



LEARNING REPORT 03

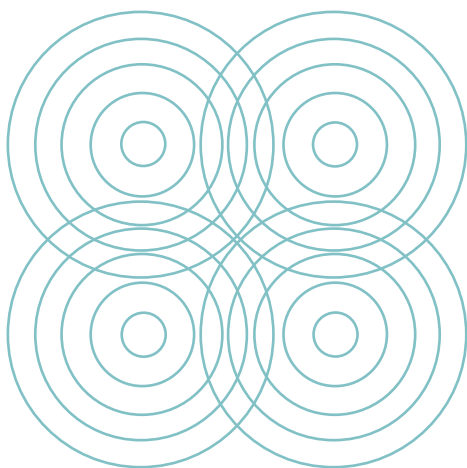
ADDRESSING SOCIAL NORMS AT THE VAW/ VAC INTERSECTION

Challenges and opportunities

WASHINGTON DC

9–10 APRIL 2019

Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices
Convened by the Gender, Violence and Health Centre (GVHC) of the
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)

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The Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices	2
The Washington DC meeting on social norms at the VAW and VAC intersection	2
Three key learnings	3
Introduction	5
Social and gender norms	5
Violence against women and violence against children: a primer	6
Violence against children	7
Violence against women	7
Two distinct fields coming together	
Collective knowledge at the learning meeting	11
A guiding framework	12
Group learnings and perspectives	14
1. Norms sustaining VAW, VAC and norms at the intersection	14
2. Current tension points in addressing VAW/VAC	16
3. Moving the VAW/VAC field forward	18
Concluding remarks and next steps	21
A coalition of the willing	21
References	23
Annex I: Participants	24
Annex II: Norms sustaining VAW, VAC and VAW/VAC	25



THE LEARNING GROUP ON SOCIAL NORMS AND GENDER-RELATED HARMFUL PRACTICES

In 2016, the Gender, Violence and Health Centre (GVHC) at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) launched a learning and reflection group on social norms and gender-related harmful practices (GHP). Donors and development practitioners have become increasingly interested in harnessing insights from social norms theory to catalyse change around gender inequity and harmful gender-related practices. Little guidance is available, however, to help programme implementers to integrate simple norms measures and change strategies within field-based programming. While theory-based insights open promising avenues for achieving change, a gap has emerged between theory and its application within development practice.

The mission of this group is thus to:

- Adapt insights and methods from social norm theory and research into practical guidance for development practitioners seeking to transform harmful gender-related practices in low and middle-income countries.
- Share and discuss individual solutions to common dilemmas around measurement and practice.
- Develop a programme of research and practice to test strategies that can help people negotiate new positive norms and/or dismantle norms that keep harmful practices in place.
- Inform the next wave of norms intervention design and evaluation, through our collective experience.

THE WASHINGTON DC MEETING ON SOCIAL NORMS AT THE VAW AND VAC INTERSECTION

In April 2019, as part of the Learning Group Initiative, LSHTM - in collaboration with the Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health - convened a meeting on addressing social norms at the intersection between violence against women and violence against children (VAW/VAC). Participants were chosen to reflect a wide range of actors in the VAW and VAC fields, and the cross-disciplinary approach needed to address VAW/VAC. This included, researchers, practitioners, international NGOs and donors working across social norms, VAW and VAC.

This meeting was the third in a series of meetings on social norms. Previous meetings covered the measurement of social norms (2017) and facilitated cross-fertilisation between social norms and gender scholars (2018). This third meeting facilitated discussion between participants on the potential for social norms work to help prevent both VAW and VAC. Over the course of the two-day meeting, we were guided by three main questions:

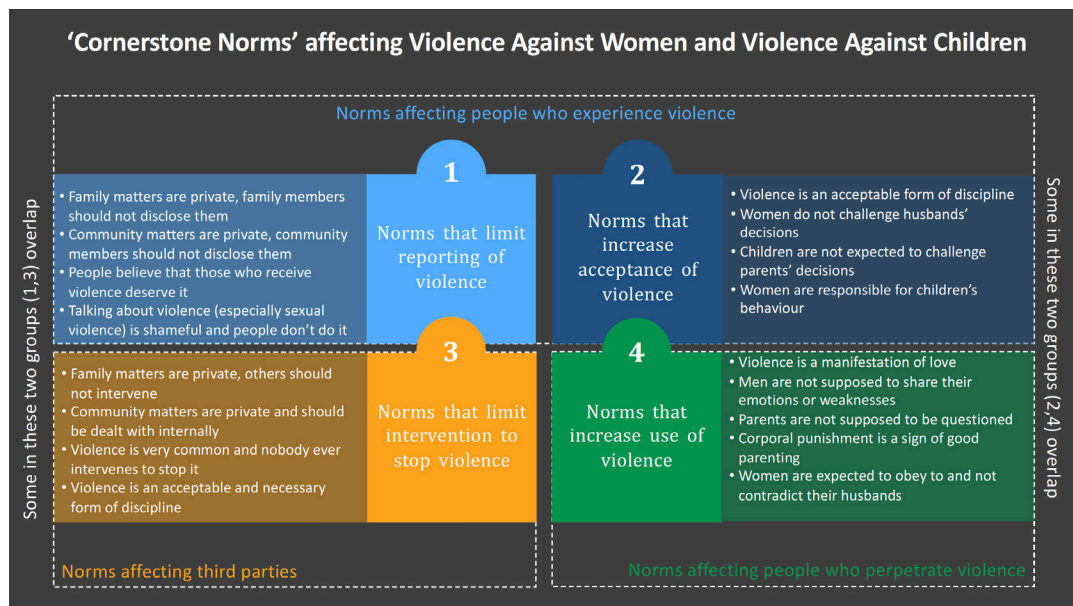
1. What are the cornerstone social norms that sustain VAW/VAC in the family and community?
2. What are the current tension points in addressing VAW/VAC that we are experiencing?
3. What opportunities exist for future effective research and action at the VAW/VAC Intersection?



THREE KEY LEARNINGS

1. Violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) are likely to be sustained by similar (or sometimes the same) norms.

We identified four normative domains (see figure below) that should receive the attention of practitioners willing to change their practice, reflecting evidence at this intersection.



2. Dissimilarities exist in how violence is conceptualized and addressed across the VAW and VAC fields.

Today, these are two distinct fields as a result of the different historical events that saw their emergence and the different intellectual standpoints that characterize scholarship and practice in these two spaces. Efforts need to be made to break conceptual "silent spaces" across the two fields, while also recognising that in some instances the two fields need dedicated approaches, focusing on areas of common ground where possible.

3. Emerging opportunities exist to implement and learn from experimental interventions at the VAW and VAC intersection.

Interventions that address several factors, including social norms, can offer important spaces of learning to progress the emerging common agenda. To avoid dispersion of resources, we need a coordinated learning and implementation strategy that allows opportunities for slow-paced reflection and learning (see figure below).

Phase 1

Marshal coalition of the willing

With this workshop we have begun to marshal a coalition of the willing. These are people who are ready to explore the potential opportunities and risks associated with doing work and the VAW/C intersection. Further discussions will help identify a core group of people who can achieve consensus on a conceptual and practical framework to move this exploration forward.

Phase 2

Develop Strategic Framework and vision

A smaller group of people gather to develop a vision and plan of action. Leveraging collective existing or new resources, the core group will develop a plan of action to stress-test the possibility of doing VAW/C work as well as its comparative advantage vis a vis siloed interventions.

Phase 3

Prototype Interventions

Prototype 'nested' interventions: VAC interventions with a VAW component, or VAW interventions with a VAC component, to generate learning and explore the future possibility of integrated VAW/C interventions.

Phase 4

Assign Value and Disseminate

Interpret and assign value to results.

