



Wilton Park



Report

**What will it take to end gender-based violence?
Rethinking pathways to preventing violence at
scale.**

Monday 6 – Wednesday 8 November 2023 | WP3221

In association with:





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In association with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO),
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, Ford Foundation and the Government of South
Africa

Context

The field of preventing gender-based violence (GBV) is at a critical point. Over the past decade there has been a significant expansion in rigorous, policy-relevant evidence which shows that violence is preventable, and a growth in new initiatives and stakeholders mobilised around GBV prevention and use of evidence. There is also growing alignment around a common research and advocacy agenda, and a greater understanding of the role of women's rights organisations (WROs) and feminist movements in prevention of violence.

Yet despite decades of mobilisation and robust evidence that GBV is preventable, the issue of violence is still not on the agenda at the highest political levels. Globally, we face concerted efforts to roll back progress on women's rights, with WROs and activists operating under a chronic level of political threat. Meanwhile the funding gap continues to hamper efforts to address violence on a scale that is commensurate with the magnitude of the problem.

At this point in the GBV prevention field's development there are also challenges in taking the next step from small to large scale impact, including a current lack of research on how to do this effectively with weak infrastructure and capacity. Driving down rates of GBV on a national scale will require further innovation and learning; new partnerships, including with unusual suspects; investment in building the infrastructure for scale up and supporting a well-resourced and resilient women's movement; and fostering a network of political champions to raise this issue at the highest levels.

Purpose of the meeting

1. In 2019, the former UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund co-hosted a Wilton Park meeting to build a shared agenda on prevention of violence against women and girls. This was acknowledged as an important moment in the evolution of the GBV prevention field. The report for the previous meeting is available [here](#).
2. Four years later, this conference, co-hosted by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the Government of South Africa, Ford Foundation and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, took stock of progress and remaining challenges and discussed concrete opportunities and strategies to drive a step change in ending GBV. It sought to build consensus around what is needed to move the GBV prevention field forwards and concrete actions that we can take together to accelerate progress in the 12 months ahead, as well as laying the foundations for a longer-term collaborative agenda.

Conference objectives

- To identify effective strategies for scaling-up violence prevention;
- To build consensus around priorities for mobilising future investment and increasing the impact of existing resources to strengthen GBV prevention;
- To build consensus around priorities for political and policy action and how to progress these priorities.

Pathways to scale

Types of scale

- **Vertical** – Embedding approaches within institutional frameworks.
- **Horizontal** – Expanding an intervention to new contexts often through adaptation.
- **Functional** – Adding to existing programmes and/or services.
- **Organisational** – Forging new partnerships and improving capacity of organisations.

3. In setting ambition to scale up efforts to prevent GBV, we need a shared understanding of what is meant by ‘scale’ and which pathways are effective, how to apply feminist-informed and evidence-based approaches in practice, and what is needed to build the infrastructure for scale-up. We reflected together on different approaches or platforms for scale-up, including expanding small-scale evidence-based interventions, the role of women’s rights organisations and movements, integration of GBV prevention into sector platforms, the use of mass media and digital as a platform for scale, implementation of national and local action plans, and supporting a wider enabling environment for prevention. These are discussed below.
4. At the same time, whilst we now have a solid evidence base on the prevention of GBV, we need to continue to resource the generation of new knowledge to build nuance in the field. Alongside research studies, there was recognition of the importance of storytelling and practice-based knowledge base on violence prevention from diverse voices and overcoming language barriers that restrict inclusion.

Expanding small-scale evidence-based interventions

5. To date, the majority of evidence available on effective approaches has been sourced from rigorous evaluations of small-scale interventions. Whilst these have been crucial additions to the evidence base, key gaps remain on how to take such interventions to scale, for example through expanding reach or adaptation for new settings. In particular, we don’t yet know enough about how to effectively adapt, expand or deepen an intensive intervention successfully in a way that is faithful to the key tenets of the programme design, is cost-effective, and follows feminist principles.¹
6. It was noted that not all interventions that have been evaluated have been developed with scale in mind and some are difficult to scale up (high cost per person, intensive curriculum etc). We need to design approaches with scale in mind from the outset – for example, those that deliver change at the community/population-level not only among individuals and households. There are examples of effective evidence-based approaches being taken to scale, such as SASA!, which focuses on community mobilisation to prevent violence against women and girls. This model is now being

¹ What Works to Prevent Violence Programme. (2023). *Practice-based lessons for feminist, ethical, and evidence-based violence against women and girls prevention at scale* (By C. Ullman, T. Musaya, & A. Kerr-Wilson). What Works 2 Programme.

implemented across 50 countries by 75 different organisations with adaptations made across different contexts. However, organisations need to be supported to take this work to scale and be well-resourced to do so.

