



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:

## Contributions to the field

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Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most widespread abuses of human rights worldwide, affecting one third of women in their lifetime. It is a human rights, security, and global health issue “of epidemic proportions, requiring urgent action.”<sup>1</sup> However, existing evidence on drivers, forms, and trends of VAWG is minimal,<sup>2</sup> particularly in conflict and humanitarian settings. Much of the rigorous evidence that exists is from high-income countries and focuses on specific types of violence.

Further, there is limited rigorous evidence on what works to prevent and respond to VAWG in low-income settings, particularly conflict and humanitarian settings. Systematic reviews of the literature on VAWG in conflict and humanitarian emergencies carried out in the last few years point to the scarcity of high quality, rigorous research in this field.<sup>3</sup> There is increasing acknowledgement of the need to better understand the scale and scope of VAWG in conflict and humanitarian emergencies, and improved strategies to prevent and address it.

*What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls* is the UK Department for International Development’s flagship research programme investing an unprecedented £25 million, over five years, to build knowledge on what works to prevent and respond to VAWG. The programme consists of three components – each building the evidence base on a specific area:

- ▶ **Component 1:** VAWG globally, focussing on effective strategies for prevention;
- ▶ **Component 2:** VAWG in conflict and humanitarian settings; and
- ▶ **Component 3:** the economic and social costs of VAWG.

**Component 2, *What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls in Conflict and Humanitarian Crises (What Works)***, is an international multi-disciplinary partnership led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with George Washington University’s Global Women’s Institute (GWU, GWI) and CARE International UK (CIUK). Additional academic and research partners include the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), the Africa Population Health Research Center (APHRC) in Nairobi, Kenya, and Forcier Consulting in Juba, South Sudan.

Six research studies (outlined in Figure 1) are being conducted to produce rigorous research and evidence on:

- ▶ the prevalence, forms, trends, and drivers of VAWG;
- ▶ effective VAWG prevention and response in conflict and humanitarian settings; and
- ▶ how to carry out safe, ethical, and rigorous research in conflict and humanitarian settings.

These areas were prioritised as thematic areas for study as they have a high likelihood of catalysing programming and donor investment to prevent and respond to VAWG in humanitarian crises, both by deepening the understanding of the problem and providing evidence about what works to address the problem. An evidence brief that summarises a number of systematic reviews on GBV in emergencies is also available.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately this evidence base, coupled with methodological innovation and a Consortium committed to robust research uptake, will result in a tangible difference to the lives of women and girls who are at risk of, and who have survived, VAWG.

## Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies

The scale and breadth of the *What Works* programme is notable, but it is important to highlight other international efforts in this field. The *What Works* programme is not alone in investing time and resources in researching and prioritising prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV)<sup>5</sup> in emergencies and fits into a larger, global drive to create change for affected populations, particularly women and girls.

In 2013 Sweden and the UK's Department for International Development jointly launched the *Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies (Call to Action)*, a global appeal to diverse stakeholders – governments, donors, international organisations, NGOs, civil society, women's organisations, the private sector – to make specific commitments to contribute towards transforming the way GBV is addressed in the humanitarian space. In its foundational Communiqué, partners laid out the core principles of the *Call to Action* and agreed to develop an operational framework, or Road Map, for pledges to be put into action and for humanitarian actors to be held accountable to the same. The US Government assumed leadership of the *Call to Action* in January 2014 and began to support the development of the Road Map, which was officially launched in October 2015 in conjunction with leadership being handed over to Sweden. The Swedish Government will now preside over promoting and implementing the Road Map for one year.

## How does *What Works* complement the *Call to Action*?

The *Call to Action* identifies an “insufficient evidence base on effective programming and systemic response”<sup>6</sup> as one of six areas of concern which present the largest challenge to quickly and effectively addressing GBV in an emergency, and emphasises that “more attention and funding are needed to build this critical evidence base.”<sup>7</sup> As the largest multi-year study currently examining VAWG in conflict and crisis, *What Works* will play an instrumental role in advancing the global research agenda in this area.

Additionally, *What Works* and the *Call to Action* share the same long-term goals and objectives. Figure 1 gives an overarching visual of how *What Works*' six individual research studies on VAWG in conflict and crisis complement the *Call to Action*'s six outcomes.