Generate evidence of what worked and how, using both VAW and VAC frameworks to assess outcomes.

Phase 5

Reassess Strategy & Expand Coalition

Share findings with practitioners and researchers in this space.

Move to second stream of work: towards fully integrated interventions, and nested policies within UN and donor organisations.

Expand coalition of the willing by enlarging network of professionals involved in the conversations.



INTRODUCTION

In this meeting, we looked at how social and gender norms theory can assist design interventions to prevent violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC). Here, we provide a short summary on social norms and how these influence harmful practices, for those who are less familiar with these theories. We offer an introduction to the fields of VAW and VAC, with some comparative reflections on their history and current dominant paradigms. Those familiar with both VAW and VAC might want to jump to the next section of this report.

SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS

Social norms are informal (often unwritten) rules shared by people in a given society or group; they define what is considered normal and appropriate behaviour for members of that group [1]. They can influence, for instance, how people dress for a wedding, stand in line when buying something, shake hands when meeting someone, say “bless you” when someone sneezes, offer their seat on the bus to someone older or speak quietly at the library, to cite a few examples. Social norms influence what people do both in familiar situations (because they know the rules) and in unfamiliar ones (because they do their best to learn the new rules and comply with them).

How do people know what rules – that is, what norms – exist to guide behaviour in a particular situation? They learn mostly from observing what happens around them and less through direct instruction. As they observe what happens in situation Y, people develop two beliefs:

1. What other people do (X) in situation Y; and
2. How other people react (including no reaction) when someone does X in situation Y.

As people see how others react to someone doing (or not doing) a certain thing, they form beliefs about what others think should be done: if others are happy and smile when someone does X, they probably think that’s what should be done. Conversely, if others get angry or roll their eyes, it probably means they think X shouldn’t be done. No reaction might suggest that a behaviour is acceptable for the situation. The most frequently mentioned theory of social norms (by Cialdini and colleagues) distinguishes between people’s beliefs about:

1. What others in their group do in situation Y (descriptive norms);
2. The extent to which others in their group approve of a given behaviour in situation Y (injunctive norms).

Similar characterisations of norms are found elsewhere in the literature. Bicchieri, for instance, called the first type of belief (what others do) “empirical expectations”

and the second type of belief (what others think should be done) “normative expectations” [2]. Several thinkers in the social norms space have also suggested that norms apply within a “reference group”; that is, different groups of people have different social rules. In Japan, there exists a norm that people dress in white at funerals, while in Italy people should dress in black. So, as people move from Italy to Japan, they move across reference groups and might knowingly change their behaviour to comply with the different norms in place. As another example, in a rural African village, where two different ethnic groups coexist, different norms might apply within the two groups. People in each group would comply with the norms that exist within their own group, but would know that others outside of their group behave differently and approve of different things, adapting their actions when they meet them.

Gender norms, finally, is a term that emerged in the gender literature, specifically. At its simplest, the word gender refers to the beliefs, roles, norms and power relations that affect women and men’s identity and actions [3]. While gender identity is one person’s sense of their own gender - for instance man, woman or another gender entirely - gender norms are rules of acceptable and appropriate behaviours for people of a given gender. These rules are learned and internalised early on in childhood, through socialisation processes happening in the family, peer group, school, media and institutions. Gender norms affect, for instance, the way a woman or a man is supposed to dress, sit, or speak. Individuals who do not conform to gender norms risk stigma, social exclusion, and negative sanctions. Gender norms contribute to shaping a gender system that affects men’s and women’s (often unequal) access to power, resources, and freedoms.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: A PRIMER

The WHO defines violence as all acts conducted with the intent to cause harm or damage someone (as opposed to unintentional harm resulting from, for example, road traffic accidents) [4]. The WHO definition considers the impact of violence on the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities, and societies. Health-related consequences of violence range from physical injury, to psychological harm, and even death. In recent years, increased attention to the health implications of intentional violence has resulted in it being considered a public health issue (and not just a criminal one) requiring both prevention and response strategies.

Different forms of violence have been defined and include for example, physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence. Commonly, researchers and practitioners interested in addressing violence distinguish types of violence according to who perpetrates it. Where the violence occurs can also distinguish between types of violence (for example, workplace violence), in addition to who experiences it.

These more formal definitions provide guidance on what should be considered violence. However, over the course of the meeting two themes emerged, which contribute to making work on violence against women and children challenging: 1) justification and tolerance of violence; and 2) addressing violence globally. For example, some forms of violence are more widely tolerated than others. Violence that causes injury or death have historically been more straightforward to define as violence when compared with emotional violence, which is less well

understood and can vary in its definition depending on the cultural context. This in turn has implications for the forms of violence that are prioritised, whether in their criminalisation, or through research and practice. Efforts to address violence at a global level are also complicated. Guided by a human rights framework, these often ignore cultural, religious or more nuanced justifications for violence. In the case of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), this is viewed as a means to 'protect' the girl by practicing communities. These beliefs, however, are predicated on asserting power and control over the lives of girls and women and rooted in patriarchal ideas and power imbalances. As such these practices are viewed by the international community as violence, but are more complex to address at the community-level.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The term violence against children refers to “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse” [5].

Violence against children (VAC) incorporates a broad range of physical, sexual, and emotional acts directed towards individuals under 18 years of age. These acts have long lasting developmental consequences and impacts on children's health and educational attainment. Estimates suggest that over one billion children a year experience at least one type of violence [6]. Sex-related differences exist: girls are more at risk of physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner and sexual violence by a non-partner while boys are more at risk of non-partner physical violence. Both witnessing violence and experiencing various forms of maltreatment however, is common across genders. The types of violent acts that children can experience also vary by age, partly because of the social and developmental changes that occur from birth up to 18 years. Three types of VAC are not age-related (maltreatment, sexual violence, and emotional violence) while three are: bullying (5-18), youth violence (10-18), and intimate partner violence (11-18). Children are likely to experience multiple forms of violence at once, the majority of which takes place within the family [7]. Witnessing violence can also have harmful consequences, for instance increasing the risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence later in life. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out the fundamental rights of children and their protection from all forms of violence on an international level.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The term “violence against women” refers to any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life [8].

Violence against women (VAW) also incorporates a broad range of physical, sexual, emotional, or economic acts directed against women and that, traditionally, have been recognised to be sustained by power imbalances and inequitable gender norms [8, 9]. Global prevalence estimates suggest that 1 in 3 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, by a partner or non-partner [10]. The causes of the persistence of VAW are multifaceted, and include structural and systemic inequalities between men and women, boys and girls, discrimination, and social and gender norms. In addition, ineffective response systems can in some instances prevent violence being reported and addressed. VAW is a global public health issue, with far reaching implications for a woman's health (and that of

her family), and society as a whole. Some of the negative impacts include, physical complications (serious injuries and death), mental health problems (psychological suffering and suicide), reproductive health complications (unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases), and reduced productivity and employment. While intimate partner violence (IPV) is the one of the most prevalent forms of violence, violence can be perpetrated against women and girls by family members, and non-partners, such as, sexual assault (including harassment), honour killings, femicide, trafficking and FGM/C [11].

TWO DISTINCT FIELDS COMING TOGETHER

Historically, VAC and VAW emerged as two distinct fields of international legislature and global development action. VAC is one of the issues addressed by the international Child Protection framework, a set of laws and services to support prevention and response to risk of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect of children. The historical roots of the current child protection framework are in the legal frameworks adopted in late 1800s by high-income Anglophone countries (e.g. UK and USA) that later developed into structured child protection systems. The term “child abuse” emerged in the 1960s; twenty years later it had gained a powerful hold in the Global North, with some arguing that, by then, the term suffered from definitional inflation, growing in both meaning and complexity. At this historical moment, the paradigm of vulnerable children needing protection from abusive parents led the way to the emergence of a new international child protection system. The Convention of the Right of the Child was created at this very time (1989), affected by the political stream of thought and action around what child protection meant and required. Today, the child protection systems in the Global North have been severely criticised; commentators argue that these ‘haemorrhaging’ systems are doing more harm than good, as they contribute to the breakdown of families and communities, thus destroying the social fabric of society [12-14].

