



## Practice-based lessons for feminist, ethical, and evidence-based violence against women and girls prevention at scale

# What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls: Impact at Scale

A seven-year initiative funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to scale up evidence-based, practice-informed prevention of violence against women and girls. The programme will invest £67.5 million to prevent and contribute to eliminating violence against women and girls (VAWG) by:

- Systematically designing, implementing, and rigorously evaluating a range of approaches to scaling up violence prevention efforts, translating proof-of-concept evidence into robust, large scale programmes and strategies.
- Designing, piloting, and testing new theory-driven violence prevention approaches (innovation).
- Strengthening long-term capability and capacity to deliver cutting-edge, evidence-based violence prevention programmes across the programme's grantees, the UK Government (principally FCDO), and developing country governments
- Using evidence to influence a more effective, scaled-up global response to end VAWG.

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# Executive Summary

The UK FCDO funded 'What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG): Impact at Scale' programme (What Works II) seeks to systematically design, implement and rigorously evaluate a range of approaches to scaling violence prevention efforts—translating proof-of-concept evidence into robust, large-scale programmes and strategies. What Works is also identifying innovative prevention interventions to test their impact on VAWG in areas where the evidence base remains weak.

As the What Works II programme began the competitive process to award funding for scale in 2022, the selection panel encountered difficulties identifying projects that could meet the necessary criteria for funding. This challenge prompted a reflection on the state of the VAWG prevention field and its readiness for scale. Our reflection produced six key findings, specifically around evidence and learning, funding mechanisms, and partnerships.

This paper is intended to contribute towards discussions on pathways for scale as part of the Wilton Park November 2023 meeting *What will it take to end gender-based violence? Rethinking pathways to preventing violence at scale*. Feedback on our experience and reflections is welcome.

## Evidence and learning on pathways to scale

- 1. While we now have rigorous evidence that VAWG prevention is possible, this evidence is limited to a handful of interventions in a few countries, working to address specific types of violence.<sup>1</sup>** Furthermore, these are mostly based at the individual or relationship level, rather than the community or the population level. This means that there are only a limited number of interventions that have demonstrated readiness for scale and there is still a broader lack of understanding of what is needed to take effective smaller models to scale in different contexts. More evidence is needed around mid-sized, “proof of concept” programming—interventions that may have some evidence of effectiveness, but could be adapted and evaluated in different contexts, with different populations and for impact particularly at the community and population levels, and sometimes with different components to best understand how the programming can be effectively scaled.
- 2. Strengthening an understanding of the pathway to scale, including what it takes to effectively scale an intervention, is just as important as understanding which type of interventions work.** There is now a growing body of evidence on what works to prevent VAWG, but much less is understood about the journey to effective scale. Increased understanding, documentation and dissemination of the journey to various types of scale—what it takes to adapt an effective intervention and scale it in a feminist way—will allow more effective interventions to be taken to scale for greater impact. This includes the documentation and uptake of practice-based learning and flexible, mutual partnerships.

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<sup>1</sup> Largely Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) with heterosexual couples

**3. To support stakeholders to engage with the evidence on effective VAWG prevention programming and reflect on what it means for their communities, there is a need to invest in making it much more accessible.** The evidence from Phase 1 of What Works and elsewhere is still not widely reaching and accessible to key audiences, including governments, women's rights organisations (WROs), donors, and broader civil society in the Global South. This crucial evidence risks getting stuck in the Global North or with elite donor and international non-governmental organisation (INGO) communities. The appetite to learn from this evidence is not being met and must be encouraged and supported. This includes adapting materials that are currently available only in English to local languages while ensuring that translations use appropriate terminologies, developing and disseminating different kinds of evidence products, and providing tailored support to understand what the evidence means for different cultures and contexts, including some regions that may not be well represented in the global evidence base.

