean when we talk about rigorous evidence?

Rigour is not about complexity for its own sake. It is about responsibility. It means being careful, survivor-centred, equitable, and transparent, and ensuring that studies are methodologically sound and conducted in accordance with global ethics and safety protocols. It means testing, adapting, and refining before scaling interventions. It means building on the existing evidence base, setting agendas based on participatory research priority setting processes, and centring the knowledge of communities who are too often marginalised in research agendas.

Rigorous evidence gives advocates the grounding to push for meaningful policy change, sheds light on what interventions work, for who and why, and helps practitioners understand where programmes may need to be strengthened. It gives funders the confidence that their investments towards building stronger, more credible science contribute to real change in people's lives.

On 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, SVRI wants to recognise and reiterate that the ***act of building evidence is an act of resistance***: a purposeful, collective effort to shape a world where safety, dignity, and justice are the norm. It is about investing in strong evidence ecosystems, powered by dedicated researchers, practitioners, funders, policymakers and activists, working together to advance the field, transform systems and improve lives.

Therefore, we call on:

Researchers, practitioners and activists:

- ❖ **To recognise that research and activism do not exist in silos** – they strengthen one another. When we all see research as an essential piece of our collective struggle, change is bound to happen.
- ❖ **To ensure research is led by the priorities of survivors**, communities and practitioners, so programmes are more impactful, sustainable and, where appropriate, scalable.



- ❖ **To document and share our learnings**, to make knowledge accessible, strengthen our collective practice, and support change far beyond individual projects.

Policymakers and funders:

- ❖ **To resource research ethically and invest in research priorities** identified through inclusive national and global processes,
- ❖ **To build policies grounded in existing evidence** and adapt policies as new insights emerge.

Because strong evidence does not slow us down. *It accelerates progress towards a world where women and children, in all our diversity, live free from violence.*