VAW is obviously not a recent phenomenon; the burning of witches in Europe, the binding of Chinese women’s feet, and laws that allowed husbands to chastise their wives in the US are all testimonies to the age-old normalisation and acceptance of VAW. In spite of the longstanding experiences of violence, only by the second half of the 20th century did efforts to end VAW become an international movement, mostly driven by larger discussions on civil rights and by second-wave feminist activists that examined systematic inequalities and advocated for collective action in the Global North (particularly in Anglophone countries) [15]. While the movement began in the US as an anti-rape movement, domestic violence soon became a central issue; it challenged invisible and yet institutionalised power dynamics that turned a blind eye on husbands’ use of violence to discipline their wives. This growing movement pushed for greater dignified attention to VAW. More recently however, efforts have been made to better understand partner violence experienced by males, and this still remains a largely neglected area in the domestic violence literature [16]. Some key milestones in the politicisation (and institutionalisation) of the VAW movement included the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (General Recommendation 19 and 35), the UN 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the 1995 adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (UN Women), and the 1996 World Health Assembly, where VAW was declared a major public health issue (followed by the seminal 2002 WHO report) [4].

More recently, the World Health Assembly adopted the Global Plan of Action to improve the health systems response to violence against women, girls, and children (2016) and the International Labour Organization’s recommendation and convention have created new standards to combat violence and harassment in the workplace,

drawing attention to gender-based violence and domestic violence amongst all employees.

To offer a visual representation of how VAW and VAC came about as different historical moments, we have mapped on Google Ngram (a website that counts the recurrence of selected words in the books included in “Google Books”) the words “child protection” and “gender equality” – not with the claim to offer precise scientific insights, but to look at when the two words emerged in the English literature over time.



Figure 1. Emergence of Terms: “Child Protection” and “Gender Equality” (1900 – 1990)

In the 20th century, the word child protection was relatively common, especially in the period 1925 – 1940 (that is, until the beginning of World War II). The opposite is true for the term gender equality, which in the same time period did not appear in books written in English. Both terms were used increasingly from the mid 1960s-onwards; later, in the period 1990-2007 (not shown), the usage of the term gender equality increased much faster. The same is not true for the terms “Violence against children” and “Violence against women”, the use of which increased for both in the 70s, albeit with different trajectories.



Figure 2. Emergence of Terms: “Violence against Women” and “Violence against Children” (1960 – 1990)

Despite their simultaneous appearance in the literature, the rise in awareness that VAW and VAC were social issues that required political solutions, took place at different historical times and with different premises. Contrary to the Child Protection system – that was, from the beginning, service-centred and embedded in organisational hierarchies – the VAW movement had explicit political and feminist grassroots origins. If anything, its subsequent professionalization was criticised for having departed from its activist nature [17]. Further differences exist in the nature

of VAW and VAC. While the Child Protection system movement is led by adults (that is, not by the children that it is meant to protect), the VAW movement is largely led by female activists. The difference in who is leading these two anti-violence efforts has important implications for the potential assumptions that actors in these two fields might make about victims and perpetrators (a point we will return to later in the report).

In Table 1 below we have summarised some of these differences, helpful in understanding the points of tension that emerged during our meeting.

Table 1: Key Differences in the VAW and VAC fields		
	Violence against children	Violence against women
Dominant Paradigm	Children abused by adults (often parents)	Women abused by men (often partners)
The paradigm suggests that victims...	Don't know what's best for them (we need to ensure the best interest for the children)	Know what's best for them (we need to permit women to use their power and ensure what is best for them)
People who experience violence are...	Victims/Others (adult-led, despite efforts for greater child participation)	Survivors/Us (women-led, despite efforts for greater engagement of men)
Movement began	Late 1800s	Second half of 1900s
Field is today primarily	A system of policies and procedures embodied in and pushed forward by international and national organisations.	A cross-cutting movement of activists, journalists, politicians and researchers leveraging influence and lobbying international actors and governments
Dominating international approach	Rights-based	Rights-based



COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE AT THE LEARNING MEETING

As we mentioned, three questions guided this meeting:

1. What are the cornerstone social norms that sustain VAW/VAC in the family and community?
2. What are the current tension points in addressing VAW/VAC that we are experiencing?
3. What opportunities exist for future effective research and action at the VAW/VAC Intersection?

Participants included individuals and organisations based in Bolivia, India, Italy, Kenya, Poland, Thailand, the UK and USA (A list of participants can be found in Annex I). To kick-off the meeting, we ran an exercise in self-reflexivity, positioning each participant in the VAW/VAC discourse. Using Alessandra Guedes' framework (see next section), participants were invited to identify their organisations as Implementers, Researchers, Funders, International Organisations in the UN system, or a mix of the above. Next, participants positioned their work on one or more VAW/VAC intersections, with the majority working on "adolescence" and "social norms". Very few of us worked on the "common, cumulative and compounding consequences" or the "co-occurrence" intersections.

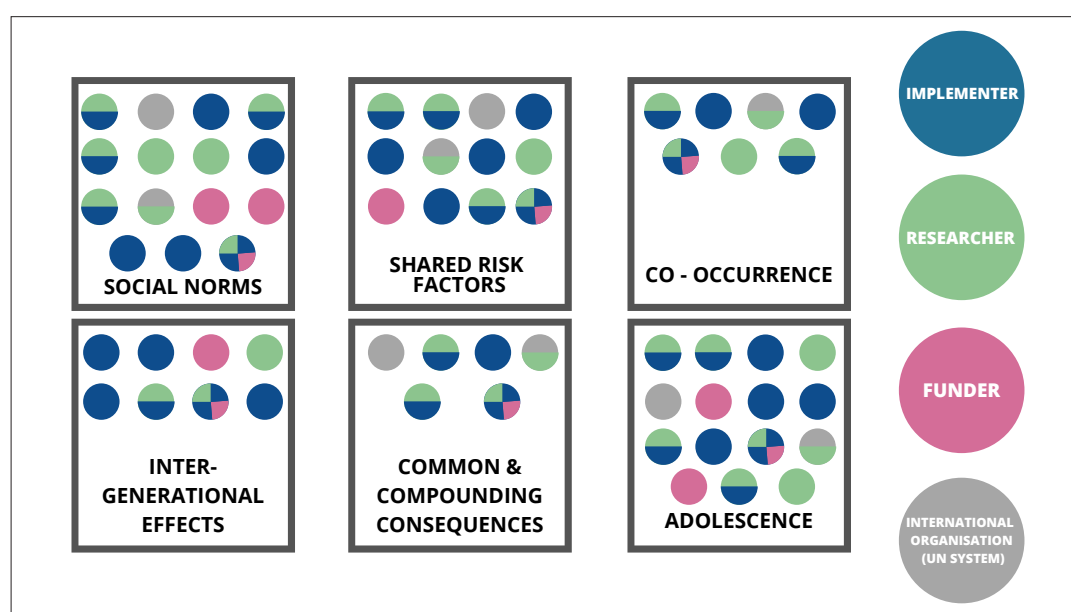


Figure 3. VAW/VAC Intersections meeting participants were working on

Despite the fact that most participants felt experienced in using social norm theory in their work, they said that while practitioners, scholars, and funders were working across VAW and VAC in various ways, few were using social norms theory to inform their work. Bringing together individuals and organisations working on social norms at the VAW/VAC intersection was seen to be crucial to moving the violence prevention and social norms fields forward. Participants discussed how the group’s purpose was to uncover how social norms can be leveraged to address both VAW and VAC, but also to generate new questions and shift the current narratives that surround both the VAW and VAC fields.



