

A close-up photograph of several women, likely in South Asia, wearing red saris. The central woman has a bindi on her forehead and a nose ring, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Other women are visible in the foreground and background, some also wearing bindis.

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A Theory of Change for
Tackling Violence Against
Women and Girls



GENDER &
DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK

Acknowledgements

Cover image:

Farmer Sumitra Thami attends a rally against gender-based violence in Lapilang, Nepal. Approximately 700 women took part, many travelling for several days from remote parts of the country.

PHOTO: BRIAN SOKOL/ACTIONAID

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“Discrimination and violence destroys the potential of girls and women in developing countries and prevents them from pulling themselves out of poverty.”

Andrew Mitchell, International Development Secretary, International Women’s Day, 8 March 2012



Members of the Voices of Women of the Congo group in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, call for peace and protection for women in the aftermath of conflict with placards that say: 'We don't want to be raped any more. Stop the violence'.

PHOTO: JENNY MATTHEWS/ACTIONAID

1. Introduction

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is the most widespread form of abuse worldwide, affecting one third of all women in their lifetime.¹ Addressing violence against women and girls is a central development goal in its own right, and key to achieving other development outcomes for individual women, their families, communities and nations. DFID's Business Plan (2011-2015) identifies tackling violence against women and girls as a priority, and commits DFID to pilot new and innovative approaches to prevent it.

This Theory of Change on ending gender-based violence against women and girls consists of a diagram (p.14-15) and accompanying narrative. Together they provide an overview of the interventions, outputs and outcomes that can reduce and ultimately eradicate violence against women and girls. It is not meant to be prescriptive, but to map the multiple pathways to tackling violence against women and girls and provide a starting point for programmes to develop their own theories of change.

The Theory of Change draws on the experience of a range of actors delivering programmes and services addressing violence against women and girls, including donor agencies, women human rights defenders, women's rights organisations and other civil society organisations.² It is designed to be used in conjunction with two other guidance documents: the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls*³ and *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation for Programming on Violence against Women and Girls*.⁴

This document outlines seven principles underlying the Theory of Change diagram. It details evidence underpinning each principle, and explains their relevance for programming. This is followed by the Theory of Change diagram itself. The document then expands on each stage of the Theory of Change and provides example indicators (the narrative).

2. Principles

The seven key principles underlying the Theory of Change are that:

1. **Context is critical:** successful interventions are those that are tailored and based on rigorous analysis of the particular factors affecting violence against women and girls in a specific context, including setting, form of violence and population affected by the violence.
2. **The state has primary responsibility for action on violence against women and girls:** national governments hold the ultimate responsibility for implementing laws, policies and services around violence against women and girls and can achieve change on violence against women and girls.
3. **Holistic and multi-sectoral approaches are more likely to have impact:** coordinated interventions operating at multiple levels, across sectors and over multiple time-frames are more likely to address the various aspects of, and therefore have greater impact on, tackling violence against women and girls.
4. **Social change makes the difference:** sustained reduction in violence against women and girls will only occur through processes of significant social change, including in social norms, at all levels.
5. **Backlash is inevitable but manageable:** resistance to tackling violence against women and girls, which may include increased risk of further violence against women and girls, is inevitable where root causes are being addressed but can, and should, be managed.
6. **Women's rights organisations create and sustain change:** supporting women's rights organisations, especially those working to tackle violence against women and girls, to make change and build strong and inclusive social movements is the most effective mechanism for ensuring sustainable change in the lives of women and girls.
7. **Empowering women is both the means and the end:** focusing on the rights of, and being accountable to, women and girls is the most effective way of tackling gender inequality as the root cause of violence against women and girls.

2.1 Context is critical

This principle is especially relevant at the barriers and the interventions stages of the Theory of Change.

