



WhatWorks

TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

Violence Against Women and Girls
in Conflict and Humanitarian Crises

What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls in Conflict and Humanitarian Crises

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT IN SOUTH SUDAN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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OBJECTIVE

The goal of the formative research was to improve the understanding of the overall context of VAWG and conflict in South Sudan, as well as to inform the design of the population-based survey and complementary qualitative tools, which is being implemented in the final phases of the study.



METHODOLOGY



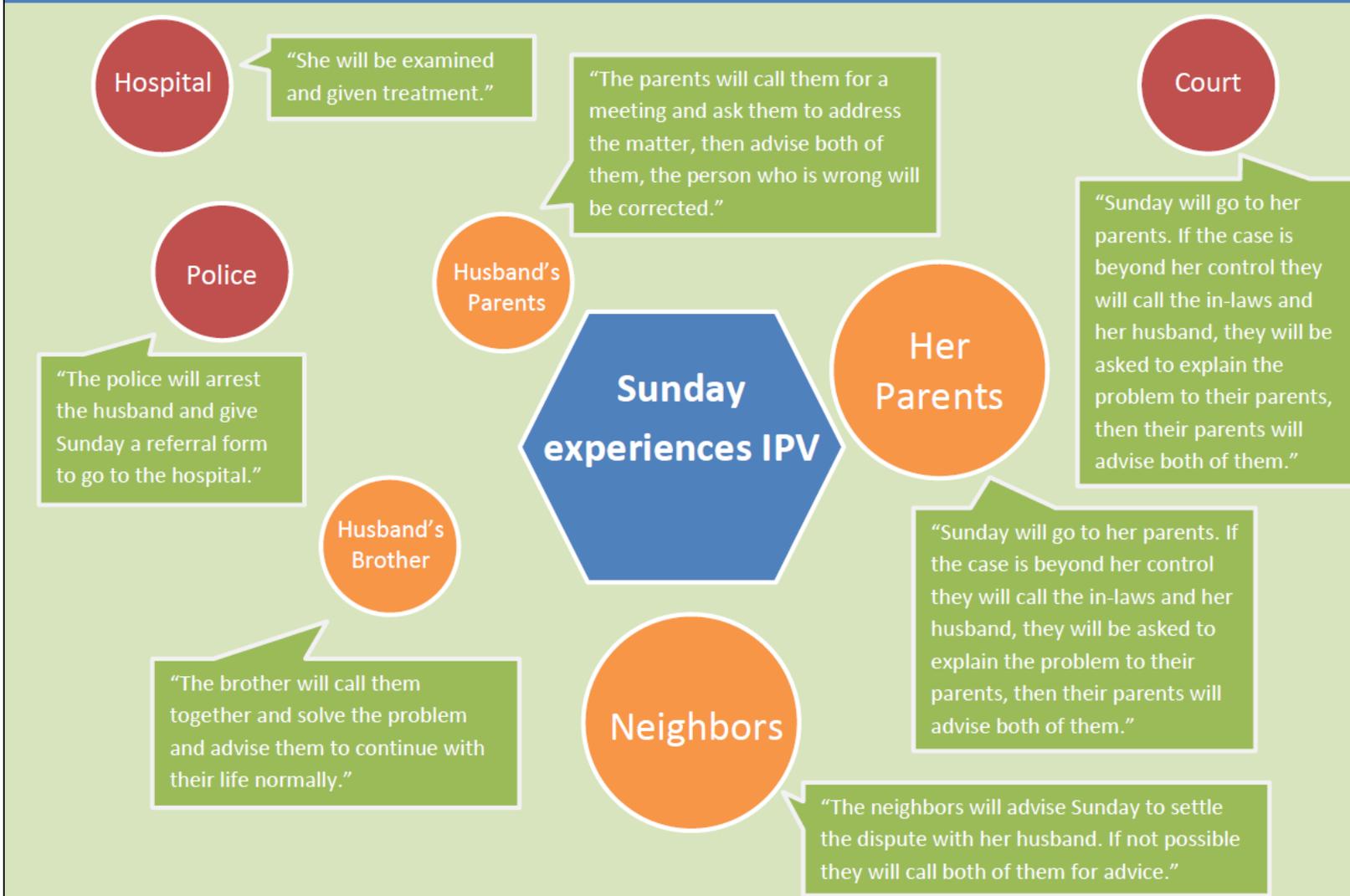
- The formative research utilized a **participatory approach** that engaged communities and local and national stakeholders.
- Fieldworkers received **gender training** before starting fieldwork and were provided psychosocial support.
- Precautions were taken to ensure that the participants were guaranteed **confidentiality and privacy** during the interviews.

FREE LISTING- WHAT TYPES OF VIOLENCE ARE MOST COMMON?





Focus Group Visualisation - Sunday's Reporting



AFTER THE EVENT: WHAT CAN SHE DO?