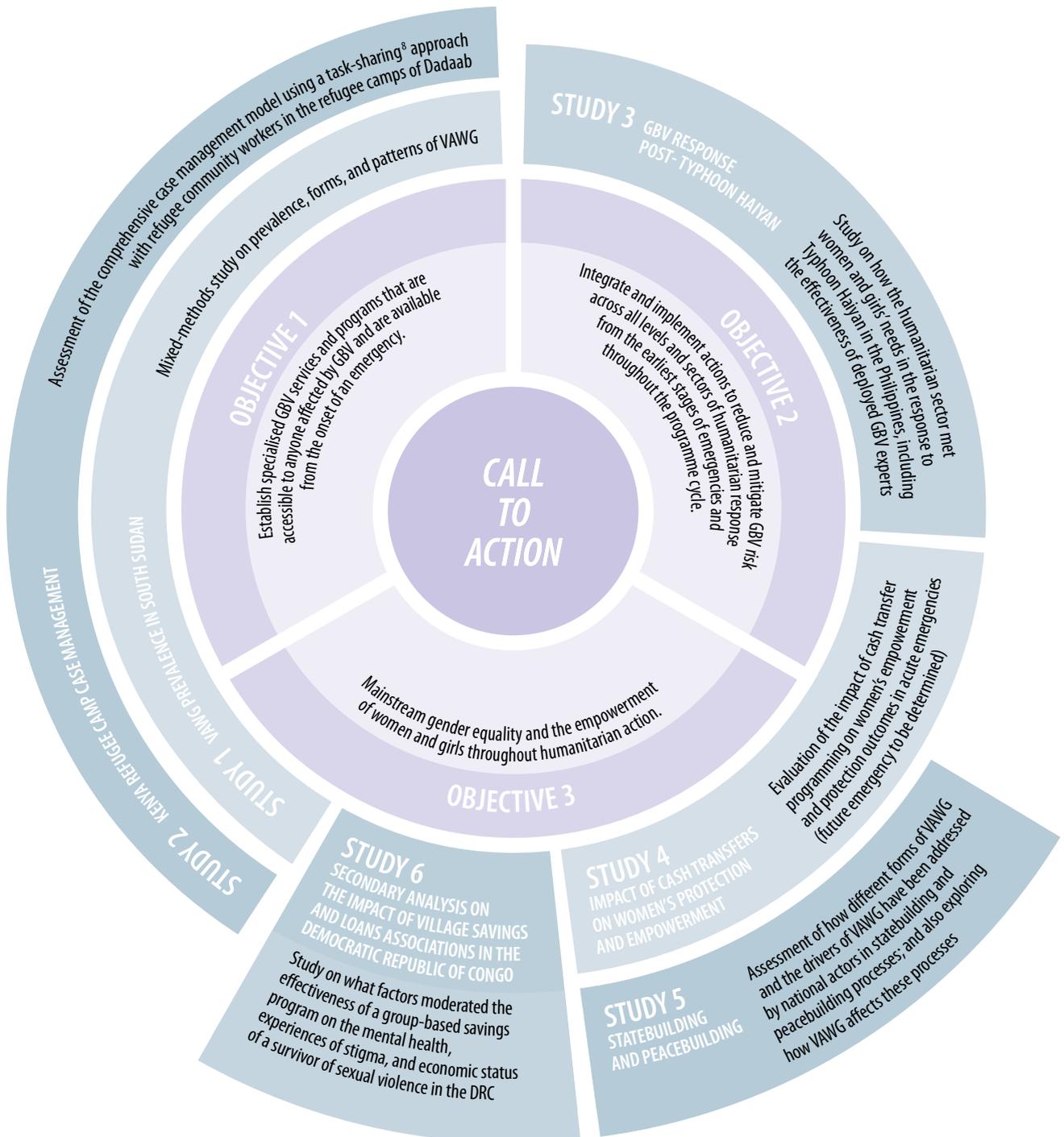
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“Specific and reliable data about the humanitarian system’s response to GBV in individual crises is also lacking.”

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### CALL TO ACTION ROAD MAP

**Figure 1: How *What Works'* studies complement the *Call to Action's* outcomes**



## Figure 2: How does the *Call to Action* plan to deliver its objectives?

In order to meet its three objectives, the *Call to Action* Road Map includes **six target outcomes** to be met by 2020, which break down further into specific action points for various stakeholders. The *What Works* research portfolio supports the achievement of the *Call to Action*'s target outcomes in the following ways:

