

SHINE ONLINE DISCUSSION SUMMARY SERIES

What is practice-based knowledge to you?

The UN Trust Fund has been inspired by **Raising Voices** and other organizations in the Global South advocating for investment in **“Practice-Based Knowledge”** of civil society organizations and practitioners in ending violence against women. **Raising Voices** defines “Practice-Based Knowledge” as *“the cumulative knowledge and learning acquired by practitioners from designing and implementing diverse programmes in different contexts, including insights gained from observations, conversations, direct experiences, and programme monitoring”*.

This SHINE discussion “What is practice-based knowledge to you?” invited users to share their understandings about the conceptualization of practice-based knowledge and how it supports ending violence against women and girls. This was the longest discussion on SHINE, starting on 18 March 2022 and closing on 28 February 2023.

KEY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Participants could answer all or any of the questions below:

1. What is practice-based knowledge to you?
2. What definition do you use and what do you think practice-based knowledge can offer to the evidence base on ending violence against women and girls?

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

I. CSOs/WROs presented multiple definitions for practice-based knowledge (PBK)

Participants presented multiple definitions of practice-based knowledge (PBK), such as:

- “... is the knowledge acquired by practitioners in communities most times through many years of working and exposure to all aspects and stages of violence against women and girls.”

- “Practice-based knowledge is the cumulative knowledge and learning acquired by practitioners over years of innovation, reflection and refinement. It includes information from observations, conversations, direct experience and program monitoring.”
- “Practice-based knowledge are the myriad and diverse lessons arising from practitioners who are working directly with communities and survivors every day.”
- “Practice Based knowledge is the new knowledge we get in the field as we carry out activities. This knowledge help us to adjust our strategies so as to better meet the needs of our community better.”

Among the diversity of such unique definitions for PBK, participants seem to reverberate to the idea that practice-based knowledge (PBK) is a continuous act informed by or acquired from lived experiences and/or monitoring of implementation work, where intentionally learning is applied, and lessons learnt feed back into the practices in action.

A. Practitioners consider PBK the documentation of their lived experience

Discussants shared that PBK is how accumulated knowledge from their own lived experience makes them engage and act differently on their work, therefore, evolving it. For example, the experience of providing essential services to women victimized by violence and/or discrimination presents a daily opportunity for learning each day.

B. Good practices and challenges can be identified through practice-based knowledge

Some discussants stressed practice-based knowledge leads to good practices through the observation of patterns and particular practices that can be replicated to achieve desired results. They also shared how PBK can point out how practitioners and CSOs/WROs navigate and tackle daily challenges in ending violence against women and girls (EVAW/G) programming, such as how to deal with backlash and resistance.

C. PBK is often cumulative and accumulated over long duration of time

Most discussants shared the idea that PBK results from a process of many years of exposure to different aspects of the work on ending violence against women. This process of acquiring PBK also involves reflection and refinement of direct practical experiences, getting involved in the communities, conversations with multistakeholders, and programme monitoring.

D. PBK speaks to organizational memory and to CSOs/WROs becoming learning organisations

Few discussants shared how practice-based knowledge (PBK) not only is critical for the continuation and success of their interventions, but also how empowered their sense of identity as learning organizations, where team members felt more confident in carrying out programming and innovation as well as in contributing to the broader ecosystem of preventing and ending violence against women and girls.

CSOs/WROs and practitioners may not have the time and opportunity to document the HOWs of their daily work during the process of preventing and responding to violence. Documentation, like reports, tend to be on results instead. The advancement of digital technologies – i.e. social media platforms, blogs, online discussion forums, and others - can facilitate the process of documentation, however, ensuring the storage and accessibility of their content for the future can be a challenge.

II. Practice-based knowledge supports centring the experiences of women and girls survivors of violence and their communities in prevention and response

Practice-based knowledge reflects upon the daily and direct work with communities and those women and girls who were perpetrated by gender-based violence.