A GUIDING FRAMEWORK

Awareness of the opportunity to address VAW and VAC comes from emerging evidence on their common risk factors and consequences. Alessandra Guedes (PAHO/WHO) presented some of this evidence (with data predominantly from high-income settings), focusing on the six points of intersection between VAW and VAC. Her work served as a preliminary conceptual framework for discussions within the meeting.

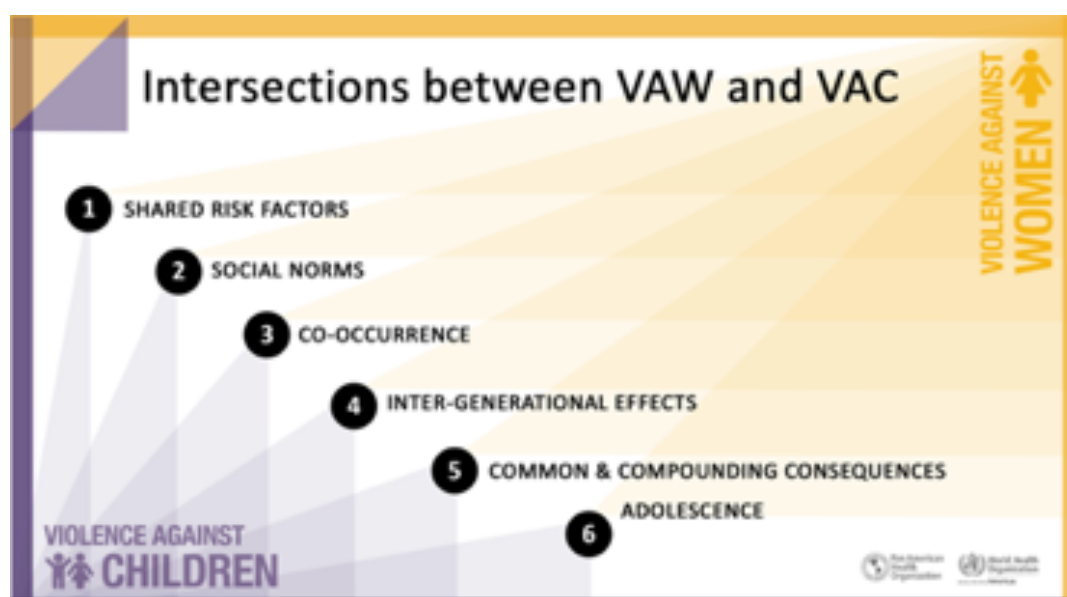


Figure 4. Guedes A; VAW and VAC: Points of Intersection

1. **Shared risk factors.** The first intersection relates to the fact that VAW and VAC share some risk factors for experiencing violence. Alessandra's work identified factors on different domains of the socio-ecological model, from the individual (e.g. poor mental health) to the societal level (e.g. weak legal systems).
2. **Co-occurrence.** Multiple forms of violence tend to co-occur in the same household. In families where IPV is taking place, children are more likely to experience abuse and maltreatment and, vice-versa. In some cases, women experiencing violence may use corporal punishment with their children.
3. **Intergenerational effects.** Experience and witnessing violence have long-lasting intergenerational effects: children who experience and/or witness violence will both have poorer health outcomes and, while most children who experience violence do not become perpetrators, most perpetrators have experience violence in childhood.
4. **Common, cumulative, and compounding consequences.** Women and children who experience violence are at risk of similar social and health consequences over the course of their lifetimes. In addition, the risk of negative health and social outcomes is increased for individuals who experience more than one form of violence.
5. **Adolescence.** Adolescence presents a life stage in which clearly distinguishing between VAW and VAC becomes challenging. For example, violence prevention programmes often consider girls aged 15 and above as 'women', thus presenting a subpopulation who bridge both fields. Adolescents are at heightened risk of both experiencing and perpetrating violence, and practices that affect adolescents, such as child marriage, increase their risk of violence at a later stage in their lives.
6. **Social norms.** Finally, social norms that permit violence and limit reporting can support forms of both VAW and VAC. This final intersecting point, social norms, was obviously the focus of this meeting. We hope that this report will contribute to knowledge generated to address this intersection specifically.

While awareness exists among scholars and practitioners that some norms might sustain both types of violence (for instance, norms of authority in the household), the literature lacked a clear framework to make sense of the different norms that might be operative for both VAW and VAC. Developing such a framework was the main goal of this working event.



GROUP LEARNINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

Before exploring the norms that sustain both VAW and VAC, we listened to participant presentations on known social and gender norms sustaining VAW and VAC separately. Several organisations also presented concrete examples from their programmes, exploring the opportunities and challenges of addressing norms that sustain VAW and VAC both in the family and community. Finally, as a group, we worked to identify what we termed cornerstone norms, or in other words, norms that support violence against women and children and that are relevant across a range of contexts.

1. NORMS SUSTAINING VAW, VAC, AND NORMS AT THE INTERSECTION

We discussed common cross-cutting norms to violence experienced by both women and children, in the home and community. Participant presentations revealed several overlaps in the norms sustaining VAW and VAC. This overlap was summarised by Lori Heise (JHU), who, reflecting on her work in LMIC context, presented six intersecting norms:

1. It's acceptable to hit as a way to "correct" behavior
2. It's appropriate for the man to be the head of household
3. It's obligatory for women and children to obey
4. It's not acceptable to disclose violence (this is to protect family reputation)
5. It's acceptable to think that women or children abused sexually must have done something to invite it
6. It's obligatory for mothers to take responsibility for their children's behavior

Participants further discussed and presented other intersecting norms – the full array of which can be found in the tables reported in Annex II. Taking these initial six overlapping norms, as well as those identified by others, participants worked in groups to identify what they believed to be the most important norms acting across VAW and VAC. From this work, we grouped these important, or "cornerstone", norms into four domains.

To identify which cornerstone, cross-cutting norms can sustain both VAW and VAC, we worked in groups. We discussed what norms sustained common forms of VAW and VAC in the family, first, and in the community, later. We debated the ways in which the norm sustained violence, for example, did it prevent individuals from reporting violence? Or, did it allow violence to take place?

By the end of the meeting we had found agreement on which of these norms were most relevant to VAW/VAC efforts and sorted them into four domains. Figure 5 presents these four normative domains (for both violence in the family and in the community) and includes some examples of the norms that we identified as fitting within each of them (note that these domains have not been numbered in order of importance). While norms were grouped according to who they impact most (for example, those who experience violence, or those who witness violence), we agreed that some can overlap across the different domains. We hope that this figure, which can be used as a map for early investigation, will be helpful to practitioners working on VAW and VAC and who wish to better incorporate how these forms of violence intersect into their interventions.

1. Norms that limit reporting of violence.

Norms in this domain affect those who experience violence, reducing the chances that they will report their experiences of it. Take for example the norm that those who experience violence will be blamed for it. If survivors of violence believe that others will blame them (and not the perpetrators), they might refrain from disclosing their experience to avoid ostracization, shame, guilt, futility and possibly further punitive violence.

2. Norms that increase the acceptance of violence

Norms in this domain also predominantly affect those who experience violence. Take, for instance, the norm that “violence is an acceptable form of discipline.” If those who experience violence internalised such a norm, they might legitimise the act. Participants returned to this point, on what makes violence acceptable, several times. Lori Heise (JHU) presented a “scale of acceptability” of violence [see box 1], which helped to explain how acceptance of violence is nuanced and can vary across contexts.