## Funding to achieve impact at scale

**4. Funding mechanisms do not adequately meet the needs of VAWG prevention organisations at different points on the pathway to scale.** There is a gap in funding for organisations who have demonstrated promising results to adapt these models for scale. This could be facilitated by providing smaller grants for interventions that have some evidence of effectiveness, but do not yet meet the high bar of reductions in VAWG demonstrated through experimental evaluation, as well as allocating more funding and sufficient time for adaptations. This may improve intervention models and practitioners' institutional capacity so that they are ready for scale at a later point. There is a need for funders to provide flexible amounts and grant durations that are tailored to meet promising organisations and interventions where they are and potentially transition grants to bridge the gap between innovation and scale.

## Building shared and equitable partnerships to scale

**5. There is very limited funding for organisations who take a localised, feminist approach (including WROs) to grow, and limited technical support available to support them on the pathway to scale.** Organisations with the largest scale capacity have often been INGOs with financial and human resources available, and this has often marginalised WROs. An investment of resources to deepen WROs' familiarity with primary prevention approaches and strengthen their organizational capacity to integrate and/or deliver these approaches through technical assistance, mentoring and accompaniment is a necessary step to feminist scale and will position them to lead larger scale projects. There is a need to give WROs the space to learn and grow, strengthening their position as real change agents in this work. At the same time, this approach would empower WROs to direct the growth of the WRO on their terms and not imposed by donor funding practices and compliance.

**6. Working with governments to mainstream effective VAWG programming into national or regional sectoral programmes is one crucial component of scale and can lead to greater reach and sustainability.** Governments are responsible for delivering quality VAWG services, and their sector programming can offer platforms from which to scale prevention programming in partnership with organisations working to prevent VAWG. However, this is not without challenges, given different political priorities and the length of time needed to change attitudes, institutional practices, structures, and norms both inside and outside government.

The following paper details the What Works programme's reflections on the current state of the VAWG prevention field, how to strengthen a feminist pathway to scale for effective programmes, and a set of recommendations for key stakeholders.

# Introduction: What Works II's ambition to scale effective programming

What Works is a £67.5 million<sup>2</sup>, seven-year initiative funded by FCDO to improve prevention of VAWG. Building on the success of its predecessor What Works 1, What Works II seeks to expand the global knowledge and evidence base on what works to prevent VAWG and how to achieve this at scale. To fulfil this goal, the What Works II programme<sup>3</sup> plans to identify and support smaller-scale projects that have already demonstrated effectiveness and test these projects at scale, as well as to support the co-design, piloting and testing of innovative<sup>4</sup> prevention projects in areas where the evidence base remains limited. Scale grants (up to £4 million each) are intended to fund the scaling of approaches that had already demonstrated effectiveness, and innovation grants (up to £500,000 each) are intended to implement innovative approaches that could then be tested for their effectiveness in reducing VAWG. In addition to scale and innovation grants, the What Works II programme is also awarding “mainstreaming grants”, to support scale programming within sectors, for £1 million each. This includes testing the integration of VAWG prevention into large-scale sector platforms, such as health, education, and social protection. All programmes awarded funding under What Works II will receive a tailored technical assistance and evaluation to better understand their impact on VAWG. Through its financial and capacity strengthening efforts, What Works II hopes to strengthen long-term capacity within the field of VAWG prevention to deliver cutting-edge, evidence-based violence prevention programmes and use the evidence produced to influence a more effective, scaled global response to end VAWG.

What Works II has an ambitious aim not only to scale effective programmes, but to model this scaling in a way that is accountable to WROs and feminist principles. This includes centering the voices and rights of women and girls, emphasising accountability at all levels, sustainable and gender transformative change, and adapting interventions to contexts while avoiding harm. What Works II recognises that WROs are leaders in advocating for VAWG prevention globally and have the contextual expertise to implement or collaborate with others to implement effective VAWG programming. What Works II has the opportunity to strengthen and lift up WROs' capacities in this area. This is an important goal, as WROs are often underfunded and overstretched, limiting their capacity to engage with large global investments like What Works II. What Works II recognises its power to shift this reality by aspiring to feminist practice, even within the limitations of a bilateral funding model.

The Community for Understanding Scaling Practices (CUSP) has recommended including at least seven key elements in a feminist approach to scale (CUSP, 2021), which are outlined in Box 1.