The Theory of Change assumes that context is critical: while unequal gender power relations and related social norms are a root cause of violence against women and girls,⁵ these manifest differently in different socio-cultural and political contexts. Successful interventions are those that are tailored and based on rigorous analysis of the particular factors affecting violence against women and girls in a given context.⁶ These factors include the setting (conflict, humanitarian or more stable situations), the level at which the violence occurs (such as within an intimate relationship or perpetrated by the state), the form of violence (examining type and perpetrator), and the population affected by the violence (such as migrant workers, widows, lesbian women, adolescent girls, women involved in the sex industry, disabled women, displaced women, women living with HIV, etc.).

For example, evidence suggests that legal sanctions can be important in reducing violence against women and girls, including by establishing normative frameworks (i.e. sets of recommended standards and specific measures to take) and providing resources to address violence against women and girls.⁷ However, legal reform on its own is not sufficient to prevent violence against women and girls, and can have negative results. For example, evidence on reducing female genital mutilation/cutting⁸ demonstrates that changing social norms (beliefs, attitudes and behaviours), including by engaging local leaders who help set the norms, is central to the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting (see the discussion on p.11 of the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence Against Women and Girls* for a specific example from Ethiopia).⁹ Similarly, criminalising so-called 'honour crimes' has, in some cases, led to minors being incited to commit violence against women because their sentences would be less severe than those of adults.¹⁰ Further, in situations where legal or other infrastructure is limited, absent or under stress (such as in conflict or humanitarian contexts or in remote rural settings), interventions addressing violence against women and girls that do not rely on legal support have proven effective.¹¹

Similarly, some risk factors may be more important in some contexts than others. Evidence on the influence of male alcohol consumption on the frequency and severity of violence perpetuated against female partners could suggest that alcohol is a cause of violence against women and girls.¹² However, not all men who consume alcohol are violent against women and girls and not all men who are violent against women and girls consume alcohol. This suggests that the effect of alcohol consumption on the prevalence, incidence, frequency and severity of violence against women and girls by men is context-specific, even in the case of intimate partner violence for which this risk factor is most established. In this way, alcohol consumption can be understood as a risk factor, and not as a root cause, of violence against women and girls. It should be considered on a context by context basis and in conjunction with a thorough assessment of all relevant risk factors.¹³ In contexts where alcohol consumption is uncommon, other risk factors will necessarily be more relevant.

The importance of context is also illustrated by work with men and boys, where dominant social constructions (i.e. beliefs relating to and interpretations) of male sexual entitlement and masculinity which perpetuate violence against women and girls may not be identical, or universally shared, within communities let alone across whole societies or beyond.¹⁴

The first step for any programme aimed at tackling violence against women and girls must therefore be to conduct thorough situational analysis, including a gendered power analysis (i.e. analysis of the specific socio-economic circumstances of men and women) to understand the specific factors affecting violence against women and girls in a particular context. This should include questions relating, for example, to: what the dominant types of violence against women and girls are; who violence against women and girls affects, and how; who the main perpetrators are; where violence takes place; how different types of violence and their causes and consequences are perceived; what the current availability/accessibility of services is; and what the proportion of women seeking support is, and from where.

2.2

The state has primary responsibility for action on violence against women and girls

This principle is especially relevant at the barriers and the interventions stages of the Theory of Change.

The Theory of Change assumes that the state has primary responsibility for action on violence against women and girls: national governments are legally bound to, and hold the ultimate responsibility for, the implementation of laws, policies and services related to violence against women and girls and can, and should be, held accountable for doing so. They are also well placed to achieve change on violence against women and girls.

The obligation for states to prevent violence against women and girls and to provide comprehensive services to survivors of such violence was established as a 'due diligence' standard by General Recommendation No. 19 of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 1992.¹⁵ The Recommendation also stipulates the need for states to tackle the gender inequality that both causes and perpetuates violence against women and girls.

While there is still some work to be done (depending on the country) to reform law and policy, in many contexts the normative frameworks to address violence against women and girls now exist.¹⁶ The problem lies in the implementation of these frameworks. In reality, no state in the world is effectively fulfilling its obligations to prevent violence against women and girls, protect women and girls from violence or provide comprehensive services to survivors.¹⁷ The reasons for this vary and include a lack of political will and low institutional capacity at local, regional and national levels. In some cases, conservative ideologies, such as so-called 'religious fundamentalisms',¹⁸ as well as entrenched institutional sexism act as further barriers.