FINDINGS

A key finding of the study is that women and girls are overwhelmingly at greatest risk of physical, sexual and emotional injury within their own homes, **primarily at the hands of family members and intimate partners.**



THE MARRIAGE DOWRY

“In our culture you have to be married and dowried”
– Female Key Informant in Juba

“If the wife is working and the man is not, she must give all the money to the man... She argues but the man will say ‘I paid many cows for your dowry, whatever you do it is my responsibility.’”
– Female FGD in Bentiu

- The reasons given for discrimination and physical violence against girls were typically associated with bride price.
- For the extended family, the bride price is a primary vehicle for wealth accumulation, and many other traditional practices such as early marriage, wife inheritance and abduction are strategies used by families to either maximize or avoid paying bride price.



VIOLENCE DURING GIRLHOOD

“If you are born a girl in this Crisis, you are born a problem.”

– Female FGD in Bentiu

“Girls are restricted from education simply because their parents think that if they are taken to school they will get spoiled and therefore will not bring the expected dowry to the family. Girls who grow up in cattle camps are expected to be married for a lot of cows.”

– Male Key Informant in Rumbek

- The reasons given for discrimination and physical violence against girls were typically associated with bride price.
- Girls also experience sexual abuse during their childhoods, usually perpetrated by family members.



VIOLENCE DURING ADULTHOOD

"It is common our custom to beat a woman when she has a mistake, not to the extent of killing her completely but to discipline her." – Male Local Chiefs in Rumbek

"Most people beat and torture their wives thinking that they have paid a lot of cows. They don't care whether the wife has some other rights." – Key Informant in Rumbek

- The most common form of violence experienced by women in adulthood is physical and sexual violence perpetrated by an intimate partner. IPV is commonly justified as a man's right to chastise a woman based on the payment of brideprice.



CONFLICT AND VAWG

“Before the crisis we were fighting. Now they are removing our eyes, they are kicking us in the stomach.”

– Female FGD in Bentiu

“Gender-based violence is taken as a tool of war in South Sudan. Women have been raped in a massive [way]. Even ten men can go and rape ten women”

– Female Key Informant in Juba

- Women are at significant risk of attack when they venture beyond the relative safety of their communities, as a result of displacement, or when men leave to engage in combat.
- IPV, early and forced marriage and other manifestations of VAWG can be linked to increasing levels of poverty and the growing culture of violence across South Sudan that have resulted from decades of conflict.



RACHEL AND HELENA

- Rachel - They came in the morning - two brothers of my husband and the son of my sister-in-law. Now we want to take this girl to live with us. I said no, she supports me... so they took out a gun and pointed it at me and said we will shoot you, and they stole the girl.
- Helena - My uncle took me to a man and he beat me and hurt my back and my legs - it still hurts. He said “do you know why your relatives took my cows? So that you would stay here.” I said “I am too young to marry you, I can’t do anything” so he hit me in the head with a stick and I collapsed. Then he removed my underwear and started to sleep with me. He held a knife to my eyes and told me that he would slaughter me. After a month I escaped from the house and went back to my mother.
- Rachel - I want the two girls to go to school, but I have no power to protect them. For the women of South Sudan nothing will change unless our Government tells people not to fight. We (women) are vulnerable - we have no one to support us....



EFFECT OF CONFLICT ON VAWG IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Types of VAWG

Directly Conflict Related

Non Partner Sexual Assault
Abduction
Killing

Women incidentally affected as part of armed attacks on villages/places of residence
Specific targeting of women and girls (for marriage, revenge, abduction, drawing men out, dehumanization, etc.) by an armed group or rival community

Drivers

Indirectly Related

IPV
Non Partner Sexual Assault
Sexual Harassment
Physical violence by family members and community members
Traditional Practices (e.g. early marriage, polygamy, wife inheritance)

Socio-economic status
Opportunistic Crime/Criminality
Displacement
Normalization of violence
Breakdown of rule of law



CONCLUSIONS

- The formative research revealed that conditions faced by women in South Sudan are dire. The effects of multiple armed conflicts on the stability and security of the population contributes to the prevalence of VAWG in South Sudan and increases perpetrator impunity.
- Comprehensive support services for survivors, including access to justice, health, and psychosocial support, need to be prioritized in South Sudan as essential components of humanitarian assistance, as well as during peace negotiations and in post-conflict reconstruction.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The revision of customary laws that govern perpetrator impunity throughout the country ;
- The targeting of awareness efforts at key community influencers, such as Boma chiefs;
- The promotion of the conception that educating girls can benefit entire communities;
- Strengthening access to justice and compassionate services for survivors of VAWG, particularly in areas of high conflict and displacement; and
- Increased efforts to prevent VAWG by changing social norms that tolerate or encourage violence, and reducing stigma towards survivors of violence.