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- 2 The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has contributed additional funding to this total to support implementation and research in specific areas, including the prevention of violence against LBT people, mental health, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
  - 3 The programme's implementation activities are managed by a consortium led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) working with four private sector and civil society organisations (two of which—Raising Voices and Samya—are feminist WROs in the Global South). A separate research consortium made up of five core research organisations (three of which are based in the Global South) and additional local partners from around the world is led by the Global Women's Institute (GWI) at the George Washington University. What Works II is also guided by an International Advisory Board (IAB), a global network of leading donors, practitioners, researchers, and activists working on VAWG.
  - 4 What Works II defines innovation as: The development and implementation of new or existing ideas with the transformative ability to contribute impact with potential for future scaling.

## Box 1: CUSP's key elements of a feminist approach to scale

- Effective, in-depth pre-programme consultation with all those who will be affected (feminist activists, donors, community and religious leaders, community members, service providers, community organisations, and government officials)
- Commitment to a sustained, safe process defined by collaboration, mutual respect and balanced power—with adequate budget to support such processes
- Culturally sensitive approaches to adaptation, with emphasis on learning and responsiveness
- High-quality, in-depth, ongoing training and mentoring
- Accountability to communities, with an emphasis on those most affected
- Facilitation of connections with local governing bodies
- Political in nature

This feminist approach to scale has guided What Works II in adopting the following definition of scale:

**Scale is expanding and/or deepening the evidence base for VAWG prevention programming and policy efforts in partnership with organisations, institutions and communities who share a commitment to sustainable change.**

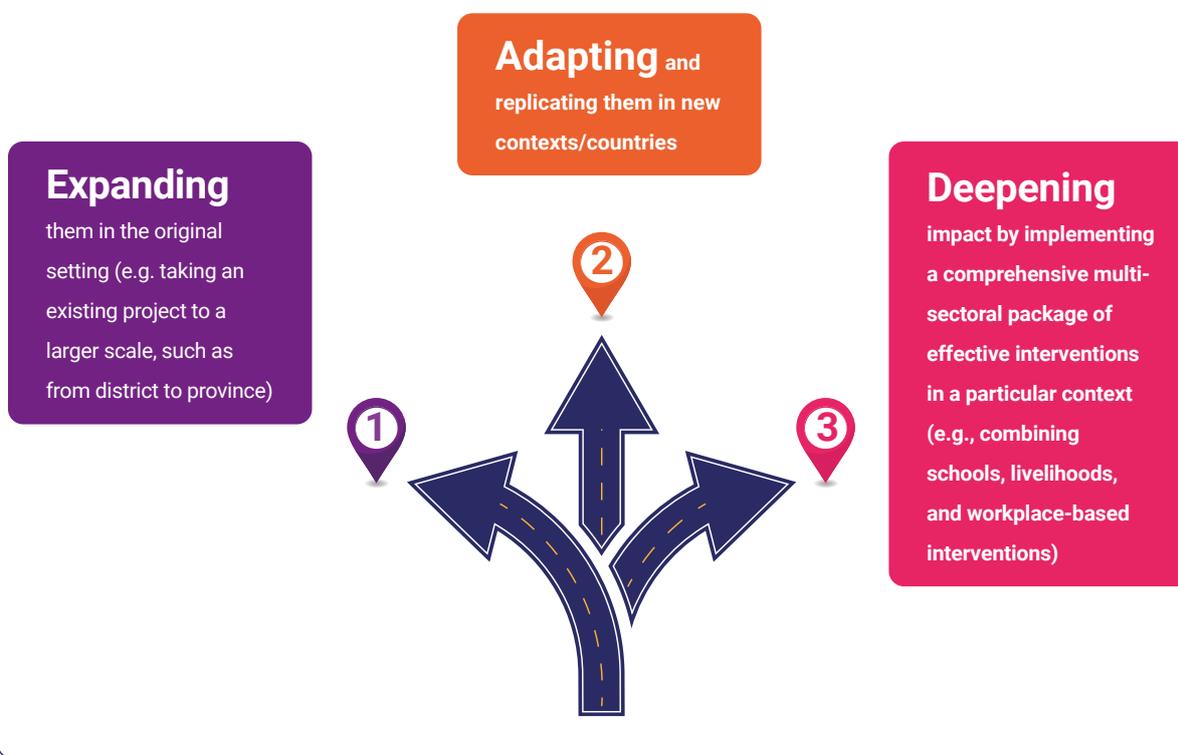
*Within this definition, What Works II is open to scaling interventions in any of the four following ways (Simmons et al., 2007):*

