EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELD

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What Community Based Organizations Know About Preventing VAW in Emergencies

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INTRODUCTION

“Prevention... is a big monster but it is one that has to be dealt with.” ~Interviewee

It is often difficult and dangerous to be a woman, and never more so than during an emergency. Instability and unrest spark violence, destroy support networks and breed impunity. Every year thousands of women and girls are raped, assaulted or killed when their communities are thrust into such chaos. Women’s rights advocates from around the world have spent enormous time and resources to provide services and support for victims of violence. Yet even large-scale efforts to respond to violence against women (VAW) are insufficient to address every case of abuse, and they can never erase the trauma that women and girls have suffered.

It is hard to overemphasize the importance of prevention work. Stopping violence before it occurs is a strategic, rather than reactive, approach to protecting vulnerable individuals. By initiating prevention efforts at the onset of an emergency, communities maximize their ability to protect and empower women. They can anticipate potential risks, educate women about threats, and establish systems to provide security.

Both the literature on violence prevention and practitioners themselves agree that local organizations must play a primary role in any effort to prevent or respond to violence. Community actors bring deep cultural knowledge, extensive community networks, relevant experience, and most importantly, a strong commitment to see their communities improved. Assuming that communities are in the best position to understand violence that affects them, strategies to address this violence must begin at the community level. Once community organizations are aware of all the factors contributing to VAW they can apply this knowledge to prevent violence against women and children during both times of stability and during emergencies.

This report is based on interviews conducted in March and April 2012 with 18 organizations that work in the field of VAW—16 in Uganda and 2 in Haiti. The insights gained from these conversations with local organization representatives are the subject of this report but represent only a few of the many voices of VAW prevention actors throughout the world.

While this research impressed upon our team all the extraordinary work that local organizations have done, we also identified areas in which all VAW prevention actors could learn more, think harder, look deeper and share further. This report is an exploratory step to initiate a conversation among the GBV Prevention Network – discussed in more detail below - about VAW prevention during emergencies. By sharing the work that local organizations are already doing, network members can forge stronger partnerships and inspire each other to continue and expand the work they do on behalf of the women and girls in their communities.
DEFINING THE RESEARCH

Violence Against Women

Among international actors, there are two main terms that refer to acts of violence that intersect with gender. Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to acts of physical, sexual, economic or psychological violence directed at men or women because of their gender. Violence against women (VAW) is used to describe these same acts, but committed solely against women and girls. This research focuses on violence against women specifically in recognition of the fact that it is still the most prevalent form of violence in any emergency context. While the needs of men and boys remain important, gender-based violence affects women disproportionately and thus was prioritized for exploration in our research and interviews.

Prevention

Actors can work to prevent violence against women from occurring or they can respond to the violence after it has occurred. Yet within these terms there is some confusion about which activities exclusively serve to prevent violence. There are in fact three levels of prevention discussed in the field. First is primary prevention. Primary prevention refers to work designed to stop an act of violence from occurring in the first place. Secondary and tertiary prevention refer to efforts that seek to prevent some of the effects of violence after it has already occurred. These actions often fall under the definition of response as well. An example of secondary prevention would be the use of prophylaxis to prevent HIV/AIDS infection in women who have been raped. Tertiary prevention might apply to interventions designed to help a woman cope with HIV she has contracted through rape. Because the goal of relief and development is to minimize human suffering, primary prevention should always be the first priority.

Emergencies

Many organizations within the GBV Prevention Network have never worked directly in a conflict or natural disaster scenario, which is typically associated with the term “emergency”. As such, our research defined the term emergency broadly. The UNICEF definition of an emergency as “…a situation that threatens the lives and well-being of large numbers of a population and requires extraordinary action to ensure their survival, care and protection” formed the basis for our discussions with organizations.\(^1\) This definition was useful as it includes situations such as riots, major protests, landslides, floods and mass evictions that were familiar to a broad spectrum of the organizations represented and allowed the representatives to relate the focus of this research to their work and lives.

It must be stated that many of the organization representatives interviewed in this study have not led programming during an emergency with the specific aim of preventing VAW. Insecurity, lack of resources, funding, facilities and personnel are often obstacles to community-based VAW prevention during crises. The programs that do remain in emergency zones are largely focused on VAW response and service provision. Though these programs could serve as valuable resources for secondary prevention, there has not been much exploration to determine how this capacity could be further developed.

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\(^2\) Triplehorn, Carl, John Madfis, and Daryl Martyris. "Emergency Safe Spaces in Haiti and the Solomon Islands." Disasters 34.3
Research Partners and Participants

This project was a collaborative effort between the research team and three organizations actively working in VAW prevention: the GBV Prevention Network, Raising Voices and the International Rescue Committee. For a complete list of research partners and participants, please view Appendix 1 below.

The GBV Prevention Network is a group of more than 220 member organizations from 24 countries united to prevent gender-based violence in the Horn, eastern and southern Africa. The network was born out of the need for more dialogue and sharing between organizations working to prevent, respond to, and end violence against women and gender-based violence. As a forum for the exchange of contacts, practices and ideas, the network aims to create a cross-continent GBV prevention movement. Members of the network take part in activities such as the 16 Days of Activism, campaigns, network gathering, skills building, exchange visits and speaker events. The GBV Prevention Network is facilitated by Raising Voices.

Raising Voices is a Ugandan organization that works to build capacity and improve collaboration between locally active organizations throughout Uganda in areas related to VAW and women’s empowerment. Raising Voices is the engine behind the SASA! methodology: an interactive model for community mobilization to prevent violence against women and the spread of HIV/AIDS. SASA! inspires community participants to think critically about power and its effects on gender, and encourages local activism to generate community-wide investment in preventing VAW. Raising Voices was the coordinator for the research conducted in the field, while the organizations that comprise the GBV Prevention Network contributed their knowledge by participating in the research itself.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is an international relief and development organization. IRC partners with local organizations in the countries where they work to empower communities to lead prevention and response programs in emergency and post-conflict settings. For this project, IRC is partnered with the GBV Prevention Network as the lead member organization in a thematic working group: GBV in Emergencies.

Participating organizations brought diverse experiences and perspectives to the research. The average organization interviewed was small to medium in size, with 15 to 20 staff members. Most target the entire community with their programs, though beneficiaries are typically identified as women and children. Organizations often manage a system of program officers in the field who work through volunteers and community leaders to lead public dialogues and spread awareness messages. Several also make significant use of media campaigns to spread their messages. Generally, these organizations are working to prevent and respond to violence through service provision (sheltering, health care, advocacy, legal services, among other services) capacity building, education and/or raising awareness. Most organizations were also comfortable discussing in detail the methods they use to prevent VAW, but organization representatives did not offer specifics on the content of their messages. For more information on these organizations, please see appendix 1.
METHODOLOGY

The findings discussed in this report are based on interviews conducted with 18 local organizations that address VAW–16 in Uganda and 2 in Haiti. Field-based interviews were conducted in March 2012 with representatives from organizations operating throughout Uganda. Researchers used a semi-structured interview framework to explore institutional knowledge in both emergency and non-emergency settings.

To supplement individual interviews, the research team conducted a focus group exercise with local organization representatives to brainstorm and discuss potential VAW prevention activities in an emergency context. Representatives were presented with a natural disaster scenario: a fictional emergency in which a major flood, widespread displacement, and civil unrest occur throughout the country. Provided the caveat that their family and property were safe from the disaster, each representative was encouraged to think critically about how their organization could continue to lead VAW prevention programming.

Two additional interviews were conducted with Haiti based organizations over Skype. Although Haiti is geographically, culturally and politically very different from Uganda, the inclusion of Haitian voices adds a unique perspective. The 2010 earthquake that struck Haiti inspired a wave of international humanitarian aid. However, long before the disaster shook Port-au-Prince, Haiti already had a cadre of robust community-based organizations (CBOs). These CBOs were staffed and managed by Haitian experts, who utilized their intimate understanding of Haitian culture and skills in operating with few resources to lead programs to prevent and respond to VAW. Incorporating the voices of indigenous CBOs with experience continuing their programs during the acute phase of an emergency contributes valuable dimensions to the research.
INVOLVING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Involving key local stakeholders and obtaining their endorsement for programming is crucial to ensure that the larger community readily accepts VAW prevention programs. It is hard to overstate the importance of identifying and engaging influential groups and individuals within the community. Understanding and mastering this component will allow actors in the VAW prevention field to build a strong foundation for effective programming, which in turn is essential for prevention of VAW in emergencies.

The first step in identifying stakeholders for effective prevention is to understand the role of communities in VAW prevention. Organization representatives consistently expressed the importance of valuing community knowledge over practices borrowed from other contexts, which may not resonate with program beneficiaries. One such practice was the use of a “rights-based approach” to prevention, or the strategy of focusing on fundamental human rights, and the specific rights of women, into education on VAW in order to demonstrate how violence violates these rights. For example, a rights-based approach may begin by teaching community members that women have the right to not be beaten, or that a young girl has the right to walk to school without fear of rape.