7. Pressure to expand reach with quick results can push forward interventions that are not adequately adapted to the needs of a given context, or that drop some of the core elements that contribute to a model's effectiveness, contributing to ineffective programmes. Instead, funders need to shift towards transforming gendered power relations for the long-term, investing in learning about effective components and pathways to change (rather than effective models), and building organisational capacity for scale.

Resourcing women's rights organisations and movements

8. Women's rights organisations play a critical role in the ecosystem to end GBV. They are uniquely placed to centre the voices, need and rights of women and girls, demand accountability from perpetrators and the state, and initiate sustainable gender-transformation within the communities in which they work. Being rooted in communities, they are well placed to determine the adaptations needed to contextualise prevention efforts and support community ownership.
9. For most smaller WROs to effectively work at scale they need to be able to work collectively. This requires resourcing the field-builders, WROs and activists as well as protecting the civic space that their action occurs within.
10. Movement building is a key component of effective prevention of GBV and women's rights organisations are well placed to establish diverse collectives, including with other justice movements. Governments need to provide space for civic activity and feminist activism. Engaging governments from the outset where this is feasible, and working together through insider/outsider collaboration, can help to drive transformative change.

Working across sectors

11. Throughout the discussions, there was acknowledgement of the need to mainstream commitment and action to eliminate GBV across sectors. This requires generating evidence of "co-benefits", distilling core principles or 'how to' for each sector, as well as fostering champions and accountability.
12. Phase II of the UK's What Works to Prevent Violence programme is testing the mainstreaming of GBV prevention components in education, health, humanitarian and climate sectors to deepen the evidence base on effective approaches and co-benefits.
13. The Multilateral Development Banks are already working at scale with government sectors and workforces in areas such as transport, health, education and climate change mitigation. The Asian Development Bank shared their work to address SEAH within infrastructure projects as an entry point to changing wider norms.

Leveraging health systems to prevent and respond to GBV

There are multiple touchpoints through a woman's lifecycle (e.g. antenatal, immunisation of children) when she is likely to come into contact with the health sector. Health systems can be a first port of call for women and girl survivors of violence. Successful integration of GBV prevention will rely on low-cost adaptations to these touchpoints.

Survivor-centred health sector responses to violence based on building a culture of empathy, compassion and dignity can lead to a reduction in the level of harm, reduce continued exposure to violence, and help to disrupt intergenerational cycles of violence. Integrating GBV prevention into health systems, including through community health workers, will help to reduce reliance on ad-hoc funding and short-term projects, instead promoting vertical scale for long-term resilience and national buy-in.

Suggested opportunities for GBV integration into the health sector included:

- Promoting skills in positive and gender-responsive parenting.
- Digital platforms for adolescents to raise awareness around consent, referrals etc.
- Articulating GBV as a health crisis to accelerate efforts and improve commitment.
- Integrating violence prevention activities into men's health services.
- Identifying champions within health systems to advocate for GBV inclusion.

Mobilising national and local level action

14. National Action Plans (NAPs) and policies on GBV can promote a shared agenda for GBV prevention at the national level. To be effective, GBV policies and strategies need to be costed and resourced, take a multisectoral approach, and centre diverse voices in development, implementation and accountability. To frame discussions, [a new handbook](#) on multisectoral NAPs was presented by the Equality Institute and UN Women.
15. In South Africa, the prioritisation of GBV within the government, including high-profile advocacy from the President, has contributed to the implementation of policies to respond to high rates of violence. South Africa continues to work towards a whole of government approach to GBV prevention and has established a multisectoral National Council on GBV to strengthen accountability and coordination.
16. Developing a NAP can also support a country to arrive at a common understanding of GBV and its causes, supporting a collective process of identifying the steps needed to respond and prevent it - although in practice most prevention components of NAPs remain limited to awareness campaigns.
17. NAP development should include engagement with survivors, communities, WROs and wider civil society, and different levels of the political system to build consensus on GBV prevention through a participatory process. For example, the development of Chile's Feminist Foreign Policy centred a participatory process and women's autonomy at both community and national levels to promote buy-in. This demonstrated the power of women's movements and community engagement combined with political will to achieve effective action at the highest levels.
18. Effective action also requires buy-in and commitment at the local level, for example

through local action plans (such as at district or city level). A good example is the international network of mayors that have united to tackle gender inequality, with GBV as one of their three priorities. The local level provides opportunity for collaboration between local authorities and civil society/women's groups, building on long-standing relationships, with employment, clinics and schools often providing an entry point.

19. There can be a short window to communicate success or results of a policy. The 100 Days Challenge² in South Africa is an example of mobilising and accelerating local-level action within a short timespan to then be able to develop meaningful collaborations with Government to solidify momentum and maintain political interest.
20. Multilateral development banks such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank are already working "at scale" in many ways and can influence the institutional and policy levels on GBV, including influencing ministries of finance. MDBs have been particularly working through the transport and infrastructure sectors to promote safeguarding and tackle sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, which in turn is helping to challenge the acceptance of wider forms of gender-based violence and shifting the gender norms of these institutions.