- 1. Quantitative scale**, by increasing geographic spread (adapting interventions in new contexts) or increasing beneficiaries reached in the same location
- 2. Functional scale**, deepening impact by implementing a comprehensive multi-sectoral package of effective interventions in a particular context with fidelity (e.g., combining schools, livelihoods, and workplace-based interventions), thereby integrating violence reduction and gender equality into local systems
- 3. Organisational scale**, involving other organisations, creating new ones, or interventions being taken on by governments/multilaterals/other donors, or
- 4. Political scale**, expansion by influencing political interests to affect institutional gains that allow interventions to be scaled up and sustained.

Successful scale grantees under What Works II must demonstrate effectiveness, cost-efficiency, scale (through one of the above four approaches) and sustainability, an enabling environment for scale programming, and an adherence to equality and inclusion principles.

# Pathways to Scale

Taking effective VAWG prevention interventions (or elements of interventions) and...



## The state of the evidence on VAWG prevention

Substantial progress has been made over the past decade to build the global knowledge base on what works to prevent VAWG. Recent investments in rigorous research, including through the earlier iteration of What Works, have greatly increased the availability and quality of evidence regarding effective violence prevention approaches. This collective learning has created robust evidence not only on what works, but also how, why, and at what cost. As a result, we know that violence is preventable, and a clear picture is emerging of evidence-based approaches. There are also numerous promising approaches that require further study.

The global evidence base on VAWG has not only grown over the past decade, but it has also shone a light on areas in need of greater research focus. A series of evidence reviews (Kerr-Wilson et al., 2020; Arango et al., 2014; GWI and WHO forthcoming) point to an evidence base on VAWG prevention that is heavily skewed toward the Global North (in 2013 over 70% of the included evaluations were conducted in just seven high-income countries). When interventions are evaluated in the Global South, these evaluations tend to be concentrated in certain settings (e.g. countries like Uganda and South Africa), in part due to donor interest and local research capacity. These trends in the global evidence base are shifting over time, and a consensus around a global shared research agenda (SVRI and EQI, 2021) is building to chart the path forward given the many evidence gaps that remain. Some of these remaining evidence gaps that have motivated What Works II are highlighted in Box 2.

## Box 2: Remaining gaps in global VAWG evidence

- Methodological weaknesses remain in existing evaluations, such as small sample sizes, or non-experimental designs, making it difficult to draw conclusions about effectiveness.
- Few evaluations measuring change at community or population levels
- Little research has focused on women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as indigenous or ethnically marginalised women, women with disabilities, migrants, and refugees, LGBTQI women, and women affected by humanitarian crises and living in conflict-affected settings.
- Certain forms of violence remain under-researched, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV); sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH); trafficking; and non-partner sexual violence (both in public spaces and conflict and humanitarian settings). Interventions addressing these forms of violence also remain scant.
- More evidence is needed to effectively address violence against children and disrupt cycles of violence across generations.
- There is a lack of understanding of how to adapt and scale prevention interventions in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS).
- Accurate and standardised measurement of violence remains a challenge.
- More evidence on cost-effectiveness of VAWG interventions is needed.

Interventions that effectively prevent VAWG work across different levels (e.g. individual, interpersonal, community, society) to reduce violence in a sustained way (Dunkle et al., 2020; Abramsky et al., 2016; Ellsberg et al., 2022). These programmes include economic and social empowerment of women and girls, social protection programmes and cash transfers to women and families to reduce VAWG, addressing poor mental health, community mobilisation, addressing harmful substance use, couples programmes, school-based programmes, and parenting programmes (Prevention Collaborative, 2021).