A. Practice-based knowledge increases the adaptability of programmes in real time

The multitude of lessons arising from practitioners enables prompt modification and improvement that can be tested on spot and reassessed timely. In fact, PBK increases the adaptability of programmes and interventions because it would be tailoring them to attend the needs of survivors in that particular context.

B. Practice-based knowledge should be co-created with, not extracted from women and girls survivors of violence, and their communities

Learning with target groups goes beyond expanding the practitioners experience, it allows the identification of crosscutting issues and needs in several groups, such as youth, people living with HIV/AIDS, survivors of gender-based violence. Therefore, sharing knowledge with them is part of engaging them in the PBK cycle.

III. CSOs/WROs shared four emerging principles to practice-based knowledge

Throughout the discussion, participants shared key constitutive principles of practice-based knowledge (PBK): (1) participatory and multistakeholder; (2) cyclical and iterative; (3) complementary to academic research; and (4) transformative social practice.

A. Practice-based knowledge is a multistakeholder participatory process

Discussants pointed out that practice-based knowledge is a collective process where multiple stakeholders play a significant role as active agents. They jointly observe and reflect on the processes and results of the implementation.

For example, according to discussants, women and girls, communities and service providers should be acknowledged in the process as active contributors. Three discussants – respectively from Cambodia, Honduras, and Liberia – agreed that getting to know the needs of the stakeholders involved are also part of the learning process embedded in practice-based knowledge.

As defined by a participant, “[t]he collective process of deliberation and scrutiny of knowledge serves as a vetting process to ensure that knowledge emerging from practice is rigorously developed and appropriately attuned to the context “.

B. Practice-based knowledge is cyclical and iterative

Discussants stressed the learning by doing aspect of PBK in ending violence against women and girls as well as the iterative and embedded aspect. This means that practical lessons learnt feed back into the practices in action while new lessons are simultaneously collected and informing back that same practice in a continuous cycle.

C. Practice-based knowledge is complementary to academic research

When defining or explaining “practice-based knowledge” (PBK), participants often used expressions, like “grounded expertise”, “lived experience”, “hands-on knowledge”, “realistic concrete actions”, “real world experience”, and others. Some were explicitly using practice-based knowledge as a complement to terms referring to “academic study” or “theory”. The term “evidence-based” was used at times to address elements of both PBK *and* academic research.

Participants largely agreed that PBK and academic research are complementary and have the potential to effectively support programmes in ending violence against women. Some contributors also observed that it is critical that academics engage practitioners and collaborate rather than simply extract information from the field.

D. Practice-based knowledge is a transformative social practice and a political stance

Practice-based knowledge explicitly values grounded expertise and experience, therefore, making it a political stance in a context where theoretical/academic research detached from lived experiences takes the spotlight.

PBK is operationalized from within the context of lived experiences feeding back to those. When discussing the importance of PBK, one participant quoted the sociologist Anibal Quijano: “[t]he knowledge of a social reality is only fully accessible from within a transformative social practice”.

IV. CSOs/WROs share that practice-based knowledge is also a knowledge management challenge

Some discussants stated that practice-based knowledge depends on adequate data collection, documentation and systematization to generate learning processes. Even though technology facilitates documentation via social media, blogs, online forums, and other digital media; questions around adequate storage for the future remain.

A. The lack of time and human resources prevent organizations from effective practice-based knowledge and risk losing tacit knowledge that is detrimental to ending violence against women and girls (EVAW/G)

Participants expressed that the lack of time and trained personnel to conduct adequate documentation and systematization of data not only prevents them from effectively engaging practice-based knowledge, but also risk losing institutional memory and ongoing praxis of the work. Social organizations expressed difficulty in bridging PBK and learning processes due to a lack of systematic practical steps for reflecting upon and, then applying learning within the programmes.

B. Practice-based knowledge tends to be undervalued in comparison to theoretical/academic research

Some participants reported that practice-based knowledge is not valued, even though it presents participatory methods and actionable knowledge that can be tested or replicated when compared to academic research.

