



LEARNING FROM PRACTICE: PREVENTION SERIES

STRENGTHENING A LEGAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

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

Participants of the national survivor workshop and gathering hold thematic group discussions and prepare for presentations. Credit: Marcos Saldana V. Branco/Acbit (Timor-Leste)

Law and policy reforms and their implementation to prevent violence against women and girls (VAW/G) are receiving increased attention around the world as a core component of strengthening an enabling environment for VAW/G prevention. Some promising progress is being made within many societies thanks to international laws, political commitments and women's rights activism. However, challenges in the effective implementation of these laws and policies, new legal and policy restrictions, the continued power of informal systems, and a range of practical barriers to accessing justice still leave women and girls at greater risk of violence than others.

This paper, part of the Learning from Practice: Prevention Series, draws on the experiences of 9 UN Trust Fund-supported civil society organizations operating in 12 countries and territories – the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, India, Libya, Myanmar, Solomon Islands, State of Palestine, Sudan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Their stories highlight the important roles they play in engaging with formal and informal legal and policy systems for VAW/G prevention.

Key lessons learned include:

1. Building the capacity of judicial, law enforcement and government institutions

Formal duty bearers such as the police, judicial and government ministry personnel need to be equipped to effectively implement new laws and policies around VAW/G prevention. Civil society organizations (CSOs) can have important roles in building the capacity and shifting the mindset of these institutions to address VAW/G in a less reactive and more proactive, preventative way, including through multisectoral partnerships with civil society.

For example, the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling in the **State of Palestine** worked with young, newly trained women sharia lawyers to train them to provide legal aid to women in the area of VAW/G prevention. Similarly, ActionAid in **Myanmar** worked with existing youth legal clinics to train young people in VAW/G prevention and response, and to assist them in arguing their cases more effectively to ensure that VAW/G perpetrators are held accountable.

2. Bridging gaps between formal laws/policies and informal systems at community level

Informal and customary systems often play roles in adjudicating legal and policy issues at the community level and reinforcing both positive and negative social norms in ways that shape many women's lives. CSOs can help make these systems more women-centred and survivor-friendly, reshaping the community level understanding of women's and girls' rights and bridging gaps with formal systems. This enables more women to participate in informal and formal systems.

For example, Pragma in **India** set up socio-empowerment kiosks in communities. These were staffed by community volunteers who Pragma had provided with basic legal information and advice. They were available to assist both men and women on a range of issues and connect them to relevant government services and court processes.

Key recommendations from practitioners include:

- Work to transform social norms and equip women at community level to understand and demand their legal and citizenship rights as an essential part of VAW/G prevention.
- Take an intersectional approach to researching law and policy reforms and their implementation as prevention tactics to ensure that no women and girls are left behind.
- Provide long-term, flexible funding, acknowledging that law and policy reforms to prevent VAW/G and their implementation take time and require building relationships of trust.

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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