



LEARNING FROM PRACTICE: PREVENTION SERIES

# ADAPTATIVE PROGRAMMING TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

LESSONS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS FUNDED BY THE UN TRUST FUND TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Beyond Borders staff support during COVID-19. Credit: Depase Fwontyè yo/Beyond Borders (Haiti)

Programming to prevent violence against women and girls (VAW/G) must regularly adapt to a range of internal and external factors, such as: the diverse needs and experiences of project beneficiaries and stakeholders; environmental and political factors; and health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a lack of documentation on how VAW/G prevention programming is adapted in practice, especially outside humanitarian settings and the focus is often on the adaptation of evidence-based prevention models. Therefore, more attention is warranted on the factors that build the adaptive capacities of organizations implementing VAW/G prevention programming, especially women's rights organizations (WROs) and civil society organizations (CSOs).

This paper, part of the Learning from Practice: Prevention Series, draws on the experiences of 9 UN Trust Fund-supported CSOs and WROs working to prevent VAW/G in Chile, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Kenya (one project), El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iraq, Solomon Islands, South Sudan and Zimbabwe, where the organizations significantly

adapted their projects due to changing circumstances and new information.

**Key lessons learned include:**

## 1. Robust and frequent monitoring, evaluation and learning

CSOs and WROs require strong monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning systems to identify and adapt to ongoing challenges and changes. For instance, the Institute for Young Women's Development in Zimbabwe had an activist steering committee that met monthly to reflect on project progress, analyse opportunities or threats, consolidate learning, and adjust its project strategy as necessary. It also reviewed its monitoring, evaluation and learning data every three months to assess the project's progress.

## 2. Flexible governance and risk mitigation

Flexible decision-making that responds to the needs and priorities of programme participants and makes changes in the face of resistance was identified as a

critical component of adaptive programming. For instance, Women's Justice Initiative in **Guatemala** encountered resistance from local leaders and adapted to have more meetings to explain the project and emphasize the importance of the leaders' participation. The organization learned that it is important to reach out directly to local leaders and to address the misinformation that can spread in communities.

### 3. Innovation and creativity

COVID-19 posed many challenges to VAW/G prevention programming, but the pandemic also fuelled innovation, creativity and opportunities. Centro de Derechos de Mujeres (Women's Rights Centre) in **Honduras** pivoted its programming by providing young women with phones and chargers to access the Internet. This allowed them to use new technologies as an educational resource, strengthen their networks, and exchange knowledge on vital topics such as emotional support for survivors of violence.

#### Key recommendations from practitioners include:

- Foster creativity and innovation in adaptive programming, which involves some risk but also brings rewards.
- Flexible funding better supports adaptive programming as projects and organizations can adjust faster and with greater ease.
- More research is needed to assess the factors underlying the adaptive capacities of VAW/G prevention actors.

For the full set of conclusions and recommendations, please read the paper through the QR code below:



## About the Prevention Series

As part of its commitment to elevating practice-based knowledge, the UN Trust Fund commissioned a prevention series of 10 papers on "Learning from Practice", produced in collaboration with almost 100 grantees and external researchers. Each paper in the series draws on the monitoring and evaluation reports of 10 civil society organizations that are implementing prevention projects funded by the UN Trust Fund in different countries and contexts. The findings identified 10 key pathways to prevent violence against women and girls. Each theme is explored in conversations with 10 grantees, resulting in one detailed report per theme.

Scan the QR code below to listen to a podcast about this topic.



## About the UN Trust Fund

The UN Trust Fund, managed by UN Women on behalf of the UN system, remains the only global, multilateral grant-giving mechanism exclusively dedicated to supporting efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls. Since its establishment in 1996 by UN General Assembly [resolution 50/166](#), the UN Trust Fund has awarded USD 215 million to 646 initiatives in 140 countries and territories. Focusing on preventing violence, implementing laws and policies, and improving access to vital services for survivors, the UN Trust Fund invests in life-changing initiatives for millions of women and girls around the world.

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