Harnessing technology and preventing harms

21. The digital space holds both opportunity and risks for the prevention of GBV at scale. Limited accountability within the digital space and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) are normalising violence in our everyday lives. Yet, when effectively resourced and regulated, the digital space can help to grow feminist activism, give space to diverse voices, facilitate global connectivity, and bring new actors into the field of GBV, such as young people, private corporations, and digital rights activists.
22. Effectively harnessing technology to prevent GBV at scale will require growing feminist movement engagement with digital infrastructure and connecting GBV experts with feminist tech and tech more broadly, building on approaches such as Take Back the Tech!³ and C'est La Vie Telenovela⁴.
23. Gaps in access to technology and digital literacy also need to be addressed, alongside efforts to build the capacity of feminist actors to engage, shape and design tech. Improving accountability and regulation of the digital space is critical, including through engagement with mainstream media.
24. Guiding principles exist on how to make the online space more inclusive, such as the [Feminist Principles of the Internet](#) which look at improving collaboration, promoting ethics of care and supporting accessibility, and the [Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Abuse and Harassment](#). However, there needs to be increased uptake and mainstreaming of these approaches across the digital space.

Fostering new partnerships for scale-up

25. Achieving impact at scale requires a paradigmatic shift in how we work and who we work with. It requires making connections across diverse fields and sectors, expanding who is in our movement, and forming new partnerships that engage non-traditional actors, for example, climate or digital rights activists.

² The 100 Day Challenges are designed to engage local communities to commit ambitious goals to prevent gender-based violence in South Africa and are a mechanism of implementing South Africa's National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide at the local level.

³ [Take Back the Tech!](#) is a global, collaborative campaign project that highlights the problem of tech-related violence against women, together with research and solutions from different parts of the world.

⁴ C'est la Vie! is an educational TV series in Senegal focussed on raising awareness of gender-based violence, sexual, reproductive health and broader issues pertaining to the rights of women and girls. It is developed by Réseau Africain pour l'Education à la Santé (RAES).

26. New partnerships facilitate innovation and knowledge sharing beyond the traditional confines of GBV work. However, there is a recognition that the technical language used across the field can be seen as jargon and act as a barrier to engagement by new stakeholders. Utilising language that is accessible can help to more clearly communicate the urgent need to prevent GBV and the role of different stakeholders in this.

Principles of care, healing and justice

27. Collective care for GBV activists and movement actors is essential to promote a healthy, sustainable and effective ecosystem for scaling efforts to tackle GBV. For example, the [UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women](#) is shifting its resourcing model to support the self-care of its grantee organisations, recognising the impact and burden of frontline work. Whilst there is an obvious need to accelerate and scale GBV prevention efforts, this cannot be to the detriment of those working on the frontline.
28. A second important principle as we transition to scale is the need to centre the needs, rights and voices of survivors and support survivor healing and justice alongside prevention. Work to end GBV must give space for survivors and communities to heal as a key component of a long-term and transformative approach to shifting the dial on GBV. [Me Too International](#) described their multi-movement approach to survivor justice which works at the intersections of movements, including racial justice, to better serve and respond to the multidimensional experiences of survivors of violence.

Financing the GBV prevention field

29. The level of resourcing available to tackle GBV is vastly incommensurate with the scale of the need, for example just 0.3% of ODA is specifically allocated to target GBV. The UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (UNTF) has received \$2.9 billion worth of requests over the last four years, yet only had the resources to support 4% of this demand. This raises the question of whether we would be in a different position today if the field had been able to mobilise the resources to meet the demand.
30. Supporting the field's growth and ability to work at scale and generate the resources for this requires looking beyond the roles of individuals, organisations, and projects, and instead at how to build a healthy ecosystem. This must include WROs but also academics, private sector, and leaders and allies in government. Moreover, while money is important, it needs to be spent well, support a joined-up strategy of action, and leverage and tap into other resources.

The GBV Ecosystem – the 'Missing Middle'

31. Gaps in the current funding ecosystem are undermining the field's ability to transition to scale. Of particular concern is the lack of resources for medium sized WROs/CSOs that have the skills and expertise to implement primary prevention at scale, and for "scaffolding organisations" that are needed to build and sustain the field over time. This was referred to as the 'missing middle'.
32. Many of the organisations that form part of the GBV ecosystem are not fit-for-purpose to bridge the gap of the missing middle, with the majority of women-led organisations in the Global South being too small to implement programming at scale. A first step is to support a subset of WROs to become leaders in the field of violence prevention, capable of delivering effective GBV prevention programming at scale. Medium sized organisations working in other sectors could also play a beneficial role for GBV prevention – this could be incentivised through funding collaboration between CSOs with sector-specific expertise and groups with gender and violence expertise.
33. There is also a need for investment in the scaffolding organisations that help to strengthen and build a holistic ecosystem for the field of GBV. Fields that surpass GBV in maturity and resourcing, such as education and HIV/AIDS prevention, have

resourced and structured associations that promote networking, strategic collaboration, and knowledge exchange. Whilst the field of GBV is too small for activities of this nature at scale, there are organisations that can support this, such as SVRI and the Prevention Collaborative.