A clearer picture is also emerging about what elements of an intervention make it successful. Changing social norms regarding VAWG is critical to sustainable prevention in any context. The most successful interventions also have shared core elements (Ellsberg et al., 2015; Jewkes et al., 2020), including: 1) a strong contextually rooted theory of change; 2) the use of participatory, group learning methods; 3) working with women, men and their families collectively; 4) focusing on multiple drivers of violence; 5) rigorous implementation (i.e. fidelity to the key components of the original programme model including emphasis on gender transformative change and skills building), 6) sufficient duration and intensity of programming; and 7) selecting, training and supporting a group of experienced implementation staff/ facilitators. In addition to these core elements, the presence of strong social justice movements is also essential for sustainable change at a population level (Htun et al., 2013). Feminist movements play a critical role ensuring that scaled programmes remain effective, and the impact of their role must be better documented. This is especially crucial when considering a feminist pathway to scale.

In spite of these exciting developments in VAWG prevention, **more research is needed to understand how and why effective interventions work, what are the key components of effective scale, and what is needed to adapt and effectively scale intervention in different contexts.** Most interventions aim

to reduce violence among individuals who participate in that intervention (usually self-selected). The majority of these interventions have not managed to achieve a sufficient level of “organised diffusion” (Cislaghi et al., 2019) - the practice of knowledge sharing that is encouraged by practitioners but led by programme participants - to achieve community level changes (although some of this could be due to implementation limitations, such as short project time frames and limited budget). To date, SASA! is one of the few programmes that has been successful at reducing VAWG at a population level when tested as implemented by its originators (those who originally developed the intervention). Often, these interventions are led by an experienced cadre of local actors (usually WROs), and for this reason are difficult to scale in a one-size-fits-all way. Most interventions have been developed and implemented under short-term project funding cycles, and when the project funds come to an end, it is difficult for WROs to continue the work, limiting opportunities to build readiness for scale.

Achieving success at scale also entails mainstreaming VAWG prevention into large sector programmes, such as health, education, social welfare (Peterman et al, 2021), micro-finance (Kapiga et al., 2019), and even transport and infrastructure, but there are few rigorously evaluated examples on which to draw. Different stakeholders have different roles to play in the prevention of VAWG, including government actors, who are well positioned to integrate programming into existing sector work in close collaboration with WROs. Achieving scale by working with governments to mainstream effective programmes into sector programming is a priority of the What Works II programme.

## Methodology: leveraging the lessons of What Works II

In 2022, What Works II opened the first competitive window for scale and innovation grants. During the course of the competitive process, the selection team of What Works II advisers, FCDO and the What Works II International Advisory Board (IAB) were unable to select as many projects as the programme intended to award, particularly for scale. Too few applications were able to demonstrate that they met the required criteria mentioned above. In addition, some of the stronger applications proposed models that were already being funded or tested elsewhere, and therefore funding them under What Works II would be duplicating efforts, failing to advance the field. The What Works II team therefore found it challenging to form a comprehensive portfolio of projects that would substantially contribute to the evidence base and be sustainable within their contexts based on the stipulated scale criteria. It became clear the team would not be able to fulfil its granting and evaluation obligations under What Works II without a substantial shift in strategy. What Works II needed to think more carefully about the pathway to scale, and how to support organisations doing effective work on VAWG to position themselves well for a scale grant.

What Works II and FCDO engaged in a reflection process on the challenges of the scale granting process, the current state of the VAWG field and its readiness for scale, and proposed pathways forward. The present paper draws on lessons from this reflection that are most relevant to donors, governments, civil society/WROs, and researchers.

### **Findings: what we've learned from What Works II about the state of the VAWG prevention field and what is needed to strengthen an evidence-based and feminist pathway to scale**

Six key findings emerged as What Works reflected on the challenges of investing in scaling VAWG prevention efforts in the areas of evidence and learning, funding mechanisms and partnerships.