In communities where arguments are not typically framed in terms of internationally recognized rights of individuals, this approach may not resonate. Research participants who operate in clan or tribe-based communities communicated that preaching the values and rights of the individual is sometimes incompatible with the cultural perceptions of the community as a bound unit, a whole. In these environments, it can be easy for program beneficiaries to dismiss a rights-based approach. Additionally, people may not understand how rights can impact their daily lives or may not view them as a priority, making such an approach ill suited to the context of that particular community. In contrast, community dialogues can produce locally relevant ideas about why individual women should not be victimized or how to develop VAW prevention programs. More research is needed into the impact of various approaches (i.e. the benefits approach, the rights based approach, economic approaches) on diverse communities. Community-generated action plans can establish ownership over the effort-at-large when the community members themselves actively collaborate to generate guidelines, ideas, or programs that matter to them. Encouraging community input allows prevention actors to understand local perspectives on VAW and incorporate this knowledge into their programming.

Raising the profile of the community in VAW prevention can also foster intra-community networking, reducing the community’s reliance on outside organizations. A common approach to build these local networks is to recruit and train individuals as Community Activists, “changemakers” or other volunteer local champions who relay messages of anti-violence throughout their communities. These volunteer activists approach their fellow community members at strategic locations- at storefronts or in the town square - anywhere community members can conveniently stop and listen for a few minutes during their regular routine. Working through communal or local spaces in this way is a more efficient use of CBO resources as well as a strategic means to reach as many people as possible.
Experts in their Field

Connecting with In-Country Resources

Efforts to critically assess Haitian food, resources, and skilled staff after the earthquake were inadequate. As such, in-country capacity was not fully identified or utilized. One CBO representative stated that rather than immediately engage with the many trained and experienced Haitian health workers in the central plateau, international actors flew in foreign doctors - an expensive, inappropriate and less effective method of administering health care to Haitians. CBOs could improve the culture of disaster response in their countries by leading proactive assessments of the resources and skills that already exist in the country, and making plans to mobilize those assets efficiently during an emergency.

Moreover, effective programming does not only target women or perpetrators of violence but instead attempts to “bring everyone on board”. Community organizations recognize that without the active buy-in of cultural leaders, faith leaders, elders, police, local council members and government officials, VAW prevention lacks sustainability. Individuals community members or groups, whether they occupy formal or informal positions, can mobilize other community members to disseminate VAW messages, generate excitement for the prevention movement as well as participate in prevention activities. A skilled organization can open new avenues for VAW prevention programs by working in collaboration with active local groups. Organization representatives urged prevention efforts to collaborate with clan leadership, cultural institutions, schoolchildren, women’s societies, religious communities, service providers and VAW-sensitive police actors, such as Child and/or Family Protection Units. In cases where no appropriate group was available some CBOs are have formed their own groups to address VAW. An organization representative from northern Uganda discussed how his organization developed teams to respond to drivers of VAW at the sub-county level and address tensions before they erupt into violence.

Several organization representatives specifically highlighted the potential benefit of working work through religious leaders. The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda helps religious leaders identify specific verses from their own religious texts about honoring one’s spouse and treating women with compassion. Religious leaders can then communicate these messages during times of worship as well as in individual counseling with couples or families. Indeed, many religious leaders already serve as counselors, and could be trained to provide psychological support to persons whose lives are affected by VAW, offering a VAW-sensitive form of spiritual counseling. Another organization prints posters that challenge community members to analyze their own behavior towards women and girls in the context of the peaceful messages documented by their religious teaching, asking them: ‘How are you living your faith?’ Utilizing verses from the Bible and Koran that outline why and how men should relate to women in peaceful ways provides tangible evidence that VAW prevention is valuable as well as reinforces similar messages that are being spread by non-religious efforts. Additionally, mechanisms such as prayer groups and fellowships can provide therapeutic outlets for community members to discuss personal experiences, hopes and fears and recover from emotional trauma.

Furthermore, religious leaders and institutions may also be able to offer active support by utilizing their facilities as shelters for vulnerable or abused women, or by connecting at-risk persons and victims of VAW with members of their congregations to provide support and temporary housing. This function could prove especially useful in emergency situations when many in the community may find themselves displaced. While some efforts to involve religious institutions have been initiated in Uganda, this approach is still new, and requires further consideration among well-established VAW prevention actors to determine its practical feasibility in all community settings.

Some organizations are looking beyond traditional VAW prevention actors and working with landlords as a means to reduce domestic violence. Landlords can reduce the rate of domestic violence occurring among
Further Exploration

One Haiti CBO representative expressed interest in learning more innovative ways to incorporate traditional Haitian methods of restorative justice and mediation. Encouraging programs such as alternative forms of housing that are safe for the survivor and also garner enough community support to be sustainable would improve efforts to foster peace.

Experts in their Field

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Community buy-in and involving all stakeholders also ensures accountability. Many organization representatives emphasized that increased accountability of those who hold the power, mandate or commitment to prevent VAW is necessary to deter acts of violence. By involving the entire community in VAW prevention, organizations increase the likelihood that violence is seen as intolerable, and that when it does occur it will be swiftly addressed. One organization worked to change attitudes by encouraging communities to select violence-free homes (as defined by the organization). This sent a clear message to all community members that non-violent behavior is the community ideal. Rewarding these households further communicated the value that the community places on non-violent behavior, reinforcing the message. Another method to provide this accountability is through the effective use of legal structures. Legal empowerment is significant as it can encourage victims to seek redress and show perpetrators that they will face consequences for their actions. For example, one legal aid organization noticed that their presence in an area had a deterrent effect on those who would be tempted to mistreat women. Perpetrators knew that the organization would provide victims with the opportunity to pursue justice, and they would be held accountable for their actions. As such, the organization shared a perceived reduction in cases of VAW committed by individuals who knew the organization was in operation.

In emergencies community members must play a central role in VAW prevention, as resources may be limited. Community members often have skills that can be used to prevent VAW in emergencies. Tapping into existing community skills to identify at-risk persons, lead community dialogues, and address the drivers of VAW is a more efficient use of available resources. The capacity of individuals needs to be thoroughly identified and harnessed before looking outside of the community for additional personnel and resources. Where skills are lacking, organizations can often provide basic training to allow community members to contribute more effectively to VAW prevention. Through proper training and preparation, community members can become paralegals, partake in community or household surveillance or even lead monitoring and evaluation processes for VAW prevention programs. Strategic use of existing (or easy to acquire) capacities becomes even more important during emergencies, when resources are strained and outside help may be delayed in reaching certain places.

Nevertheless, during emergencies, displacement may alter the composition of the community and make it more difficult for organizations to access those who remain. When communities are in displacement camps, groups of people from different communities may interact with each other for the first time. Actors working with displaced communities must be mindful of the ethnic compositions of their targeted beneficiaries for any activities related to VAW prevention in order to avoid any inter-ethnic, tribal or cultural conflict. These tensions may compromise activities or lead to jealousy that one group is perceived as receiving more services than another, which may incite further violence. Some organizations mentioned the benefit of working with homogenous groups in camp settings. In a displacement context, working within small groups comprised solely of members of their original community can improve the likelihood that once the emergency ends and
displaced persons return to their villages; progress made by VAW prevention programming will be taken back to the same community. Similarly, it may be most effective to differentiate services between young children and older children/youth to keep each group safe and engaged.\(^2\) One way of sharing space is to provide age-specific activities at different times during the day.

Despite the need for ethnic and cultural sensitivities, the concept of involving everyone in preventing VAW remains fundamental. One example to reinforce this point is the use of young men and boys as prevention allies during specific aspects of crises, such as resource procurement. One organization representative worked with emergency-affected families to teach them that although threats of physical and sexual violence are valid, girls should not always avoid interacting with boys in order to ensure their safety. Sometimes, strategic accompaniment or assistance from young men can provide additional protection for vulnerable girls as they go about their daily routine. In emergencies, girls may have to walk long distances to reach their schools or to collect firewood, water, or other necessities. Doing so alone can place them at increased risk of attack. By traveling with young men from their families or others whom they trust women and girls can reduce their risks, particularly when they need to travel to areas outside the center of the community settlement.

Nevertheless, the involvement of men and boys needs to be monitored to ensure that it does not reinforce systems that marginalize women and girls. When pursuing such partnerships, organizations must be careful not to create a climate in which women are dependent on boys and men. Dependency creates power imbalances in relationships, which may result in a return to violence in relationships between men and women. Organizations considering male engagement programs during emergencies must maintain power balance and gender equality as a priority in their activities.

**BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY**

One of the most frequently cited themes was both the value of, and need for, increased capacity building and skills training for community members and organizations working to prevent violence against women. This need was identified at all levels: among locally active volunteers and community members, within organizations themselves and throughout the community at large. Participants also highlighted the potential for groups with specific skill sets to provide training and capacity building to other organizations in the field. For example, training and courses on community application of international and national legal frameworks prohibiting violence was identified by several sources as an area in which they would benefit from increased technical assistance. As one representative explained, “sometimes people are confronted with [VAW] issues, but because they don’t know the relevant law [on how such cases should be prosecuted] to use, either they mishandle the case or the issue or misinform others.” These organization representatives expressed that better understanding and utilization of legal tools such as the domestic violence act would help them empower women and advocate on their behalf.