<p><b>CALL TO ACTION TARGET OUTCOMES</b></p> <p><i>WHAT WORKS STUDIES</i></p>	<p><b>OUTCOME 1</b></p> <p>Humanitarian actors adopt and implement institutional policies and standards to strengthen gender equality, prevent and respond to GBV, and enhance accountability for taking action.</p>	<p><b>OUTCOME 2</b></p> <p>All levels within the humanitarian architecture promote effective and accountable inter-agency/ inter-sectoral GBV leadership and coordination.</p>	<p><b>OUTCOME 3</b></p> <p>Needs assessments, analyses, and planning processes support effective and accountable integration of GBV prevention and response and gender equality into humanitarian response efforts.</p>	<p><b>OUTCOME 4</b></p> <p>Funding is available for GBV prevention and response for each phase of an emergency, from preparedness and crisis onset through transition to development.</p>	<p><b>OUTCOME 5</b></p> <p>Specialised GBV prevention and response services are implemented in each phase of an emergency, from preparedness and crisis onset through transition to development.</p>	<p><b>OUTCOME 6</b></p> <p>Those managing and leading humanitarian operations have and apply the knowledge and skills needed to foster gender equality and reduce and mitigate GBV risk.</p>
<p><b>STUDY 1</b></p> <p>South Sudan prevalence study</p>		<p>Highlights specific challenges related to the humanitarian architecture in South Sudan and the impact on women and girls.</p>	<p>Focuses on understanding the context and needs of the local population and provides concrete recommendations on ensuring effective and accountable integration of GBV prevention and response.</p>	<p>Provides robust evidence on the drivers, forms and trends of VAWG in South Sudan and where funding needs to be channelled in relation to research, policy, and programming.</p>		<p>Overall the research programme aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ provide rigorous research on GBV in conflict-affected areas so that humanitarian actors have the necessary data to make evidence-based decisions in order to improve programming and policy on VAWG at the international, national, and local levels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>STUDY 2</b></p> <p>Assessment of comprehensive case management and task-sharing model in Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya</p>			<p>Focuses on understanding the context and needs of the local population (Dadaab refugee camp).</p>	<p>Increases understanding of effective models for GBV response and comprehensive case management in a refugee camp setting, and whether this is scalable.</p>	<p>Assesses comprehensive task-sharing case management model to improve access, quality of care, and health outcomes for survivors of violence in the refugee camps of Dadaab.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ present data in appropriate formats for different audiences; hold events and workshops at the international and national levels to ensure research findings are understood; and discuss concrete ways of taking forward the findings and recommendations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>STUDY 3</b></p> <p>Retrospective study on humanitarian response to Typhoon Haiyan, Philippines</p>	<p>Provides recommendations for increased accountability, including for the implementation of, and accountability to, the <i>2015 Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action</i>.</p>	<p>Emphasises the consequences of not having clear leadership and coordination across the various sectors and how this leads to missed opportunities in providing timely and comprehensive response activities to women and girls in an emergency.</p>	<p>Focuses on analysis in the early phase of an emergency, and provides concrete recommendations on ensuring effective and accountable integration of GBV prevention and response and gender equality into humanitarian response efforts.</p>	<p>Analyses where lack of funding was a constraint to preventing and responding to GBV in an acute setting.</p>	<p>Explores the effectiveness of GBV experts deployed during Typhoon Haiyan and their role in ensuring VAWG prevention and response activities were addressed by the wider humanitarian response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ complement the research through a range of capacity strengthening workshops and activities aimed at supporting humanitarian actors and donors to better understand and interpret VAWG research and evidence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>STUDY 4</b></p> <p>Prospective emergency cash transfer study</p>		<p>Contributes to making links across sectors on the use of cash transfers to meet basic needs.</p>	<p>Evaluates the impact of cash transfers on women's empowerment and protection outcomes in an acute emergency; Informs the development of effective integration of women's protection and empowerment considerations into cash transfer programming and policy.</p>	<p>Analyses cash transfer programming as an effective intervention to prevent VAWG and support women's empowerment.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ facilitate access to evidence on VAWG in conflict and humanitarian crises by managing a comprehensive and user-friendly database.</li> </ul>
<p><b>STUDY 5</b></p> <p>Statebuilding and peacebuilding study</p>				<p>Provides learnings on changes needed at the structural level to reduce and prevent VAWG long-term in settings affected by humanitarian emergencies; Provides evidence of promising practices in addressing gender norms and VAWG through statebuilding and peacebuilding strategies, which in turn will help to inform funding decisions.</p>	<p>Assesses how responses to VAWG have been integrated by national actors into statebuilding and peacebuilding processes in four selected post-conflict countries.</p>	
<p><b>STUDY 6</b></p> <p>Secondary analysis on the impact of Village Savings and Loans Associations in the DRC</p>				<p>Analyses Village Savings and Loans Associations as an effective intervention to prevent and/or respond to VAWG.</p>	<p>Provides further analysis of the impact of Village Savings and Loans Associations programming in the DRC.</p>	

## References

- 1 WHO, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, the South African Medical Research Council.  
Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2013.
- 2 Ellsberg, Mary et al. (2015).  
Prevention of violence against women and girls: what does the evidence say?  
Lancet, 385 (9977), 1555-1566.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 The Global Women's Institute and International Rescue Committee. (2016)  
*Evidence brief: What works to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in conflict and humanitarian settings?*  
Washington DC: George Washington University and London: IRC.
- 5 The 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defined violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women." However, it is important to note that interpretation of the term "GBV" has shifted over time and is not always used interchangeably with "VAWG". "GBV" is also used to describe violence against both sexes to assert gender roles and systemic inequalities.
- 6 Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies; Road Map 2016-2020. September 2015.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Task sharing in this context is the process of training refugees to provide case management tasks that would otherwise be restricted to NGO staff.

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