## Evidence and learning on pathways to scale

**First**, while we now have evidence that VAWG prevention is possible, this evidence is limited to small scale interventions that were not always designed with scale in mind, and **there are key remaining gaps in the evidence that present challenges to scale**. Also, not all of this evidence is rigorous (e.g. tested experimentally against a control or comparison group), and an even smaller number of research studies exist on VAWG prevention approaches (in different contexts, among different populations) that have been adapted and taken to scale. Where this type of evidence exists, it tends to be limited to specific regions or models (for example, there is more evidence in East and Southern Africa than other regions—like MENA—and some prevention approaches—like Stepping Stones and SASA!—have been more rigorously evaluated than others). Also restricting the opportunities for scaling is the fact that most VAWG prevention interventions have been designed to address violence only at the individual or relationship level, rather than a community or societal level. This limits the pool of approaches that have demonstrated readiness for scale and has led to a tendency amongst donors and governments to invest in implementing the same small number of tested models without always paying due respect to the original model or to the need to continue to fund innovation to broaden the range of tested models. It also limits thoughtful adaptation that would allow learning about what it takes to further scale effective interventions.

**Second, strengthening and understanding the pathway to scale is just as important as understanding what programmes work.** The past decade has seen robust investment in rigorous evaluations of VAWG prevention interventions, but much less is understood about the journey to effective scale. There has also been a tendency by donors, governments and civil society to scale-up smaller projects that have had one randomised controlled trial (RCT), in one context that has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing women’s experience of violence, without heeding the core principles of effective design and implementation, learning from originators, and carefully adapting the context and dimensions of scale. Several models that have demonstrated effectiveness have been made available through open source to anyone who would like to implement the approach. While this wide availability can be useful on the pathway to scale, if implementers aren’t carrying out the programmes true to how they were designed (e.g. compressing an intervention meant to be delivered over three years into three months), implementers risk rendering an effective intervention ineffective due to lack of fidelity. As a VAWG prevention field, it is critical that we be able to tell the story of what it takes to adapt and take effective interventions to scale in a way that is gender transformative and accountable to feminist movements and WROs. Documenting these lessons, engaging in deep reflections about ethical programmatic practices through communities of practice, equitable partnerships and sharing guidance about pathways to scale will ease the journey for other effective interventions to be taken to scale.

The largest grant investment to date by What Works II is the *Pomodzi Kuthetsa Nkhanza* (PKN)<sup>5</sup> programme in Malawi. What Works II plans to scale PKN by deepening its impact through a multi-sectoral, multi-level approach, addressing multiple risk factors for VAWG. Though the project combines two evidence-based approaches, neither has been evaluated in Malawi, and they have not been rigorously tested as a package. Taking evidence-based models, adapting them to new contexts, and evaluating them at scale and sharing learning (as What Works II is planning with PKN) are critical steps along the pathway to scale, but this requires rigorous support for implementing partners and can require complex evaluation strategies.

5 Formerly Tithetse Nkhanza!

Third, **the evidence on what we currently know about effective VAWG prevention programming is still not sufficiently reaching key audiences including governments, WROs, donors, and broader civil society in the Global South.** To support these stakeholders to engage with the evidence and reflect on what it means for their communities, there is a need to invest in skilling and equitably involving Global South researchers in making evidence accessible, otherwise it risks getting stuck in the Global North or with elite donor and INGO communities. This will involve thoughtful resourcing and technical support to disseminate key evidence and allow space for organisations to engage with the evidence and reflect on how evidence speaks to their existing programming and expertise. This can also include adapting materials only available in English to local languages, cultures and contexts. Different kinds of evidence products should be made available with an eye toward what would be most useful for practitioners.

## Funding to achieve impact at scale

Fourth, **funding mechanisms must be thoughtfully developed to meet the needs of the VAWG prevention field.** What Works II was looking to use sizable grants to scale approaches that had demonstrated reductions in VAWG through robust RCTs. Few approaches meet this criterion in a way that justifies such a large grant. Approaches that do have this evidence tend to either already have a pathway to scale (with separate funding and support), or do not meet feminist principles of scale. For example, some interventions that seemed more ready for scale were proposing a disproportionate amount of funding or leadership to organisations in the Global North, and since What Works II is committed to a feminist way of working, some organisations were not directly aligned with these values. More flexible grant types and amounts are needed to fund interventions that are on the path to scale: interventions that may have some evidence of effectiveness, but do not yet meet the high bar of reductions in VAWG demonstrated through an RCT. In addition, nearly all interventions required some level of co-design with the What Works II team to become appropriate for a grant or ready for an evaluation. This co-design included clarification around response versus prevention programming, strengthened capacity around theories of change and monitoring and evaluation, and deepening understanding around primary prevention (as distinct from awareness-raising). This involved more technical support than What Works II had anticipated or budgeted for (even invite-only grants under What Works II required additional technical support). Funding mechanisms that are aiming to support work at scale must account for the technical support required to ready organisations and interventions for that process, recognising that this can be quite significant but is likely to be rewarding investment in long-term social change. The presence of feminist movements is a critical impetus for progressive policy change (Htun et al., 2013), thus this investment is likely to pay dividends beyond the life of any single programme (including What Works).