In line with increased capacity and skills building is the need for more research on successful strategies for preventing VAW. Though many organization representatives offered anecdotal strategies and successes from their own experiences, few have engaged in formal research, documentation and dissemination of their approaches. In particular, organization representatives expressed interest in improving their access to research on the determinants of behavior change, effective and impactful public awareness on preventing

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VAW, as well as methods for crafting strong prevention policies. Because the GBV Prevention Network members represent a variety of geographic and issue specializations, each has its own research needs and priorities. One legal advocacy organization mentioned the need to formally research traditional justice systems and make better use of these mechanisms in their work. Enhanced understanding and application of traditional mediation and justice may allow for prosecutions and convictions of VAW perpetrators that do not conflict with a local culture’s ideas of how crimes should be addressed.

Furthermore, the need for capacity and skills building also applies to communities, not just organizations. Several organization representatives discussed the importance of providing individual community members and community groups with the skills and tools needed to discourage violence. Skills programs referenced by organization representatives indirectly address VAW by targeting its root causes. Recognizing that resources and finances are often closely linked to decision-making and power, capacity building often includes economic empowerment initiatives. These efforts can help women develop financial management skills, or promote women’s entrepreneurial spirit by funding income-generating activities (IGAs). Such activities enable women to supervise household finances and participate in important decisions that can reduce some of the household tensions that drive violence.

Childhood and adolescent education is an important medium through which to provide knowledge on VAW as well as develop young people’s skills to reassess community attitudes and norms that drive instances of VAW. Several organizations work with schools to form clubs that teach children about human rights and build their awareness of VAW. These efforts teach children from an earlier age that violence is not an acceptable way to interact with others, and should not be perpetrated against others because of their gender. Some literature urges that instructors should be respected male community members. Normative Councils composed of local male leaders could be established to design culturally-appropriate VAW awareness curricula for male students, seek relationships with potential male program partners as well as serve as a watchdog presence to monitor for potential aggressors.

One representative shared the way his organization has worked through schools to lead competitive debates, essay and art competitions inspired by provocative themes of VAW reduction to further engage children in thinking about preventing VAW. For example, one school debate presented participants with the statement: “women are to blame for the violence they go through”. Organization staff and teachers facilitated a debate about this commonly held misconception for male and female students. For projects that encouraged student’s essay and art contributions, the organization posed the question: ‘how might domestic violence prevent girls from having a prosperous future?’ In addition to collaborating closely with students, the organization also works through Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) to reach parents and extend the discussion from schools into the home.

With careful planning, these capacity building and training activities can still take place during emergencies. During the acute phases of the conflict in northern Uganda, one organization transported women from conflict-affected Gulu to Kampala for skills training on conflict prevention and community activism. The organization representative acknowledged that often it is assumed that people who are removed from a conflict will refuse to return to the danger they have escaped. However, after completing the trainings, these women were often eager to return to their own communities as quickly as possible to protect their loved ones from impending

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harm as well as spread the lessons they had learned as part of the program. This case highlights the strong
desire of local activists to broaden their skills in the service of their communities.

Though activities in emergencies often occur in a rush, undertaking preliminary, and when possible, mid-term
assessments remain a vital task to ensure that a proposed initiative addresses as many local needs as
possible. Assessments help to identify underserved or at-risk populations so programs can be more carefully
targeted. They allow VAW prevention actors to identify existing support systems to avoid duplication and use
their resources more effectively. For protection of vulnerable populations such as women and children in
emergency situations, evaluators should develop a tracking system through local networks to follow-up
with individuals engaged in the humanitarian response process as accurately as possible. It is important
to remember that elements of VAW prevention, such as “well being” and “safety”, cannot be
standardized across communities and must be adapted to each community before evaluating the success
of a program. Nevertheless, assessments before, during and after a crisis are an important tool for building
the knowledge of prevention actors and making that knowledge available to the wider community.

RAISING AWARENESS

Almost all organization representatives who participated in the study are working to raise awareness about
the existence of VAW and its effects on communities. In many contexts, deeply ingrained cultural norms
perpetuate the belief that violence against women is normal behavior. As one organization representative
explained, the goal for raising awareness is about working with communities "to take them through the
process of change to a level where they know what the violence is, how to prevent it and how to create norms
that will help them prevent it". Organizations target these norms through awareness campaigns and activities
in order to break the cycle of violence and prevent future violence.

Efforts to raise awareness take many forms, including: campaigns that use print, radio, song, drama, video
and a variety of other mediums to reach communities; education outreach to impact the younger generation;
training community members to become champions for the issue or “changemakers”; and other related
approaches. Disseminated messages educate the public on populations at-risk for VAW, places in which VAW
tends to occur, services available for VAW survivors as well as the specific vulnerabilities of certain
populations, such as refugee groups.

One representative discussed how his organization’s use of video dramatizations — or ‘participatory videos’-
enables community members to realize what types of VAW are occurring, analyze how such violence
negatively affects the community and encourages them to devise action plans to prevent VAW. This program
identifies real cases of violence that have occurred in the community and creates video dramatizations of the
case using community members as actresses and actors. After producing the video, the community is gathered
in a public place for a formal screening and post-film discussion on the effects of VAW in that community. This
method has the dual function of both garnering widespread interest and excitement in the program and

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4 ICRC, “Workshop Report: Children Affected by Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence” International Committee of the
Effective Messages

Clear, instructive messages about available services are effective in emergency settings. After the earthquake in Haiti, scores of posters and billboards with messages and contact information on victim services were visible to disaster-affected persons. These messages would often instruct victims of sexual violence to call a certain number for services and legal recourse. By making the message as clear and direct as possible, women and girls were able to make proactive decisions about their safety and health.

Organization representatives also emphasized the significance of creating awareness by disseminating messages through community leaders whose voices are respected. Depending upon their role, these leaders often tailor messages to the audience and use a voice that most persuasively encourages listeners to invest in VAW prevention. For example, one representative said proper engagement of community leaders “point[s] out the effects of violence, because if we talk about the economic costs of violence it becomes clear that we are talking about what it means other than talking about rights, rights, rights, but if you contextualize VAW and what it costs the family, especially the family, then I think that can be a hope for an approach.” Presenting arguments for why VAW prevention matters to community members can be complex and daunting. Strategic partnerships with community leaders to lead dialogues about preventing VAW can allow the ideas to reach their intended recipients, as these recipients already hold respect for, and trust in, that community leader.

Many organizations integrate issues related to VAW but not specifically about VAW in their efforts to increase awareness and prevention of VAW. One organization that focuses on responding to VAW through legal frameworks discussed the importance for widespread awareness of women’s rights in general – not just those that pertain to the right to live free from violence - and the legal and policy frameworks that protect these rights so that women, communities, police and law makers all understand the significance of the issue. Another organization that works with refugee populations settled in Uganda spoke of the importance of raising awareness on potentially dangerous situations that all refugees are vulnerable to – not solely women - in their new environment. These messages may urge refugees to avoid doing business in private homes where they might be taken advantage of or to avoid getting involved during political protests where they might be at increased risk of violence due to their unfamiliarity with the situation.

Although many organizations stressed raising awareness for prevention, as seen in the number of times and ways this was referred to, they also discussed the difficulties to creating lasting behavior change. The knowledge-attitudes-practice gap is well known in many efforts that work to create behavior change, and the VAW prevention field is no different. One representative said, “Changing people’s attitudes is much more difficult than disseminating knowledge. Changing the belief system is not an easy task because people keep going back [to their ingrained behaviors] and then they will start to speak to you and give you the right answers [about preventing violence], but they aren’t acting on what they are saying. They will say that violence is bad and unacceptable, but what they are doing is contrary to what they are saying. So behavior and social norm changes are very difficult.”

This issue demonstrates the importance of utilizing multiple strategies for prevention. While organizations utilize a variety of strategies, raising awareness is central to most programming, which could produce limited results if not complemented by efforts that have more practical aims. Additionally, many organization representatives emphasized that in rural, less-populated regions such as Karamoja, few resources exist to
disseminate such messages and the movement has not yet taken hold in communities. As such, education should be improved in these areas, as raising awareness is fundamental to fostering long-term progress towards violence-free communities.

**CRAFTING MESSAGES FOR VAW PREVENTION**

Organization representatives highlighted the importance of disseminating specific pieces of information as well as drafting specific messages that will be interesting and relevant to targeted beneficiaries. Community-based organizations need to ensure that their information campaigns take into consideration the local context, lifestyles and priorities of communities, and create messages accordingly. It is important to note that organization representatives, while emphasizing this point, often did not share the specific content of the messages they found appropriate or successful within the communities where they work. Rather, most focused on the strategies and broader frameworks that guide their awareness-raising activities and the challenges that accompany them. An example of one such strategy is the rights-based approach, discussed above. Some participants expressed interest in exploring new ways to communicate the principles of the rights-based approach through language that makes more sense in the communities where they work, rather than the buzzwords that international organizations and national governments often reference when discussing human rights.