3. Norms that limit interventions to stop violence

These social norms are active amongst those who witness violence (or third parties). For example, the norm that “violence is very common and nobody ever intervenes to stop it”, prevents individuals who witness violence from intervening as they accept violence to be a common occurrence, something that is ‘private’ and because they may face sanctions for intervening.

4. Norms that increase the use of violence

The social norms affect individuals who perpetrate violence. They can act to condone violence, for example, that “violence is a manifestation of love” permits individuals to be violent towards their children or partners, in the name of love. Some of these norms also affect those who experience violence, by justifying certain acts.

Finally, participants discussed how future discussions would need to consider whether some norms are “easier” than others to change, and if there are norms that should be focused on. Participants also felt that future research would need to unpack whether these cornerstone norms are equally operative in both high, low, and middle-income settings, as the limited data makes it hard to draw conclusions.

Box 1. What violence is acceptable and why?

Lori Heise offered a conceptual tool to understand what influences people’s collective understanding and definition of violence. Or, in other words, what people understand as “acceptable” violence. She suggested that acceptability of violence is informed by answers to three questions:

1. *Who does what violence to whom?* This question looks at the direction of violence. Violence that is husband-to-wife, adult-to-child, or parent-to-child, is usually more tolerated. However, violence that is less tolerated, one participant suggested, might also be more secret and difficult to uncover with research.
2. *What severity of violence is used?* This question addresses severity of violence. While perpetrators might believe that it is acceptable to use violence to discipline a woman or child, they might also believe that some acts are appropriate (e.g. slapping a woman if she burns food) while others are not (e.g. killing her in the previous example).
3. *What reasons are given for the violence?* This third question invites us to look at how the trigger of violence makes it justifiable. While it might be acceptable for a parent to hit their child if the child has disrespected an elder, it might not be as acceptable if a child is caught cheating in a game against their sibling.

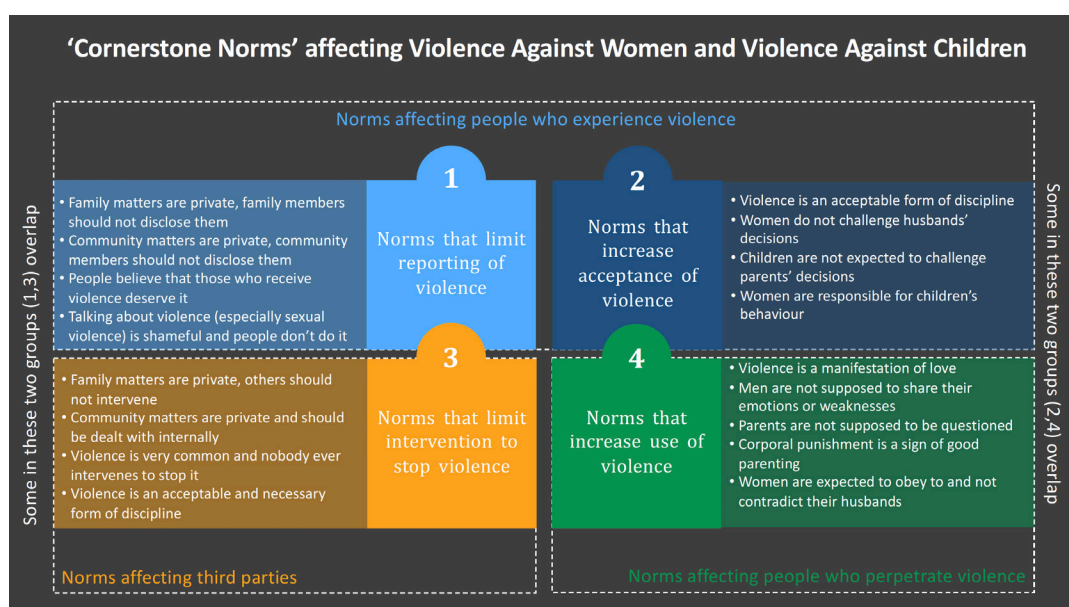


Figure 5. 'Cornerstone Norms' Sustaining VAW and VAC

2. CURRENT TENSION POINTS IN ADDRESSING VAW/VAC

Collaboration between the VAW and VAC fields is not without its challenges [18]. Combining VAW and VAC requires integrated approaches in research, intervention design, and response systems. While participants felt that cooperation was essential because of the shared entry points for intervention and response, they also expressed concerns over the prioritisation of one issue over the other. They also remarked that, while in most cases beneficial, cooperation might not always be advantageous, as VAW and VAC programmes may in some instances need different approaches due to the differing desired outcomes. Take, for instance, the difference between power relations between partners and power relations between parents and children that obviously require different strategies and approaches. This section fleshes out three tension points identified, while recognising these challenges should not postpone work at the intersection that could be beneficial. Rather, these tension points should inform a purposeful strategy for moving forward (explored in the next section).

First Tension Point: Missing players in VAW and VAC

Participants discussed the need to engage, collectivise, and humanise women, men, and children alike, including people who perpetrate violence, if we are to truly prevent violence. They also suggested that men and children are often (although not always) missing in key discussions and decision-making around VAW and VAC.

Despite acknowledging the many efforts to include men and boys in violence prevention work, participants suggested that such engagement still needs to happen at both community and global levels. At the community level, the strategy of working with men to reduce violence against women has gained increased attention over recent years [19]. Evidence exists that, to be effective, interventions with men and boys need to be work with entire social networks (besides husbands and children) integrating, for instance, school and health personnel, in ways that create space for gender transformation. Several participants said they worked with men and boys to reduce VAW, but they also felt that greater effort was needed to include men's voices in understanding the source of violence, eventually to address the structured inequality, discrimination and gender norms that result in women's experience of violence.

Participants also discussed the importance of looking for humanising strategies that both worked towards restorative justice in case of perpetration, but that also look at what possible suffering comes with perpetration of violence itself, eventually opening new uncharted pathways for its effective reduction. The root causes of violence, the systems that uphold structural inequality and privilege men, also result in suffering for men, including some of those who perpetrate that very violence.

While in the VAW space men's missing voice is often that of the perpetrators, in VAC children's missing voice is that of the victims. Participants reflected on how, with very notable and laudable exceptions, VAC policy and programme design tended to be adult-centric, shaped and led by adults, often overriding children's agency and their families' collective agency in choosing what is best for themselves. Joanna Skonieczna (Ponton) and Brisa de Angulo (A Breeze of Hope) spoke of their youth-led violence prevention programmes, providing models for how children and adolescents who have experienced violence can support or mentor other young people.

Second Tension Point: The Silent Spaces

Participants reflected on how certain topics in VAW and VAC were politically contentious and emotionally difficult to discuss. Similar topics created what we have called "silent spaces", potentially important spaces of research and action that are unfrequently navigated. Participants cautiously reflected on two of these silent spaces.

The first included research and action on women perpetrating violence against children, qualified by participants as politically sensitive. Nobody in the room had forgotten the hard struggle of the anti-VAW movement to receive the dignified attention of the international community in the second half of the last century (and, to a certain extent, even today). The fragile outcomes achieved after incessant political action, some feared, could be threatened by studies looking at women as perpetrators of violence. "Women experience a great deal of violence", one participant said, "they certainly don't need the blame for perpetrating violence against children". Participants discussed how women, statistically, are more likely than men to perpetrate corporal punishment because gender norms attribute to them caregiver roles. Some acknowledged the role that gender norms played in the differences in the percentage of corporal punishment against children perpetrated by men and women, but suggested that to understand dynamics of violence we might want to also research these important intersections between gender norms and VAC.

The second silent space that we encountered in the meeting was that children can be perpetrators of violence against adults and their peers. This issue seemed less politically contentious, partly because of the less political nature of the VAC system, some participants suggested. However, because of the limited evidence on these topics, participants felt there was little understanding of the types of violence that children perpetrate and at what stage in their development.