## Building shared and equitable Partnerships to scale

Fifth, **WROs taking a localised, feminist approach to scale interventions must receive expanded support as leading partners on the path to feminist scale.** Organisations with the largest scale capacity have often been INGOs who have had the financial and human resources available, a reality which marginalises WROs and leaves them with little decision-making power or access to resources when effective interventions are funded for scale. Even when INGOs are working with local partners to implement VAWG prevention, too often these partners lack a feminist approach to programming. All types of organisations have different roles to play in ending VAWG, including (importantly) WROs who are experts in their context. While What Works II is seeking to fund and support WROs as leading partners in VAWG prevention, What Works II grant applications reflected a limited familiarity with the most promising primary prevention approaches and their theories of change. WROs are implementing innovative approaches to prevent VAWG, but have historically lacked the funding and support to organically innovate interventions, neither have they been allowed the space and time to learn from

their mistakes and correct to get them to a level where they can evaluate these approaches in a rigorous way. WROs are often overstretched and underfunded, and focusing on more immediate VAWG response needs, limiting their capacity to engage with global evidence on promising primary prevention approaches and to reflect on how these approaches might fit within their existing work, or step into new activities that funders might consider innovative or scalable. These findings also came out in a series of listening consultations conducted under What Works II (What Works II, 2022).

The result is that WROs who are doing important work to prevent VAWG in their communities are unable to produce grant proposals that fully reflect their capacity and meet funders' expectations. This can lead to a climate in which donors rely heavily on only a handful of well-known WROs working on prevention to provide support to the rest of the field to adapt evidence-based models. Investing in WROs that reflect a range of sizes and capacities (including more mid-sized, national WROs) would strengthen and diversify the partnerships funders are making to bring effective prevention programming to scale. WROs are key partners in the pathway to scale, and should be engaged in scaling prevention programming to the extent it fits within their existing work, and doesn't present an undue burden on their existing mission.

Deepening WROs' familiarity with primary prevention approaches and strengthening their capacity to integrate and/or deliver these approaches is a necessary step to feminist scale, as it will position them well to lead or effectively support large scale projects. WROs must also be well resourced to meet the demands of other organisations who are looking to adapt and implement their effective models. In addition, funding processes must better encourage equitable partnerships between those with deep expertise regarding gender and power (like WROs) and those who are already operating at scale (often INGOs or government). These partnerships may be strengthened through increased adaptive management, changes to procurement processes, and other measures such that when WROs are working in partnership with other organisations, it is a co-led, equitable partnership that avoids limiting their role to that of a subcontractor. Practically, this may mean applying ceilings to budgets for prime contractors, and minimum funding allocations to co-leading partners.

**Sixth, working with governments to mainstream effective VAWG programming into national or regional sectoral programmes, including multi-sectoral programmes, is one crucial component of scale and can lead to greater reach and sustainability. Governments also need to strengthen and adequately support response services.** This is not without challenges, given different political priorities and the length of time needed to change attitudes, institutional practices (including high-level commitment to domestic financing for VAWG), structures, and norms both inside and outside government. Localised, scaled interventions often require partnering with local and national governments and other actors (faith-based communities, environmental, financial entities, and others) who have not been traditional allies in this work, or who may not have previously worked in VAWG prevention. This can be a slow and deliberate process, but is worth exploring given the vast scale potential of government programming. In working with governments, VAWG actors should remain attentive to the quality of and fidelity to the original intervention model. If this is not maintained, this may render the intervention ineffective or even cause harm to women and girls. What Works II has so far funded three interventions that leverage existing sector programming (education programmes in Pakistan and Somalia, and a health programme in India), and is keen to leverage the learning from these interventions for future mainstreaming opportunities. However much of these current mainstreaming efforts under What Works II are in selective areas where there was a pre-existing relationship with government actors, or where the work is really being motivated and upheld by an NGO. More focus must be on how to effectively work with governments to bring evidence-based, sustainable models to scale.