Some of the messages that were shared by participants used examples and discussion questions to help the audience reach their own conclusions about VAW. A poster might be used to ask the group what children learn when they witness violence in the home, or what a violence-free community means to the participant. Other messages feature rhetorical questions that subtly highlight injustices. One organization representative explained that some of the most effective messages were not about rights but rather talking about the economic cost of violence. Messages that contextualize VAW and what it costs to the family may clarify the objectives of VAW prevention and highlight the benefits of respectful relationships to potential perpetrators.

Furthermore, organizations recognized the importance of sharing general information about programs, such as where women could find specific services or how they could link up to support groups. This type of messaging is a reaction to the immediate situation, rather than a means of addressing root causes of violence, and it serves to prevent further victimization (i.e. it is a form of secondary prevention). Though primary prevention is generally the main goal of most VAW prevention messages, reactive and/or secondary prevention programming and information campaigns are still important to ensure that all potential beneficiaries know that resources exist for their needs. However, research participants did not directly discuss the distinction between messages geared at women who have not yet experienced violence and those who have survived some type of abuse. It may be useful for the larger VAW prevention field to develop more institutional knowledge about the differences between the voice and intent behind proactive and reactive messaging to ensure that all beneficiary communities benefit from an equal balance of information.

The importance of information also emerged during discussions about emergencies. Accurate, up-to-date information on unfolding crises is vital for VAW prevention organizations to continue operating during an emergency. One organization representative stressed that availability of accurate reports regarding crisis developments and instructions on how to address urgent needs throughout the acute phase would allow CBOs to make confident programming decisions in order to maintain their prevention activities. In this context, discussion groups and community dialogue activities that analyze VAW can still take place, though the rhetoric
of such programming may need to change from more exploratory themes to trainings and dialogues that
directly address what community members must do to protect women from violence. One organization
representative suggested that VAW prevention actors should always link awareness efforts to some type of
concrete activity, such as ration distribution or health services, in order to ensure a higher volume of
participants.

Organization representatives emphasized the importance of tailoring messages to the specific emergency
context in order to lead valuable awareness-raising campaigns. During emergencies, awareness messages
used in times of peace should be modified in tone and content to better address the potential dangers women
and girls face. As one representative explained, "you cannot remain static, the message won't sink, you
actually will become irrelevant." Only a few organizations were able to provide examples of appropriate
messaging during emergencies. Generally these messages were composed of information about safe and
unsafe areas, direct threats and how to avoid them, and the location of services for at-risk individuals. The
absence of further discussion on message content demonstrates how information and awareness remains an
important area to continue to explore with organizations active in the field of VAW prevention.

MEDIA/TECHNOLOGY

Use of media such as radio was often mentioned as a tool to support awareness raising and information
dissemination. Though media was sometimes highlighted as a potential driver of violence against women, if
used correctly, it can serve as an effective and accessible vehicle to prevent VAW.

Additionally, some forms of media can be adapted to the emergency context. Radio was often cited as a
means to reach and communicate with people even during emergencies when other types of communication
may have broken down. However, organization representatives offered two cautionary pieces of advice.
First, the use of complex technology may be expensive and difficult, particularly in rural and impoverished
communities, hence the need to focus on more accessible forms of communication. Second, several
organizations mentioned that the easy accessibility of radio has historically meant that it can be also used by
people who intend to cause harm. The use of radio during the Rwandan genocide was often identified as an
example for the need to be careful in how radio is being used and what types of messages are being
spread. Nevertheless, with the right training and messages, radio can have significant impact in spreading
necessary messages about the crisis and ways to prevent violence during emergencies. "In Uganda radio is
the widely penetrative medium of information dissemination. With over 120 licensed stations and over 80
operational, radio is undoubtedly the most important mode of communication."5 VAW prevention
organizations should not ignore the potential that radio could have in delivering messages of peace and
understanding.

The widespread use of radio and other forms of communication such as community drama is important for two
reasons. First, despite the rise and popularity of new media (or internet-based social networking platforms)
and modern technology, it is important to emphasize that traditional media such as radio still remains one of
the most accessible tools for impoverished rural communities. As one organization representative noted, the
most effective media tool is radio - television is a luxury that most rural communities do not have. Another

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5Using Radio to help communities talk: A manual for community dialogue. Straight Talk
Experts in their Field

organization shared that even though they have seen high levels of community interest in prevention efforts that use video, these programs quickly become expensive. This is particularly true in rural areas that lack electricity, requiring the organization to procure, carry and power a generator as well as purchase fuel and pay for the transportation of persons involved in the project.

Nevertheless, communication challenges identified by Ugandan organizations and the absence of any mention of other technologies such as mobile phones points to an important gap in access to these new tools in rural areas. Uganda has 8 million mobile subscribers and 2 million PC Internet users, yet many community-based organizations are not assessing how they might use mobile or internet platforms in their VAW programming. 6 Though some “women use mobile phones to contact police officers in the event of domestic violence to ask for help and indeed some men’s aggression has been checked for fear of being apprehended ”, the potential for mobile phones to empower women to protect themselves needs further consideration and development. 7

In contrast, Haiti proved that the use of text messaging to individual mobiles could be one of the most useful communication tools in emergency settings. After the earthquake, Haitians and relief actors utilized Frontline SMS - a free, open source software that enables NGOs or other users to send and receive messages with groups of people through mobile phones – to assess community needs and coordinate response.8 Similarly, Haitian women are using their cell phones to access services. KOFAVIV, Digital Democracy and the Commission for Women Victims for Victims are developing the only phone-based emergency hotline in Haiti dedicated to sexual assault and rape. It will operate similarly to the American ‘911’ number, under the short code 572.9 By dialing 572, at-risk women and survivors of VAW will be able to connect with local services.

In the end, though other communities and contexts around the world have shown the potential that new media and technologies can have in preventing VAW, actors must carefully evaluate when it is appropriate to use such tools and when traditional forms of communication are still most effective. Like most VAW prevention efforts, communication technologies offer promises to both help and hinder VAW prevention efforts. Any initiatives to explore and launch communication-based prevention programs should liaise with other stakeholders leading similar work to determine the feasibility of such a program.

LIVELIHOOD AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Many organization representatives expressed the need to further develop programs that support income generating activities (IGAs) and other forms of economic assistance for women as a means to raise their status in the home and empower them to make important decisions for the family. Organization representatives explained that women often stay in violent and abusive relationships because they lack economic empowerment. Women that are “economically handicapped”, or lacking access to financial resources of their own, often do not feel that they can do anything to prevent or end the violence they experience from their partners: they depend on their abusers for economic support.

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7Ibid, 7
8The Software. Frontline SMS. <http://www.frontlinesms.com/the-software/>
The economic empowerment approach can respond to violence that is already occurring - by targeting abused women with economic programs - and impact future generations by addressing one of the root causes of violence. This can be achieved by initiating income-generating programming to empower women and reduce tensions in relationships before they might turn violent. Often, the rationale for these programs is that one of the root causes of violence is the perception that women are a man’s property, rather than contributing members to the household’s finances and stability. Empowering women to manage family resources today can lead to a new generation of men and women tomorrow who view the status and worth of women in their households very differently, which may - little by little - reduce intimate partner violence.

As such, organizations recognize that even small monetary inputs are important to assist women in gaining the respect of their intimate partners and thus tangible reductions in intra-familial violence. One organization paraphrased a beneficiary who had seen a significant change in the household dynamic after joining a savings group: “I was nothing at home, I could not even buy a quarter cube of sugar but when I come back these days and I have some sugar my husband respects me, we sit together and we can discuss, I can also say no, my children will go to this school because I have something.” In another interview, an organization relayed the sentiments of another beneficiary, who said: “because now I am making some money, I bring something to the table... so what used to make us fight, or what used to make him beat me, was because I wasn’t managing the mutual resources that we had well, or I wasn’t bringing anything to the table... so I was more like a liability to the family, and now he thinks I’m an asset.”

While recognizing that ideally, male partners would not hold these perceptions of, and resentment against, their female partners, the reality is that many of these attitudes persist. CBO programming that provides financial training to improve the status of women responds to this reality and seeks to resolve immediate negative attitudes while also complementing these efforts with longer-term, awareness raising initiatives to prevent these attitudes from developing in the first place. Unfortunately, the majority of organizations that are taking part in these activities can only offer very small IGAs, such as craft projects where participants weave baskets or mats, knit clothing or other handicrafts that they sell, often featuring VAW prevention messages. As such, some organization are diversifying their capacity to support women’s income generating activities by offering complementary programming aimed at assisting women in pursuing jobs, such as childcare. Women’s groups can use their networks to provide childcare to women who need to earn money outside their homes and cannot care for their children while doing so. Lifting the challenge of caring for one’s children frees women to more actively seek out employment. Still, most organization representatives highlighted the importance of continuing to develop livelihood programming as a practical means to prevent violence at the household level.

Similarly, the importance of livelihood and economic empowerment during emergency settings was discussed as a potential strategy to give women knowledge and further life skills. This becomes particularly important when women’s traditional support networks and resources may be unavailable to them. Furthermore, emergencies may increase the number of female-headed households, making such programming essential for women to take care of their families and to shield them from potential abuse.

