

LEARNING FROM PRACTICE: PREVENTION SERIES

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

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

Women participating in the project from Madre in Nicaragua working to end violence against indigenous women. Credit: Madre (Nicaragua)

Community mobilization is a strategy that engages with a broad range of actors – including community activists, faith-based actors, and health and social services – to prevent violence against women and girls (VAW/G) and reduce violence within entire communities. The effectiveness of this strategy relies heavily on its implementation and context.

This paper, part of the Learning from Practice: Prevention Series, draws on the experiences of 10 UN Trust Fund-supported civil society organizations (CSOs) in India, Kenya, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Serbia, Solomon Islands, Tanzania and Uganda to present lessons learned and recommendations from practice-based knowledge on preventing VAW/G.

Key lessons learned include:

1. Representation and understanding: ‘Know your community to know your response’

Effective community mobilization interventions need to be culturally relevant, appropriate and tailored to the priorities and needs within and across communities. For instance, the experience of Raising Voices using its SASA! model¹ in **Uganda** demonstrates the importance

of translating material into local languages and testing it with communities before rolling it out more widely. Finding appropriate community entry points was also found to be critical to gain trust and avoid a potential backlash against VAW/G prevention projects.

2. Socioeconomic contexts and incentives

The inclusion of economic empowerment activities in community mobilization projects is vital as economic deprivation can be a risk factor for VAW/G or can prevent full engagement by women and girls in projects. For example, MADRE in **Nicaragua** provided local women farmers with seeds, giving them greater food security and economic independence, and increasing their ability to make decisions that reduce their risk of violence.

3. Engagement across and within community groups for effective mobilization

Meaningful engagement of communities in design and implementation of projects requires relationship-building, which takes time, trust and mutual respect. In **Papua New Guinea**, Voice for Change, which works to improve services, including by initiating the opening of a police unit for family and sexual violence, has

¹ The SASA! model consists of four phases of community mobilization – Start, Awareness, Support and Action – that focus on changing power imbalances between men and women through community-based activities

established a strong reputation through longstanding relationships in their communities. This has enabled active community engagement in its project.

4. Linking community mobilization to institutional contexts

Community mobilization interventions can effectively identify gaps in the quality or capacity of institution-led services for survivors of VAW/G. In **Tanzania**, for example, Equality for Growth devised a legal aid model that acted as a bridge between market leaders, government authorities, traders and other stakeholders, including police, NGOs and community based organizations. Community mobilizations also helped to ensure that VAW/G cases were heard by initiating, among other things, training of legal professionals on guaranteeing confidentiality for survivors of VAW/G.

Key recommendations by practitioners include:

- Further research is needed to investigate how community mobilization can foster change at the institutional level.

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.



- Ensuring sufficient time and intensity of interventions for community mobilization is key for shifting attitudes, beliefs and norms, and donors should support prevention programming through longer term and flexible funding cycles.
- Community mobilization should start from within, with staff encouraged to connect on a personal level with the issues of gender and VAW/G and be accountable to mitigate inequitable power dynamics within communities.

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



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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