# Recommendations: where do we go from here?

While there is growing evidence about which interventions are effective in reducing VAWG, there is still much to learn about how to effectively scale these interventions. Donors, governments, civil society, researchers, practitioners and activists are eager to leverage this evidence and invest in the scaling of effective approaches. This enthusiasm is evident in initiatives like the Generation Equality Action Coalition on GBV, and the Shared Advocacy Agenda, both of which aim to scaling evidence driven prevention programming and increase the quality, quantity, and flexibility of funding to women and girls-led organisations. As the global VAWG evidence base grows, how can these actors work together to invest in the adaptation and scaling of effective approaches? And how do we do this with equitable partnerships between WROs, governments, and other crucial stakeholders?

Several recommendations emerge from the What Works II scale and innovation experience. These recommendations have implications for individual stakeholder groups, and the ways in which we all work together to advance VAWG prevention:

## Build shared agendas and equitable partnerships to scale:

- **Invest in strengthening WROs' and capacity to engage with evidence-based primary prevention approaches and reflect on how these approaches speak to and strengthen their existing work.** Allow WROs the space to collaboratively learn from their own work and form their own partnerships, where each partner is equally valued and recognises the contributions of the other, and to increase their capacity to deliver effective interventions to new regions, stakeholders, communities and even governments. This will position these groups well to be leading partners in-large scale projects in a feminist way.
- **There must be adequate resourcing of technical assistance, mentoring and accompaniment to support WROs and to deepen understanding around primary prevention, the evidence base and how to put this into practice, and create institutional readiness for scale.** This ensures they have the support they need to prepare and implement interventions for feminist scale.
- **Investment in partnerships between WROs, other NGOs and INGOs, and governments is crucial to establish a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, and to build shared commitment.** Everyone has a role to play and there is a need to capitalise on different capabilities to mainstream VAWG prevention into existing sectors and systems for maximum impact.

## Fund to achieve impact at scale:

- **Flexible funding mechanisms, including potentially 'transition grants' for WROs, are crucial to facilitate the journey to scale for effective VAWG prevention programmes.** This includes flexible amounts that are tailored to meet organisations and interventions where they are, and due diligence and proposal requirements that take into account the needs of WROs. It is important that donors consider WROs as learning and innovation partners who they need to continue to support as they iterate and adapt their models even when these don't initially demonstrate reductions in VAWG. This is an important aspect of strengthening VAWG prevention interventions, the field of VAWG prevention and accountability to the field.
- **There must be greater investment in a wider variety of prevention models, including those designed with scale in mind.** This includes models that go beyond intensive engagement at the individual or household level (which can be challenging and expensive to scale) and test the use of media, technology, or other approaches to change social norms to prevent VAWG.

## Strengthen learning on pathways to scale:

- **More evaluation is needed of interventions designed to reduce violence at the community and society levels.** This will produce improved evidence about what works to reduce VAWG at scale. This involves investing in impact evaluations (which tend to be more expensive) and research designs that can demonstrate community and population-level reductions in VAWG and better understanding how effective organised diffusion works.
- **Barriers must be removed so that practitioners can easily access and apply the evidence they need to implement effective interventions.** This includes technical support and space to test and innovate, and may include a range of evidence products, translations that use appropriate context specific terminology, and dissemination activities.
- **Increased understanding, documentation and dissemination of the journey to scale--what it takes to adapt an effective, innovative intervention and scale it in a feminist way--will allow more effective interventions to be taken to scale for greater impact.** This includes practice-based learning along the journey to scale. Existing evidence must be adapted to different products with an eye toward what is most useful for key actors in the field, including practitioners.

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