However, livelihood programs can prove unsustainable if they change the power dynamics in a household without sufficient complementary programs and support for both partners. Providing equal opportunities can reduce the jealousy and tension in communities where women might become the sole breadwinners of their

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families. As one publication stated, “There is such a push for women to make it, but there is grumbling by men – the men are the potential trouble makers.” To reduce jealousy, men and women should be trained and employed together, earning comparable wages for similar jobs.

Additionally, economic inputs that drastically alter the roles and responsibilities of a woman during an emergency may inadvertently make the woman vulnerable to violence when the emergency ends. There have been occasions in the past where a crisis resolves itself and the male partner expects the woman to revert back to her pre-emergency role as subordinate partner and doting mother. Having experienced a newfound sense of independence and purpose, women in these situations often resist reassuming their pre-crisis status in the family – and suffer violent consequences for it. Therefore, organization representatives stressed the need for any emergency livelihood or economic empowerment programs to consider the needs of the beneficiaries beyond the acute phase of the emergency, and to design their programs accordingly.

PROTECTION/SECURITY

In discussions about raising awareness, many organizations mentioned working with police forces, targeting them as key stakeholders in their programming. Such programming would include capacity building to teach police officers how to properly conduct a deposition interview when women come to report, how to establish private spaces for confidential questioning in such instances, and how to connect victims to appropriate services. Additionally, some crisis contexts have demonstrated how the police can be used to set the standard for how men, relief actors and other groups should treat women. Civil society and community groups can expand the benefits of standardized codes of conduct by actively training local law enforcement and other grassroots security mechanisms on appropriate relationships and how to report infractions.

Overall, organization representatives felt that police are receptive to the idea of teaming with VAW prevention organizations. However, many still felt that the police are highly corrupt, and Uganda’s continued lack of enforcement and high level of impunity continue threaten the security of women and girls. Regardless, attempts to engage and build the capacity of law enforcement to prevent VAW highlights the relationship between prevention and security. Currently, training and capacity building offered to police is reactive, addressing re-victimization. If perpetrators begin to be brought to justice through more proactive police efforts, then communities will benefits from fewer acts of violence.

Protection and security for women and girls becomes even more challenging and essential during emergencies. In times of political unrest police can become perpetrators of violence if they are not engaged as a positive force for protection. During the “Walk to Work” protests in Kampala, Uganda, women and children were most negatively affected by the violence, tear gas and disorder that frequently accompany the chaos of public unrest. One organization worked closely with local police to conduct a peaceful demonstration against violence down city streets. The organization devised a parallel demonstration to promote peaceful protest by collaborating with, rather than against, the system. They consulted with the police prior to their

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What Makes Emergency VAW Prevention Effective

After the Haitian earthquake, one Haiti-based NGO led a campaign to distribute whistles to female camp residents as a tool to alert the camp in the event of sexual violence. What is effective about this intervention, shared one CBO representative, is not the whistles themselves — it is the network behind the whistle campaign. The NGO was able to lead a successful program because of its reputation among and accessibility to community members. Continually nurturing connections between themselves, participants and other organizations would assist a CBO in leading VAW prevention during emergencies.

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Furthermore, armed conflicts and chaotic environments often require organizations to develop structural remedies to address the physical vulnerabilities of women and girls. Organizations need to make a special effort to reach out to children who may be less likely to take advantage of a safe space — including girls, minorities, disabled children, former child soldiers, and the most economically disadvantaged in the community. One organization representative shared how his organization opened and coordinated shelters to respond to the high levels of violence committed against women and children in the northern region of Uganda. He found that displacement was forcing scores of vulnerable boys and girls to sleep on the ground in public areas. Lack of shelter left young women vulnerable to rape and physical violence. The organization convinced the community to convert existing spaces into child-friendly shelters and encouraged local businesses to participate by contributing sanitation facilities. This community-wide effort allowed the organization to prevent acts of VAW during conflict. Other organizations in northern Uganda established “safe spaces” for children affected by conflict. In two IDP camps in northern Uganda 10 children under 6 years old were raped in a single year. Creating safe spaces for preschool aged children was seen as a crucial step toward protecting young girls from sexual and other forms of violence during a displacement. In the year after the safe space was created, no instances of rape of preschool children were reported.

There is also a need to positively engage the military to prevent VAW during emergencies. The military is often deployed during emergencies, and, much like the police, it can either be a source of protection or danger for women. By training the military and working within existing structures to hold them accountable, VAW organizations can attempt keep community members safe. Similarly, forming community protection groups is another way for communities to increase their security and is a helpful technique to utilize when traditional security systems may be unavailable, overwhelmed or disturbed. It is also a way for communities to

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actively participate in prevention of VAW and take ownership of the problem and potential solutions. Communities in several African conflicts and in south Asia have used this approach widely, though none of the organization representatives we spoke with had any experience with this method. For instance, the model of a village vigilance committee (VVC) has been widely implemented in India to supplement the existing police force and is increasingly being used in conflict-affected states of central Africa.\(^{15}\)

### PROACTIVE VS. REACTIVE PROGRAMMING

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CHALLENGES

Funding During Emergencies

International organizations flooded the country after the Haiti earthquake. During the influx of global aid, many CBOs lost some or all of their funding to large international NGOs. Though these international NGOs have the resources to lead large-scale efforts in complex humanitarian emergencies, the knowledge, skills, relationships of trust, and the breadth of a local CBO network cannot be overlooked. Donors and INGOs need to work through these local organizations; not bypass them automatically in favor of big-name relief actors.

While providing rich data on their approaches and tools for VAW prevention, organization representatives also cited a wide variety of challenges that they must mitigate, adapt to and attempt to overcome during implementation of VAW prevention activities.

Organizations working on prevention of VAW generally face resource gaps of varying severity. Organization representatives mentioned the expenses they confront in conducting programming in remote areas, in using innovative technologies such as video for dramas and in general day-to-day programming. Aside from material resources, gaps were identified in knowledge, skills and approaches to prevention programming. One representative specifically asked for training on program monitoring and evaluation to help her gauge the progress of her programs. Other organizations felt that their local volunteers need to be provided more training, specifically in areas such as counseling, legal rights and structures in the Ugandan system, and public speaking. Finally, organizations wanted more training in communication, which is essential for awareness efforts.

Inadequate service provision and institutional structures also hamper the potential progress of local organizations. Shelters in Uganda are few and far between, making it difficult for most women to seek protection from violence. In terms of policies, although a law on domestic violence exists, the police and the justice system’s capacity to successfully enforce it have not been adequate. Representatives often discussed the danger of encouraging women to seek services only to have them have to return home to situations where violence may be likely to continue. Furthermore, health services, such as hospitals or clinics, are often not fully equipped to handle cases of VAW. They may not, for example, have supplies of post exposure prophylactics (PEP) necessary to treat the needs of women seeking those services.

Additionally, deeply ingrained cultural norms and attitudes perpetuate VAW issues in Uganda and continually inhibit the work of organization staff. Patriarchal attitudes are seen in practices such as bride price, early marriage and widow inheritance, which illustrate the low status that women occupy in society. This view that women are not valuable is also evident in women’s role in economic decision-making. When men view women as consumers of household resources rather than income earners they are more likely to be seen as dependents and considered to be a burden on the man. On a related note, several representatives reported that their programs are also challenged by the economic hardships that many of their communities face. For example, many representatives pointed to the disconnect between the culture of volunteerism that their programs are trying to foster, and the reality that working on a culturally and politically sensitive issue without compensation is unappealing to would-be activists. Without strong incentives to work as VAW prevention actors, community members are unlikely to invest themselves in the prevention effort.

Furthermore, though VAW can be difficult to prevent during non-emergency periods, natural disasters and armed conflicts bring new challenges for VAW prevention efforts. The following points represent challenges
organization representatives have experienced while working during an emergency as well as general challenges that always exist, and are exacerbated by crises.

General instability during emergencies often prevents CBOs from reaching target populations. Mass displacement may cause local organizations to lose loyal participants and activists, and thus potentially the progress they were making in fostering sustainable commitments to VAW prevention. Resuming prevention activities with displaced populations requires expertise and careful execution. Activities should be launched after a thorough analysis of the pre- and post-disaster community dynamics that might affect program success.

Emergencies also often strain or inhibit communication between local personnel and community volunteer members. This compromises staff safety and often results in additional responsibilities to ensure that personnel in the field are accounted for and out of direct danger.

Additionally, CBOs often find themselves competing with international organizations for limited sources of funding. Several organization representatives mentioned volunteer and employee poaching - or the reality that personnel leave the organization for international organizations in favor of higher salaries or the promise thereof - as a common challenge to operating during emergencies. Without tangible incentives for remaining actively involved in a CBO’s program, volunteers are unlikely to remain loyal to the effort.

Organization representatives also highlighted the importance of assessing how a crisis influences the priorities of individuals and communities to realistically determine what types of emergency programming are possible given the chaos of the situation. Naturally, immediate survival becomes the main concern of individuals and families and it can be difficult to maintain support for VAW prevention under such circumstances. Victims of sexual violence may be less willing to come forward for help during the emergency. This can make addressing their needs increasingly difficult.