Third Tension Point: Agency

An important point of intellectual divergence between those working on VAW and those working on VAC was around whether expanding survivors' agency (loosely defined as the ability to make choices) was always a desirable outcome. While in VAW work increase in women's agency was always considered an outcome to work towards, in VAC work things are less clear. To exemplify what we mean, let us give an example that was used during the meeting, when participants were asked whether they agreed or not with the following three statements:

1. **A woman who wants to work outside of the household should be allowed to do so.**

All participants agreed that women should be allowed the freedom they need to fulfil lives that matter to them, so nobody questioned this statement. That is, all participants believed that women's agency had to be respected and valued.

2. **A child who doesn't want to go to school should be allowed to do so.**

Most participants agreed that school was beneficial to children. Despite a child not wanting to go to school, his or her freedom should be limited (obviously with kindness and providing rational explanations for doing so) so that the child should be convinced or even taken to school despite their desire to stay home. That is, most participants believed that children's agency was to be protected, but that sometimes they might not know what is best for them, and that international agencies were to understand and act in the child's best interest. Added to this, in many contexts attending school is a legal requirement and parents are responsible for complying.

3. **A 16-year-old girl who is well aware of the consequences of her decision, wants to marry an 18-year-old man should be allowed to do so.**

Participants disagreed on whether an adolescent girl should be allowed to do what she wants, especially when the child protection framework would judge her actions as harmful.

In some instances, child protection policies and interventions that seek to prevent sexual violence amongst adolescents, or generally increase their sexual and reproductive health, might restrict their agency. Adolescents straddle the divide between the VAW and VAC fields, especially when it comes to deciding whether their agency should be respected and expanded a priori, or whether there should exist a framework to channel and interpret adolescent actions as positive or negative.

3. MOVING THE VAW/VAC FIELD FORWARD

Learning from Successful Interventions

Participants spoke of the opportunities presented by existing interventions working to prevent VAW and VAC. One example of a VAC intervention that could incorporate VAW, was parenting programmes. These interventions have been shown to support parents to communicate and connect with their child, and ultimately improve their child's wellbeing. However, some remarked, these interventions could do a better job at 1) addressing intimate partner violence in the home and at 2) shifting harmful social and gender norms in the family. Similarly, response systems that deal with VAW, should be finding out, and acting on, potential violence against children in the home. Participants also discussed the need to understand further what specifically works at the VAW/VAC intersection, beyond the potential of looking at how VAW interventions protect children from violence, and vice-versa. This would require a review of organisations already working in communities to address VAW/VAC, to inform intervention design. Participants spoke of the importance of community-level interventions and the need for interventions to include opportunity for intergenerational dialogue, given the cyclical nature of violence in the family.

Effective Grant making for VAW/VAC Interventions

Given the limited evidence on effective VAW/VAC interventions that are context-specific, participants felt that more flexible approaches to funding were required. At this stage, the approach should be to "fund the space", rather than "fund for outcomes". New funding schemes could help identify and test pathways of change and how to progress along these pathways. Participants discussed the current lack

of opportunities to communicate and share decision-making amongst funders and practitioners, especially as VAW/VAC interventions may have multiple and changing components. Practitioners in the room said it was particularly important for them to have an avenue to explain when and why they needed the funding to be increased or directed to different parts of their programmes. Two solutions to funding VAW/VAC interventions was: participatory grant making and unrestricted core funding. This would enable programmes to be more independent, and quickly respond to the needs of the communities they serve.

Reframing the Current Discourse: Addressing the Tension points

In the tension points, we discussed three areas: missing players, silent spaces, and agency. Together, these three tension points affect how we think about who the “victims” and “perpetrators” are, and the positionality and responsibilities of those working to prevent violence (“Us”). The current discourses of VAW and VAC leave relatively little room for nuance or flexibility. We are living at a time in international development that allows little space for risk, exploration, and deviation from dogmatic paradigms, in ways that might ultimately work against our collective goals.

In the VAC paradigm that we represent graphically below, VAC falls within the child protection “system” (not a movement as in the VAW paradigm) where the dominating community (the “Us”) are adults with technical expertise. The others are both perpetrators and victims of violence. Boys and girls, rather than being perceived as part of the community of actors, are in need of protection from others perpetrating violence. Children tend not to be part of the discussions around the violence that affects them – instead, protection is something “done” to them. The system at country-level, may not respond adequately to the different capacities and needs across ages, and as children develop. While there is a growing research based on peer-to-peer violence, the bulk of research has been on adult perpetrated violence against children. Children, in this paradigm, are protected by adults working in the child protection field (researchers, advocates etc.) but also experience violence by adults (parents/caregivers/teachers).

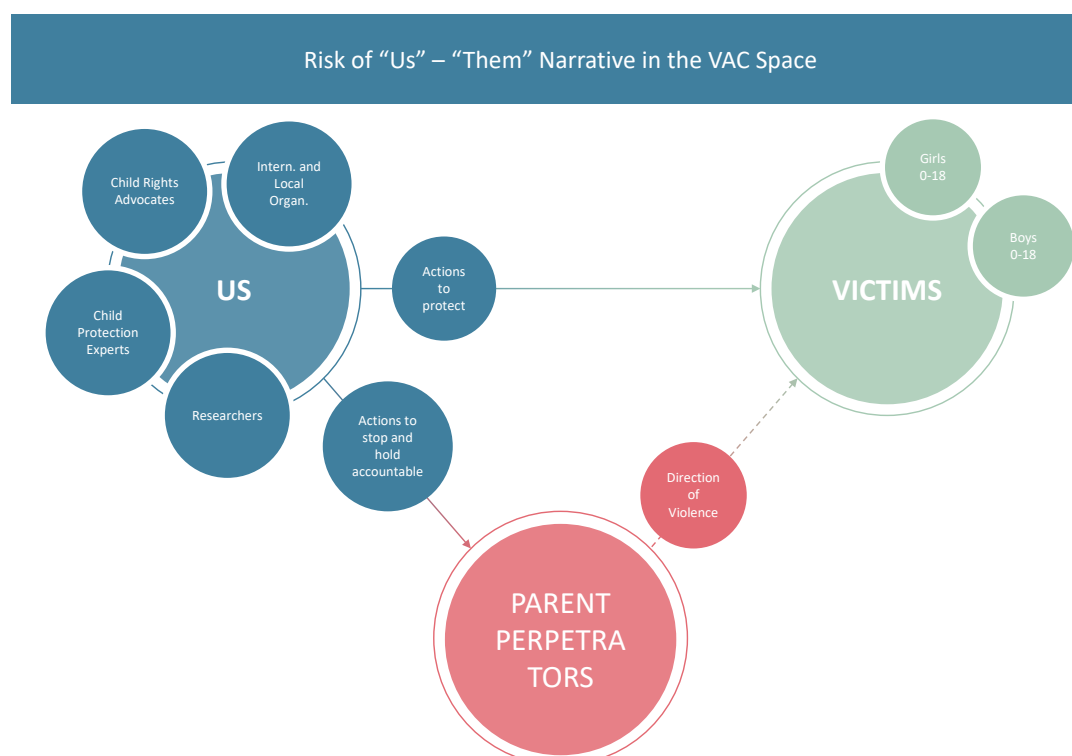


Figure 6. 'A simplified paradigm for the VAC field

Conversely, in the VAW paradigm that is represented in Figure 7, VAW falls within the women's rights "movement" where the dominating community (the "Us") includes survivors (not victims, as in VAC). The significance of survivors being in the Us group cannot be underestimated, as it inevitably affects the dominant narrative within the political movement. The 'othering' of perpetrators (and not survivors) results in a difficult humanisation, where little space exists for breaking the dichotomy between those who harm and those who are harmed, and to recognise suffering as a shared condition in a system of violence and oppression, where everyone experiences the negative consequences of patriarchy. Contrary to the VAC field, the VAW field also has a strong theoretical basis in feminist sociological theory with important political activism surrounding it: this group is working towards stronger commitments to address VAW at the national, regional and international development community levels, while advocating for transformations in power to tackle its root causes.