Academics should be collaborators, not simply extractors of information from practitioners, communities and subjects. They should actively engage stakeholders in the process of knowledge co-creation.



C. Language barriers and lack of accessibility can prevent the sharing of PBK

Academic products could more accessible and contribute to furthering the conversation and learning for all, when engaging practitioners and communities. However, language can also prevent toolkit to be widely shared and used by multiple members of the EVAW/G ecosystem, according to discussants.

With the advance of new technologies, for example the translation plug-in on SHINE hub, this gap can be narrowed and PBK can be widely shared among users communicating in over 50 languages.

V. CSOs/WROs shared examples of challenges faced, and actions taken in their contexts

Few contributors briefly shared examples on their experience with practice-based knowledge and its added value to their work in ending violence against women and girls.

A. Specific examples given by discussants

- Two participants – one from Chad and another from Cameroon – shared the importance of practice-based knowledge and experience in detecting some signs of violence through women's and girl's behaviour who are under or have gone through gender-based violence situations, including women and girls with disabilities.
- A participant from Liberia informed that a key success factor on their work is the coordination among CSOs and other stakeholders on gender-based violence prevention – i.e. ministries, agencies, and communities – while operating with the existing structures at the community level. This ensured a sustainable engagement of the operation.
- A participant from Vietnam shared how a “Communication Ambassador” contest about the prevention of HIV/AIDS among youth spread the word about HIV/AIDS prevention and received training about it. This successful practice was replicated across youth networks.

B. Resources shared by discussants

- *Raising Voices*, whose definition on PBK sparked this conversation shared its [learning paper number 8 “Nurturing & Elevating Practice-Based Learning”](#)
- [Development Education Network – Liberia \(DEN-L\) Success Stories under the Spotlight Initiative Program](#)

VI. Conclusions and Next Steps

In conclusion, practice-based knowledge [PBK] is not a well-defined and/or disseminated concept among civil society organizations and women's organizations [CSOs/WROs]. Even though different terms were used to refer to their understandings of “what practice-based knowledge is”, they commonly shared several elements that constitute it and its critical role to the continuation and success of interventions in ending violence against women and girls.

CSOs/WROs understand that practice-based knowledge is a collective process where multistakeholders should collaborate, including academics, service providers, target groups, etc. They also affirm that PBK is complementary to academic or

theoretical knowledge, even though the former is undervalued in relation to the latter. Bearing in mind the lack of time and human resources for the documentation of praxis, according to discussants, there is room for collaboration between academics and practitioners to fill up this gap and address other knowledge management related issues. CSOs/WROs also shared that PBK is a continuous cyclical learning where best practices can be identified and replicated.

As next steps, the UN Trust Fund will use the collected information to inform its funding practices and direct grantmaking on practice-based knowledge. These inputs will also be used to inform an upcoming workshop in SVRI Forum in October 2024 on 'What is PBK and how can it be leveraged further for EVAW/G programming, funding, policies and practice?'.

VII. ONLINE DISCUSSION ANALYTICS¹

Period of the discussion: 17 March 2022 – 28 February 2023 (346 days)

Audience: all registered users of SHINE

Number of comments: 49

Number of likes on comments: 104

Number of unique discussants: 24 (03 moderators)

Most used language: English (17)

Other languages used: French (04), Spanish (04), Vietnamese (01) - one user commented in Spanish and French while also posting comments in English.

Related SHINE resources:

[Learning from Practice: Lessons on preventing violence from civil society organizations funded by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women](#)

Pathways to Prevention – The Podcast

Related SHINE community(ies) of practice: [Prevention](#)

More information on SHINE hub website <https://www.shinehub.org/about/SHINE>

1 The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) would like to thank all SHINE users who contributed to this discussion sharing their thoughts and experiences from Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Ghana, Honduras, India, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Peru, Spain, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vietnam. Your valuable inputs enrich and inform the UN Trust Fund's grant-making, knowledge products, and programming on ending violence against women and girls (EVAW/G), feminist movement building, and organizational resilience.

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