These challenges require adaptation of messages and communication strategies, to reflect the shifting priorities of the target audience. For example, in times of peace many VAW prevention messages are designed to spur discussion about community norms. (Just because violence happens often, does that make it right? When a father hits a mother, what are the children learning? Are women to be blamed for the violence they go through?) In an emergency, messages about immediate threats and strategies for staying safe should be more direct and active. For example, following Hurricane Mitch’s destruction in Central America, a local Nicaraguan NGO organized a violence prevention campaign with the slogan: “violence against women is a disaster than men can prevent”. Or, VAW prevention actors may find a deeper impact in presenting the

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issue in a personal way. In the Ngara camp, a displacement camp in Tanzania for Rwandan refugees – a local NGO asked men to imagine their own daughters, wives, sisters, mothers and other female relatives as victims of sexual and physical violence that accompanied the conflict. Participants in the group, having never framed the problem in such a personal way, changed their attitudes on VAW substantially.\(^\text{17}\)

Emergency situations have also been shown to influence gender relations in ways that can increase VAW. Organization representatives discussed how humanitarian relief, targeted towards women only could leave men feeling disempowered, leading them to act out these feelings with violence. Sometimes, a female-centric approach to VAW prevention is unsustainable – men must also have access to male-oriented spaces and activities.\(^\text{18}\) When men perceive themselves as having been excluded from the relief process due to their gender, the scapegoats for their frustration are often women. For example, one organization representative shared that when women were given food rations they became targets for theft, increasing their vulnerability. Furthermore, men, already disempowered because they could not provide for their families, felt even more excluded. When organizations later approached men to engage them in awareness activities, the men reacted against these organizations telling them that it was too easy to only engage men when it was convenient for organizations and not when they, men, could also benefit, such as during resource distributions. Careful consultations with men can avoid such misunderstandings that might lead to violence. In an IDP camp in Guinea, local men attempted to close a shelter for abused women out of a misconception that the safe space was encouraging women to divorce their husbands. Once these men were educated on the purpose of the shelter, they accepted its value and gave support to its continued operation.\(^\text{19}\)

Finally, considering the lack of institutional support during stable situations, it was no surprise that organization representatives discussed the further breakdown of these services during crises. The destruction of support systems also affects traditional community mechanisms that, under normal circumstances, are often relied on more frequently than state justice systems to seek redress for cases of violence. When community level mechanisms are destabilized, impunity for violence increases and women are less safe, further complicating prevention work.

**IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE OF VAW IN EMERGENCIES**

Though most organization representatives have not worked directly on VAW prevention in emergencies, they used their contextual understanding and expertise in non-emergency work to articulate several methods they thought would be effective. Many different topics and ideas were discussed but the theme that emerged most was the need for emergency and disaster preparedness.

Emergency and disaster preparedness is a necessary, yet underdeveloped component of VAW prevention. In this area, organizations feel that the government has a large role to play in preparing for emergencies and in equipping itself to manage them more effectively. This in turn can help mitigate the negative impact of such

\(^\text{17}\) Ibid
\(^\text{18}\) Ibid
emergencies on increasing VAW. Furthermore, NGOs and other local actors should also engage in preparedness to be ready before the onset of an emergency. Being prepared means, first, being able to anticipate the needs of people and the gaps that are most likely to occur. If organizations have this knowledge, they can already start planning, training, and building the necessary capacity to respond when an emergency strikes.

Emergency preparedness also means having materials and other program plans ready for the onset of an emergency. After Hurricane Joan, Nicaraguan women formed a community-specific disaster preparedness organization, which created and implemented locally relevant disaster preparedness plans. The group’s activities better prepared the town to brace the subsequent Hurricane Mitch. This increased resilience to a natural disaster, spearheaded by local women, inherently prevents a large amount of post-disaster VAW by buffering the town as a whole against the chaos typical of the acute phase of the disaster.  

On the individual level, people should be taught how to prepare to protect themselves and their families from the heightened risk of VAW during a crisis. This may mean training families to prepare emergency kits at home, ready by the front door, equipped with items necessary to prevent or respond to VAW, such as prophylactics or a small amount of money, in the event of an evacuation. This could also mean having boy clothes available for girls to put on quickly if the family has to leave in a hurry. Disguising girls as boys can protect them from certain types of violence directed at girls. Overall, organization representatives felt that knowing ahead of time how to prepare, what to expect, and how to act during an emergency would be the most effective way to help prevent VAW once an emergency starts.

Additionally, easy access to services is paramount for equipping women with protection. Women and girls often become even more vulnerable if they have to walk long distances to access services. Close proximity can help reduce exposure to potential violence. It is also important for prevention of re-victimization for those women and girls that need specific follow-up services. If those services are not easily accessible, they may not be able to heal and may become even more vulnerable. Additionally, organizations should serve as advocates for the establishment of private spaces where women and victims of violence can feel safe discussing their experiences, accessing services, or simply having a conversation in peace.

Nevertheless, organization representatives generally agreed that there should not be a sole approach to preventing VAW. Rather, different strategies must be used simultaneously. As one representative framed it, "I think prevention is not a one man’s job or one man’s institution...In an emergency you need collective efforts, so what you can do is team up because alone you can’t do anything, so team up with different multi-sectoral organizations so you address the situation at hand". This multi-strategy approach may look different in every context, as different groups may be targeted with special programs or messages. However, it can be accomplished through creative use of advocacy, media campaigns, cooperation with police, and service provision among other options. By combining a number of different but complementary approaches, organizations can increase their impact. For example, one representative described the way his organization uses school debates and assemblies to teach children about VAW. The organization complemented this work with separate activities for parents. On a broad scale the full community was reached through media campaigns and a partnership with cultural leadership. This holistic programming ensured that every community member received some form of VAW prevention messaging and that many were able to hear complementary messages in multiple settings to reinforce them.

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20 Ibid.
In a crisis situation, creating a multi-sectoral approach is even more complex. Members of multiple communities may be mixed with their hosts, and outside actors such as the military or international organizations may also play a large role. Structures used to promote VAW messaging in times of stability - such as schools, churches, or local councils - may be overwhelmed or destroyed during the crisis. Any existing program would have to quickly identify new structures through which to act, maintain an awareness of what new actors are doing in the field, and carefully balance the programming it targets to host and guest communities in order to adapt to an emergency environment.

Several organizations mentioned the negative effect that can result when strategies are not coordinated. This can be particularly problematic for organizations that focus on awareness raising rather than service provision. If these groups raise awareness about services without coordinating with service providers to improve and expand these services, women may become disillusioned to find that there is not as much support as may have been advertised. Comprehensive programming can also be administered through collaborative partnerships. These relationships include linking up with service providers, other organizations, police and international agencies. Collaborating with media outlets is essential to disseminate pertinent information or messages encouraging nonviolence. Partnering with the police can allow for peaceful demonstrations and lead to a reduction in police brutality during protests, as discussed above.

On a related note, coordination is an important aspect of effective programming in emergencies. Coordination between and among all actors involved is necessary to avoid duplication and more efficiently utilize limited time and resources. Additionally, coordination allows for more holistic programming, as actors with different areas of specialization are able to complement one another’s work and benefit from a wider body of knowledge and resources. Local actors should explore existent tools for improving their ability to coordinate between and among each other. For instance, they could engage with the GBV Information Management System, or GBVIMS. The GBVIMS represents a complex initiative to assist humanitarian actors responding to VAW to securely and efficiently “collect, store, analyze and share data reported by GBV [VAW] survivors.” 21 Enhancing local access to, and active use of, a platform such as the GBVIMS could facilitate information sharing and dissemination of best practices.

Despite the many negative consequences of emergency or disaster contexts, several organization representatives noted that there are positive opportunities amidst the chaos. During emergencies, especially if displacement occurs, people may for the first time interact with communities that hold different attitudes, moral standards, and behavior. Exposure to new ideas may encourage community members to rethink and redefine their own values away from violent or patriarchal attitudes. Furthermore, during a crisis people are forced to rebuild many aspects of their lives. This rebuilding may offer an opportunity for affected families to create new habits of relating to one another and the larger community. Since prevention of VAW depends on behavior change, emergencies, while temporarily increasing the incidence of violence, may hold the potential

21 About the GBVIMS. The Gender-Based Violence Information Management System. <http://gbvims.org/what-is-gbvims/>
The onset of a crisis does not imply that CBOs cannot explore creative and artistic ways to prevent violence. For a non-violence program in schools, a Haitian CBO brought in the expertise of a Haitian ethnographer to assist in crafting innovative lessons about child exploitation. The materials created in collaboration with the ethnographer included nuanced details about Haitian culture, which piqued the interest of participants and reinforced a sense of Haitian pride that may have been affected by the disaster. By personalizing the curriculum, the CBO left a deeper impression upon participants than a more generalized lesson might have done.