34. The creation of a new fund and/or mechanism was considered as one possible option for addressing the Missing Middle.

Diversifying funding streams

35. Bilateral funding mechanisms are often inaccessible to women's rights organisations and high standards of due diligence can restrict grassroots organisations from being able to apply for funds. The same challenges can be seen within the UN system. Bilateral funding is also contingent on political will, is often unable to be mobilised at pace, and can be too large to be easily absorbed by smaller organisations directly. This creates a significant hurdle to developing a healthy women's rights movement.
36. The process of resource mobilisation should be cemented within feminist principles. Flexible and core funding is a key means to ensure WROs are able to deliver on their own mandates rather than being redirected to donor priorities and are able to develop as organisations. Feminist funding mechanisms, such as the Equality Fund, have helped to shift away from priority setting solely in the global North towards rooting this instead in demand from frontline actors.
37. To expand resources for GBV prevention, it is important to mobilise funds beyond those traditionally committed to women's rights. Through diversification of funding streams, including by developing new partnerships for cross-sector collaboration, the GBV field can move beyond a reliance on competitive contracts from limited sources that risk reinforcing power imbalances. This can be done by thinking more creatively about incentivising collaboration across sectors such as GBV and education, tech and climate, and through strategic advocacy to influence large education, climate and other funds to prioritise GBV. There is also the opportunity to look at mobilising funds from alternative sources, such as inheritance and private wealth.
38. Resourcing GBV prevention at scale also requires building national systems and capacity and leveraging domestic financing. This calls for a firm understanding of the costs of interventions and the co-benefits of violence prevention to achieve other objectives.

Coordination and advocacy to mobilise resources for ending GBV

39. Effective mobilisation of resources for ending GBV requires platforms and funding for coordinating priorities, messaging, and advocacy. Further mapping of the ecosystem would aid an improved understanding of how to mobilise resources and the role of each organisation in doing so, including more detail on how resources go across the UN family and the scale of resources dispersed through policy loans (e.g. World Bank etc).
40. There also needs to be funded opportunities to collaborate and engage in strategic planning, particularly to bring together diverse voices and expertise from survivors, WROs and new partners. Donors are already coordinating through the GBV Funders' Forum; however, the wider ecosystem requires coordination mechanisms.

Next steps for scaling GBV prevention and growing the field

Some suggested opportunities for the field to explore in scaling up GBV prevention were discussed throughout the meeting and include:

- i. Grow funding and political commitment globally, regionally and nationally:
 - **Establish a high-level panel** of influential individuals from a range of policy areas and sectors to push GBV prevention up more mainstream agendas and build political momentum and visibility around the issue, rooted in

disseminating the evidence base on 'what works'. This could be a similar model to the GEEAP in the education sector.

- **Forge new partnerships** and work at the intersections of justice movements and with sectors such as humanitarian, health, education and climate, for example by convening women's and other social justice movements. These new partnerships can be used to leverage commitment and investment in GBV across sectors and institutions.
 - **Identify a collective narrative** for the field, including articulating the co-benefits of undertaking GBV prevention work across sectors, and a common advocacy agenda that sets out priorities to collectively push, including sector influencing.
 - **Harness key global and regional moments** to influence awareness and commitment to GBV prevention, including potentially the World Bank Spring Meetings (focused on domestic financing), Commission on the Status of Women and Summit for the Future.
 - Support the development of **National Action Plans on GBV** to institutionalise national action and budget to address GBV.
 - Influence **national spending on GBV** through MDB engagement with Ministries of Finance.
- ii. Continuing to develop the field towards scale:
- Build the field's **understanding of pathways to prevention at scale**.
 - **Value, capture and disseminate diverse forms of knowledge** including practitioner, survivor and activist perspectives on prevention.
 - Support and invest in **diverse 'field-building' organisations** to promote a healthy and well-resourced ecosystem that can take forward work to respond to and prevent GBV.
 - Support the **growth of small to medium-sized WROs** to have the capability to work on prevention at scale along with medium-sized CSOs from other fields who are positioned to collaborate on GBV prevention and response.
 - Continue to explore **partnership with the Digital Rights movement** to better understand the risks and opportunities associated with tech that can advance the GBV prevention field.
 - Support **trust-building, collaboration and strategic planning** between ecosystem actors to build collective priorities and support collective care.

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