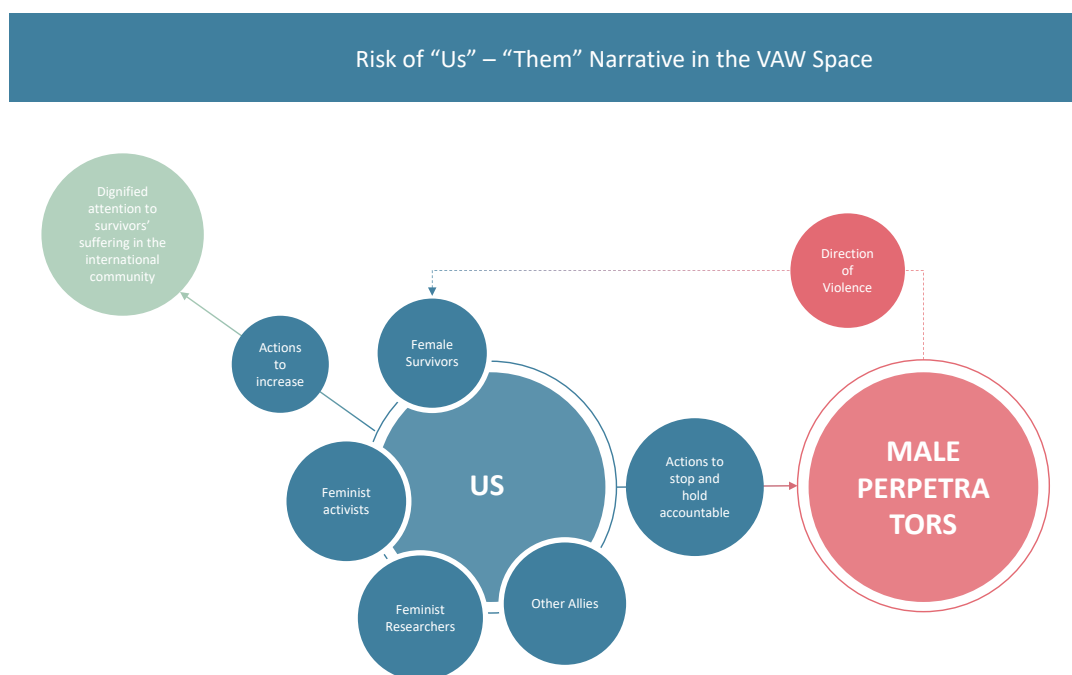


Figure 7. 'A simplified paradigm for the VAW field

To move the field forward, participants reflected on recent evidence from both research and practice (and those in the room), which has opened a space for us to look at how VAW/VAC work can become more coherent and coordinated. In particular, using a norms lens, we focused on working on prevention, while also recognising the need to improve the response side. By doing this, we can create better outcomes for all who suffer violence and create tailored solutions for children (acknowledging differences between boys and girls) and women.

We also discussed that progress requires recognition of the biases and norms we hold as practitioners, researchers, and donors working in the field and how these play a part in creating these hard-to-challenge images of VAW and VAC, and as a result VAW/VAC. This opens a new space to look critically at the victim/perpetrator dichotomy. Simplified narratives in violence work can pit those who are seen as "good" and "in need of saving", against those who are "bad" and "undeserving" [20]. Similar paradigms today seem in need of new life, to grow and acknowledge that wider systems, structures, and norms which permit violence (e.g. patriarchy), create suffering for everyone in the community and family. The purposeful shared aims in VAW and VAC will always be to prevent violence and to care for those who

have experienced it. To move the field forward, we invite people in these community to unlock creative imagination and self-reflectivity. We look forward to a process of mutual trust, that will help us work with whole communities to address violence and suffering more effectively.



CONCLUDING REMARKS AND NEXT STEPS

To our knowledge, our meeting was one of the few on social norms at the VAW/VAC intersection. We sought to expand on where current conversations in this space have got to, to acknowledge the challenges of working at this intersection (including ones that have been previously identified, and ones fleshed out in this report), and importantly to highlight that greater collaboration between the VAW and VAC fields is possible. By bringing together actors working across the two fields, and at the intersection, this meeting provided an opportunity for open and honest dialogue, and generated questions and ideas for future work. Additional discussion points that emerged, but were beyond the scope of this report are included in Annex III. Through this meeting, we identified cornerstone norms that contribute to both violence against women and children. Going forward, it will be crucial for similar critical discussions to remain alive, continuously examining the how and whys of violence prevention work, especially as they relate to different contexts and individuals. In a world that is moving towards more conservative views on sexuality and gender equality, it is imperative to create conciliatory compassionate spaces where those addressing violence can connect and learn from each other. Participants emphasised the need to create a community of care amongst funders, practitioners, and researchers working at this intersection. This could involve creating networks within and across organisations working to address VAW/VAC that would provide support to one another and opportunities for shared learning. This was also seen as a way to share successes and celebrate incremental changes in the violence sector, as opposed to searching for rapid magic-bullet solutions.

A COALITION OF THE WILLING

As the meeting drew to a close, participants spoke of their desire to continue the conversation on addressing social norms at the VAW/VAC intersection. We talked of forming a “coalition of the willing”, to create momentum and drive this field forward. We then created a strategy for potential future work (See Figure 8). Finally, participants pledged to take this work forward. For many in the room, this meant incorporating some of the discussions from the meeting into their work, either through working to identify cornerstone norms, better documenting social norms change in their work, and/or organising capacity building on social norms approaches in their organisations. Other pledges focused on pushing the VAW/VAC field forward, by opening discussions to increase funding for this space, and ways to share conceptual and practical learning from current or future projects.

We look forward to a new community of VAWC practitioners and researchers working together to tackle one of the most pressing issues of our times.

