

LEARNING FROM PRACTICE: PREVENTION SERIES

MOBILIZING WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

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

Women's Justice Initiative Women's Rights Education Programme participants from the community of El Llano. Credit: Olivia Jacquet/WJI (Guatemala)

Strengthening the empowerment of women and girls is an important factor in reducing the risk of violence and is one of seven central intervention strategies outlined in the RESPECT framework for preventing violence¹. A strategy often used to strengthen social empowerment for preventing violence against women and girls (VAW/G) is recruiting a cadre of community facilitators. This involves: mobilizing women to actively participate in projects as agents of change; building their self-confidence; training them on their rights; and encouraging mobilization of others to participate in interventions.

This paper, part of the Learning from Practice: Prevention Series, draws together lessons learned by 10 UN Trust Fund-supported organizations in Albania, Guatemala, Iraq, Jordan, Kosovo (under UN SCR 1244 (1999)), Morocco, Nepal, Peru, Tanzania and Viet

Nam who found that mobilizing women community facilitators as agents of change was a key pathway to the prevention of VAW/G.

Key lessons learned include:

1. Mobilizing women as agents of change through safe spaces

The creation of safe spaces is a key dimension of mobilizing women as agents of change in efforts to prevent VAW/G. The concept of safe spaces includes physical spaces, making non-project spaces safer by ensuring that discussions on VAW/G do not create any risks, paying attention to the language used, and identifying “safe” persons in communities to confide in.

This approach was adopted in **Nepal** where the Story Kitchen organized storytelling workshops. In these safe spaces, community facilitators – survivors of

¹ [World Health Organization \(WHO\) \(2019\), RESPECT Women: Preventing Violence Against Women \(Geneva, WHO\).](#)

the country's civil war – became agents of change by interviewing women like themselves about their experiences of violence, offering them a chance to reclaim their dignity and their own narratives to break the cycle of intergenerational violence.

2. Utilizing women's networks

The UN Trust Fund-supported projects also mobilized women to become agents of change by widening women's social networks. Through participating in project activities, women developed networks of friendship and mutual support that had a cascading effect. Women's networks can also be widened to include the service providers that are critical to preventing violence and ensuring justice.

War Child Canada (**Jordan**) trained Syrian refugee women and Jordanian women as volunteers to conduct home visits and spread awareness about support groups, training and workshops. Women who participated in the groups found them to be very valuable and started inviting their peers, sisters and neighbours, who they felt would similarly benefit from the support sessions.

Key recommendations from practitioners include:

- Conduct additional research on having a cadre of community facilitators as a mobilization strategy to help donors and practitioners develop sound, evidence-based policies.
- Additional investment is needed in creating safe spaces for women to meet and collectively organize, paying close attention to safety in physical and online spaces and the language used in project communications.
- Enhance the agency and voice of women leaders through supporting the participation of women agents of change in high-visibility events in advocating for the role of women community facilitators in community mobilization efforts to end VAW/G.

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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