Finally, regardless of the inherent challenges of programming during emergencies, the majority of organization representatives felt that their work would continue, though it would have to be adapted to the emergency context. For example, organizations undertaking sensitization and awareness felt that their work not only could continue, but also should continue during the emergency. Nevertheless they emphasized the need to adapt the messaging to the new circumstances that emergencies bring along, though no concrete example of this type of messaging were offered. Work to involve men should also continue during emergencies. Men may feel certain vulnerabilities during emergencies due to various circumstances such as lack of work and inability to provide for their families. Such changes can provoke some men to resort to more violence. In emergencies men therefore need to continue to be involved in prevention of VAW as they are part of the problem but also the solution. Organizations working with the SASA! method also said that SASA! could be continued in emergencies, albeit once again adapted to the specific circumstances created by the emergency.

A FINAL NOTE

“GBV prevention should be seen as a movement, not as a project.” These words, spoken by an individual GBV Prevention Network member, capture many of the ideas our team encountered in the course of this research. They underscore the fact that violence has deep roots in society and requires a long-term commitment to overcome. Projects that attempt to change actions only at the surface level will forever be responding to the newest crisis, rather than uprooting the problem at its source. To make the transition from a project to a movement, actors must work with the full spectrum of community members and attack violence from multiple angles – using a combination of approaches to best fit each context. They must engage the community not only as beneficiaries but as creators of VAW programming and provide community members with the training to carry on this work independently. Finally, they must work not only in reaction to the dangers of today but strategically to address the root causes of violence that may manifest only in the next generation. This may mean crafting messages that address patriarchal attitudes or providing women with income generating activities to reduce their economic dependency. Whatever the specific form this movement takes, it cannot be a short-term activity – undertaken for a couple of years until funding runs out or interest wanes. Instead, actors in the VAW prevention field should weave a dialogue about women’s rights into the communities where they work, alongside other community ideals of peace, prosperity, education and health. Attitudes and behaviors that display respect towards women must become a central feature of every culture.
The GBV Prevention Network, aided by tools like the SASA! method, is in many ways already working toward this goal. Network members are working throughout the country to raise awareness of VAW in Ugandan communities both large and small. They have shared many of the remarkable successes of that work with our team. What remains is for each member organization to take full advantage of the knowledge held by the professional field and by communities themselves to prevent violence against women. It is our hope that this research brings the network one step closer to that goal by collecting and presenting the wealth of knowledge members themselves possess and opening a discussion about where there might be room for growth in the future. Through innovative and collaborative work each VAW prevention organization can make a lasting impact of the future of the women it serves and the world they inhabit.
QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN

How can violence against women be prioritized during a crisis situation?

Several groups discussed the low priority given to women’s issues and the likelihood that this will only worsen during a crisis. To combat this tendency VAW prevention needs to be more effectively mainstreamed, methods must be found to incorporate VAW messages into crisis-specific activities (such as relief distribution), and communities must work more effectively with outside groups such as the military and police to communicate their expectations.

Which prevention methods can organizations adapt in times of emergencies?

Though organizations shared their ideas and experiences with adapting strategies and programming in times of emergencies, further reflection is needed to brainstorm which methodologies can be best applied during a crisis. This includes understanding and incorporating how the context of a specific emergency will affect the prevention strategy by either creating new opportunities that were not available before the emergency or, on the other hand, creating challenges that can make prevention work even more difficult. In a displacement setting for example, the ability to easily access populations that are typically remote may create greater access to services and law enforcement for women. On the other hand, it will be more difficult to target the population with livelihood programs while they are removed from their homes and normal income sources.

When should prevention efforts be initiated after an emergency?

Disaster preparedness and initiating prevention efforts at the onset of an emergency, can allow for communities to maximize their ability to defend and empower women. Yet many organizations struggle to be able to work at all in the acute phase of an emergency. As such organizations need to further explore when prevention efforts should be initiated, whether it is before or after of an emergency or during cyclical emergencies.

How can we fill the gap between awareness-raising and changing attitudes?

Awareness raising has often become synonymous with changed behavior yet awareness alone does not change attitudes and behaviors. Almost all organization represented highlighted deeply rooted cultural perceptions and attitudes as a major challenge to preventing VAW. As such awareness raising must be accompanied by complementary mobilization—such as through the increased use of incentives and accountability structures—to address root causes and drivers of violence.

How can organizations continue to empower women in a way that involves men as a positive asset?

Singling out women for special opportunities can threaten traditional gender roles and cultural norms potentially marginalizing men. This can further expose women to violence and increase their vulnerability. Several organization representatives noted that men tend to disengage from awareness campaigns as it becomes clear to them that they are being targeted for awareness-raising and left out of programs that offer tangible benefits. It may be necessary to find ways to re-engage men in other areas in order to win their trust and support for gender initiatives.

Likewise, how can we engage men in the fight against VAW without a subsequent marginalization of women’s voices?
It is widely recognized that men’s attitudes and behavior are major drivers of VAW and the increase in programs that engage men reflects this. Yet bringing men on board should never mean that women’s voices and ideas take a backseat. Those active in the field justifiably wish to ensure that an increase in programs that engage men does not divert vital resources away from programs in place for women, nor reinforce norms of male domination of resources and decision-making.

How can organizations be encouraged to adapt long-term strategies during a short-term crisis? Or should entirely separate activities be adopted?

During the majority of conversations, organization representatives tended to favor long-term approaches in their crisis prevention strategies. A good example is the use of anti-domestic violence boys clubs in schools or other programs designed to raise awareness and change behavior. Most of these activities would take months to establish and require functioning local institutions, such as schools, to be effective. It remains to be discovered which long-term strategies would be best suited to continue during a crisis and which should be temporarily replaced with crisis-phase activities.
REFLECTIONS

Preparedness

Our interviews highlighted the need for greater disaster preparedness among local organizations. Most organizations admitted that they may have never even considered operating during an emergency and as such are not adequately prepared to adapt or continue their activities during a crisis. Yet despite this gap, many organizations expressed enthusiasm for gaining skills in this area and building crisis plans. Still, as this idea is explored it is important to emphasize that preparing for the threats of tomorrow should never come at the cost of effectively carrying out VAW prevention today.

Prevention vs. Response

The line between prevention and response needs to be more clearly drawn. Most of the organization representatives (and much of the literature on violence against women) lack a clear understanding of the difference between response and prevention activities. The result has been to conceal a gap in activities geared toward the primary prevention of violence, particularly in the immediate crisis phase. Most activities seem to be either crisis phase response (such as improving medical services for rape victims), or long-term prevention (such as educating boys about gender equality). During a crisis this gap becomes more problematic as the need for primary prevention increases.

Matching challenges to responses

At times there is an imbalance between the dynamics that local organizations highlight as drivers of violence against women, and the strategies that these same organizations employ to prevent violence. For example, attitudes were almost universally cited as the major driver of VAW, yet many activities were geared towards raising awareness about prevalence or existence of VAW, rather than addressing the challenges created by patriarchal attitudes. However, even those with an awareness of VAW may still perpetrate violence. Likewise, economic vulnerability was cited as a significant challenge for women, yet it did not receive a corresponding emphasis in programming. These distinctions are slight, but important as CBOs craft programs. If actors acknowledge that sustainable VAW prevention must stem from contextual analysis of the VAW drivers in a given community, then it follows that prevention programming should complement community needs based on the understanding of local drivers of violence.

Methods vs. Message

Finally, most organizations were comfortable discussing in detail the methods they use to prevent VAW, but organization representatives did not offer specifics on the content of their messages. This is reflected in a lack of metrics in place for gauging the effectiveness of messages. Instead, when organizations talked about their successes they focused on successful methods – highlighting the size of an audience or the number of volunteers, rather than the message itself. This tendency may lead organizations to miss the indications that lasting change has occurred.
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Women’s Refugee Commission, 1 Nov. 2009.  

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<http://gbvims.org/what-is-gbvims/>

The Software. Frontline SMS. <http://www.frontlinesms.com/the-software/>
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Lists of participating organizations

Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD): ACORD envisions a society in which all citizens are equally able to achieve their rights and fulfill their responsibilities. ACORD works with more than 2,000 partners and community-based organizations in 18 Sub-Saharan African countries to improve women’s rights, foster sustainable livelihoods, pursue peacebuilding initiatives and address HIV/AIDS in Africa. http://www.acordinternational.org/

Action for Development (ACFODE): Works to promote women’s empowerment, gender equality and equity through advocacy, networking and capacity building of both women and men through increased women’s participation in decision-making, good governance through all levels, gender mainstreaming throughout political, economic and social programming, and similar initiatives. www.acfode.org

American Refugee Committee (ARC): Since 1994 ARC Uganda has been working to provide emergency and transitional assistance to displaced persons. Today, ARC manages 14 displacement camps in northern Uganda, assisting with the construction of new homes, administering business loans, leading livelihoods training and other services. http://www.arcrelief.org/site/PageServer?pagename=programs_uganda

Center for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP): CEDOVIP works to influence change in attitudes, beliefs and practices that lead to violent behaviors by creating activism against domestic violence, promoting national prevention of violence against women, and bringing new focus to legislative and policy reform on violence against women issues in Uganda. http://www.raisingvoices.org/cedovip.php