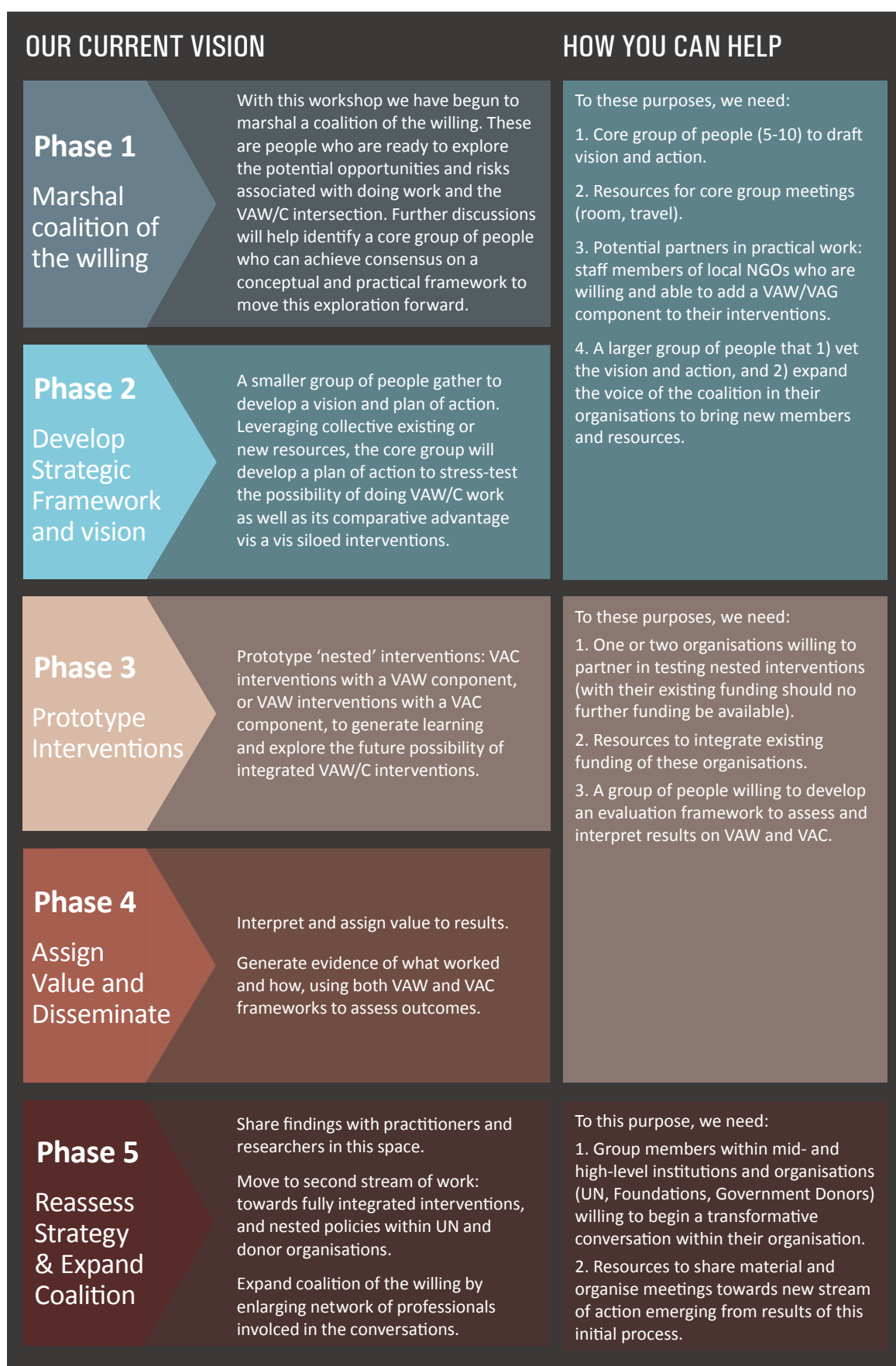


Figure 8. A strategy for further work at the VAWC intersection

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ANNEX I: PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX II: NORMS SUSTAINING VAW, VAC AND VAW/VAC

Table A provides an overview of norms sustaining violence against women, while **Table B** provides an overview of norms sustaining violence against children. **Tables C** and **D** highlight the contributions of several organisations present during the meeting, and the social norms that are relevant to their work around violence prevention and response in the community and in the family.

Table A: Leigh S; Social Norms & Violence against Women	
NORMS THAT SUSTAIN DIFFERENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	
SOCIAL NORMS THAT PERPETUATE INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)	SOCIAL NORMS THAT PERPETUATE NON-PARTNER SEXUAL VIOLENCE
Men are the head of the household and should assert power and control over their wives	Men need and should have lots of sex
It's expected wives will obey their husbands	It's obligatory for women and girls to manage men's sexual urges
It's acceptable for men to use violence to discipline & resolve conflicts with wives	It's acceptable for a man to engage in sexual activity with a woman if she "tempts" him, even if it is unwelcomed or without consent
It's appropriate for men and women to fulfil distinct and fixed gender roles & responsibilities	Women and girls should not be seen roaming around in public spaces
It's not acceptable for women to refuse to have sex with their husbands	It's not acceptable for those who experience rape to report it or else they will bring shame upon their families
It's obligatory to resolve violence in the family since it's a private matter	It's acceptable to be asked for sex in exchange of something else
Women should keep the family together; despite any abuse they might be facing	

Table B: Ligiero D; Violence Against Children				
NORMS THAT SUSTAIN DIFFERENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN				
CHILD MALTREATMENT	DATING VIOLENCE	SEXUAL VIOLENCE	SUICIDE AND SELF-HARM	YOUTH COMMUNITY VIOLENCE
It's acceptable (and necessary) to use corporal punishment to rear a child	It's acceptable for a man/boy to assert power over a woman/girl	It's acceptable for a man to demand sex as his right from his partner	It's not acceptable to discuss mental health issues with others	It's not acceptable to report youth violence or bullying
	It's appropriate to restrict a woman/girl's freedom	It's obligatory for girls to control a man's sexual urges	It's not acceptable for someone who experiences sexual violence to discuss it	It's acceptable to use violence to resolve conflict
Female children are valued less than male children (where female children are considered to have less economic and social potential)	It's acceptable to use physical or emotional violence to resolve conflicts within a relationship	It's acceptable to use sexual violence to punish women/girls	It's not possible or acceptable to be "different" (e.g., ethnic or religious minority, LGBTQ+)	Cultural intolerance, intense dislike, and stereotyping and violence toward "different" groups is acceptable (based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.)
		It's not appropriate to talk about sex and sexuality		
		It's not acceptable for someone who experiences sexual violence to discuss it		

Table C: Social Norms Sustaining VAW and VAC: Family			
EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL NORMS SUSTAINING VAW AND VAC IN THE FAMILY			
SNEHA (INDIA)	SNEHA (INDIA)	BRAC (BANGLADESH)	BREAKTHROUGH TV (INDIA)
It's not appropriate for women to walk outside of the household alone	It's not acceptable to discuss what takes place in the family	Men are the primary decision makers and breadwinners	Women are owned by men (husbands, fathers, sons)
Domestic violence is acceptable if a woman neglects the house or children, does not cook properly, is unfaithful, or disrespects her in-laws	Men and in-laws have economic control over women	Good women are tolerant (and tolerate violence)	Children obey their parents and children who do not can be punished
It's not acceptable for women to divorce	It's not acceptable for women to leave the marital home	Good women take care of their husband, children, and in-laws	Women's/girl's sexuality must be controlled

Table D: Social Norms Sustaining VAW and VAC: Community		
EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL NORMS SUSTAINING VAW AND VAC IN THE COMMUNITY		
BREEZE OF HOPE (BOLIVIA)	PONTON (POLAND)	NIRANTAR (INDIA)
Issues affecting women should not be spoken about	Sexuality is negative and immoral	Sexuality is negative and immoral
Men must be dominant and women must be submissive	Sex and sexuality should only be discussed in private	Narrow sexual norm (gender binary, heteronormative, sex is only between adults)
Women who experience violence have done something to deserve it	Narrow sexual norm (gender binary, heteronormative, sex is only between adults)	Women must be sexually pure

ABOUT THE LSHTM GROUP ON SOCIAL NORMS AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) is renowned for its research, postgraduate studies and continuing education in public and global health. The School's Gender Violence and Health Centre (GVHC) launched The Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-Based Violence, to translate and adapt insights and methods from social norm theory and research into practical guidance for development practitioners seeking to transform harmful gender-related practices in low and middle-income countries. Since 2016, the group has worked to inform intervention evaluation and norms measurement through expert meetings and sharing the learnings from these. Previous Meeting Reports by The Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-based Violence:

- Learning Report 1. Measuring Social Norms: Expert group meeting on the measurement of social norms sustaining GBV. The meeting focused on identifying best-practice strategies to diagnose and measure social norms. This learning report addresses the key challenges in social norms theory and proposes next steps based on the lessons learned and shared at the meeting.
<http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/resources/norms-measurement-meeting-learning-report>
- Learning Report 2. Theory in Support of Better Practice: The group brought together thinkers and “doers” who seldom have the opportunity for exchange. Experts in their fields sought to identify and discuss insights from social norms theory and gender theory that could help transform the norms sustaining harmful gender-related practices.
<http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/resources/norms-learning-report-2-theory-support-better-practice>