Charity for Peace Foundation: Based in northern Uganda, the organization works to identify communities experiencing high levels of violence against women, governments and other relevant stakeholders for awareness and advocacy initiatives that seek to prevent and respond to violence against women. http://www.preventgbvafrica.org/organizational-member/organizational-member-charity-peace-foundation

The Good Hope Foundation for Rural Development: Through community awareness, sensitization, training and technical assistance, the organization works to mainstream intersecting social, health and political issues in a way that might effectively reduce and prevent violence against women. http://www.preventgbvafrica.org/organizational-member/organizational-member-good-hope-foundation-rural-development


ICON Women & Young People’s Leadership Academy: An initiative to encourage the leadership potential of young adults who have been affected by or live with HIV/AIDS and/or gender based violence, to develop innovative approaches to address poverty, violence, gender inequality and gender inequity in all areas of society. http://iconwypla.org/
InterAid, Inc: In partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), InterAid, Inc seeks to address human rights, health, environment, poverty and other concerns of displaced and refugee communities in Uganda.
http://www.interaiduganda.org/

The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU): Works to promote peace, reconciliation, good governance, and holistic human development through interfaith action and collaboration, advocating for the empowerment of member bodies for the common good.
http://www.ircu.or.ug/

International Rescue Committee Moroto: The IRC exists to protect women and children from violence and exploitation by fostering a safe environment, encouraging education, supporting farmers and small businesses, and helping communities promote peace and long-term development.
http://www.rescue.org/where/uganda

Isis WICCE: Works to promote justice and empowerment of women by investigating and documenting women’s realities and facilitating the exchange of skills and information to create a vanguard of women with the capacity to participate in processes that provide redress, and policies on women’s human rights, peace and human security.
http://www.isis.or.ug

Karimojong Community Child Welfare Initiatives (KACOCI): Works to prevent violence at the community level by leading awareness, sensitization, advocacy and other efforts tailored to the unique context of the Karamoja region.

Fondasyon Limyè Lavi: Commits to long-term partnerships with communities to facilitate dialogues and processes that address the effects of the restavek system, a form of child slavery.
http://www.fondasyonlimyelavi.org/

Oxfam International Uganda: Oxfam supports post-conflict recovery through provision of essential services - such as water and sanitation – and supporting agricultural development and other livelihoods initiatives through provision of agricultural inputs, extension support, trainings and production assets.
http://www.oxfam.org/en/uganda

Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence (RECESVID): Dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights and victim rehabilitation. To this end, the organization seeks to provide quality post-violence care as well as advocate for improved prevention of all forms of GBV.
http://www.recesvid.org/

Uganda Network on Law, Ethics and HIV/AIDS (UGANET): A network or organizations and individuals advocating for the development and strengthening of an appropriate human rights, legal, ethical and policy response to HIV/AIDS.
http://www.uganet.org/

Solidarité Fanm Ayisyen / Haitian Women in Solidarity (SOFA): An organization comprised of more than 5,000 members that works to reduce poverty, improve access to health, and advocate to power structures for better protection of women’s rights.
[No website available]

War Child Holland – Uganda: In Gulu, Lira and Kitgum districts, War Child focuses on improving community-based resources and protection for children, youth, and young mothers by engaging parents and caretakers, teachers, youth groups, other non-governmental organizations and community based organizations.
Appendix 2: Scenario details

Scenario used in the focus group process:

There has been major flooding and landslides throughout the country resulting in massive population displacement and the disruption of basic services. The national police force is overwhelmed; rioting is occurring in many places. The military have been deployed to keep the peace. Organization representatives’ loved ones and possessions are assumed to be safe.

Group 1 brainstormed ideas for involving community leaders.

Group 2 considered strategies for engaging men and boys.

Group 3 presented ways to raise community awareness.

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Below are the consent form and interview template used by our team in Uganda:

Community VAW Prevention

Hello and thank you for participating in this research. We are graduate students from the George Washington University in Washington, DC USA. We are working with the GBV Prevention Network on research to explore how community-based organizations can prevent violence against women and children before it happens during times of emergency. An emergency is an event that disrupts normal life, creates dangerous situations for local residents and can take a long time to recover from. This could be flooding, drought, an attack by armed groups or war. During emergencies, violence against women and children often increases dramatically. There are many organizations and programs that provide services to survivors of violence but there is less information about how community-based organizations prevent violence against women and children from happening at all. We know that local organizations have valuable insights into prevention work, and we are looking for the lessons you have learned, including certain aspects of your work that you believe are important for people to know. We know that organizations that don’t work specifically in emergencies, but are working generally on prevention in the region also have important contributions to this research.

The answers you provide for the study will be used to gather information about how to prevent violence against women before it happens during emergencies. This information will be gathered from other organizations that work on similar issues within their local community. All the information will then serve as base for more discussion on how to better prevent violence against women in emergencies.

- Do you have any questions?
- Do you understand our purpose?
• Everything you say here is confidential
• During this interview I will ask your name and about colleagues and organizations with whom you collaborate, but the names will be removed as soon as we are done talking. Is this OK?
• You are free not to answer any questions or to end the interview at anytime.
• Are you willing to talk with us and share your experiences?

• If you have any questions at any point feel free to email us at preventionproject2012@gmail.com

If so, please sign that you were given adequate information about the purpose of this interview and that you are comfortable to consent to the use of information that you have given during the interview according to your discretion.

X_______________________________________________________________

**RESPONDENT DATA:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affiliation/Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title/position in the organization</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission of the organization</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scope/Main activities of the organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Targeted Populations of your organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Reach of your organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of Staff and types of position held</td>
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<tr>
<td>What does your work at ____________ organization consist of? What are your</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POTENTIAL DISCUSSION GUIDE: (FOR EACH ANSWER = NO: IF NOT, WHY?)

General

1. What does violence against women look like/what types of violence are present in the community where you work? What types are more common?

2. Who experiences violence against women directly? Who is affected by violence against women indirectly?

3. What services exist in the community to prevent violence against women?

4. What do you think organizations working on preventing violence against women have been able to do well?

5. What do you think organizations/communities have not been able to address well in preventing VAW?

6. Does your organization work with other groups to prevent violence against women? If so, how?

7. Among your organizations activities, what are some general success stories or accomplishments you have achieved to prevent violence against women? (Refer back to earlier answers on organization activities, mission, goals, etc...)

8. Is your organization using a specific approach to VAW prevention, if so which one? Have they found any approach to be successful?

9. From your experiences, what prevention activities are the most effective in stopping violence against women before it starts? Why?

10. From your experiences, what is the biggest challenge to preventing violence against women?

11. What do community groups still need to learn to prevent violence against women?

12. Are there parts of preventing VAW that we don’t understand well?
13. If you could obtain specific skills/knowledge that you do not have now about preventing VAW what would they be/would you want to know?

**Emergency-transition**

14. During emergencies such as (see examples below), does your organizations have to change its violence against women prevention activities? How do you do this?

*Possible Scenarios:*

- **In Kampala:**
  Imagine that in an area where you work, the residents have been forcibly evicted by the city. This has led to homelessness, protests, and riots. How would this impact your violence against women prevention activities? What would you have to do differently? Has anything similar to this scenario happened before that impacted your activities? What did your organization do?

  Other past references: The walk to work protest after the 2011 elections or the riots in 2010 over the King (Kabaka) of Buganda

  Imagine that in an area where you work, the residents have lost their homes after a big storm caused flooding and mudslides. This has led to mass displacement. How would this impact your violence against women prevention activities? What would you have to do differently? Has anything similar to this scenario happened before that impacted your activities? What did your organization do?

- **Northern Uganda:**
  Was your organization working on the prevention of violence against women during the conflict with LRA? Could you share examples of how your prevention activities changed during this time? If not, imagine that an emergency like the LRA conflict emerged, how do you think your prevention activities would change?

- **Karamoja:**
  Has your organization been working on the prevention of violence against women as a part of the cattle raiding? Could you share examples of how your prevention activities changed to deal with these situations? If not, imagine the effects of the cattle raids on women and girls, how do you think your prevention activities would change?

- **Rwanda**
Was your organization working on the prevention of violence against women during the events of 1994? Could you share examples of how your prevention activities changed during that time? If not, imagine that a conflict emerges, how would your prevention activities change?

15. What do communities- families, schools, service providers, community groups- need to prevent violence against women during emergencies?

16. Are there any additional challenges/specific challenges you face in an emergency, how do you react?

17. What do you think that organizations have been able to do well in preventing VAW in emergencies?

18. What approaches/tools/strategies/etc. that you use could best be applied in an emergency?

19. What do community groups still need to learn to prevent VAW in emergencies? Please be specific.

**Final Thoughts**

20. What is the most important lesson you have learned about doing prevention work?

21. Do you have anything else you would like to share about preventing VAW in emergencies before we finish?

Would you be available to answer further questions after this interview? May we contact you by phone or email at a later time if we have more questions?

**CLOSING**

Thank respondent for their time and ideas, and express how helpful it has been to facilitators. Explain next steps: “We will look at all information and will make a presentation of findings to representatives of the community and agencies working on VAW prevention in emergencies. You will be able to access the product of this research project through relevant organizations connected with this research.”