Impunity is also a problem, particularly in the justice and security sectors. For example, systematic failures of police, armies and law enforcement agents at the local level put women and girls at risk of violence and prevent access to justice.¹⁹ In extreme cases, failures of the state can manifest as state violence, where the state is the perpetrator of violence against women and girls.²⁰ In addition to being a violation of rights, this can lead to women and girls avoiding or fearing agents of the state who are supposed to be acting as their access point to claiming rights and justice. This may especially be the case for certain groups of marginalised women such as

women involved in the sex industry, lesbian women and migrant women.²¹

Lessons on working with the state to tackle impunity and improve implementation of laws and policy show targeted support can make a significant difference. Through sector policy dialogue and in joint sector reviews, missions and sector consultative forums, DFID and its partners can influence national programming on violence against women and girls and provide appropriate, targeted capacity building of government institutions.

For example, integrating violence against women and girls programming in governance and security sector reform can build state capacity to recognise, respond to and tackle violence against women and girls.²² Integrating violence against women and girls programming into education policy frameworks can help the state to prevent, manage and work to eliminate violence against girls in schools.²³ Integrating violence against women and girls programming into health systems strengthening can build state capacity to provide comprehensive services for survivors.²⁴ Integrating violence against women and girls programming into humanitarian and emergency response can save lives and empower women to be part of efforts to rebuild their communities.²⁵

Direct support to women's rights organisations, for example through providing core, long-term funding, can also support state efforts by ensuring that civil society has the resources to share its good practice with the state, raise awareness of rights and services amongst women and girls and increase their access to justice, and hold the state to account and help tackle impunity.²⁶ See the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* for more detail.

As discussed in further detail under Principle 2.3, efforts to support holistic and multi-sectoral state approaches to addressing violence against women and girls, for example through establishing National Action Plans, are particularly effective. DFID and its partners can add value by promoting the participation of women's rights organisations in the development, implementation and monitoring of such action plans. It can also provide analytical and technical support to facilitate cross-departmental working, monitoring and evaluation.

2.3

Holistic and multi-sectoral approaches are more likely to have impact

This principle is especially relevant at the interventions stage of the Theory of Change.

Figure 1: A Holistic and multi-sectoral approach



The Theory of Change assumes that a holistic approach is more likely to have greater impact: coordinated interventions operating at multiple levels, across sectors and over multiple time-frames are more likely to address the various aspects of, and therefore have greater impact on, tackling violence against women and girls (see Figure 1 above).

Violence against women and girls manifests at every level of society, from interpersonal and familial relationships, through communities and right up throughout society, including via the state. This is known as the 'ecological model'.²⁷ Interventions that address only one level of the ecological model or use only one intervention method can achieve results, but these will be limited. Legal reform is a good example. Despite laws that criminalise marital rape at the level of 'society', marital rape is still widely practised at the 'relationship' level in a number of countries because social norms at the level of 'relationship' have not sufficiently changed. It is therefore necessary to pursue change at all levels – from the family and household, through to national and international structures and institutions.

Single-sector responses can similarly achieve only limited results. Integrated multi-sectoral approaches that use a variety of methods to create change are better able to tackle violence against women and girls,²⁸ especially in terms of 'primary prevention' efforts – stopping violence before it occurs and providing protection for women at risk of violence.²⁹ In particular, there is a need to recognise the links between prevention and response interventions, where responses to violence can integrate services that help protect women and girls from further violence. For example, strengthening justice systems without improving health and psycho-social welfare systems could leave survivors unable to pursue justice or protection from the police, because they are struggling to cope with the physical and emotional trauma of the violence they have experienced.

Different sorts of changes take different time periods to be achieved, with social change and changes to social norms (including behaviours and practices) taking longer. It is therefore helpful to plan interventions over multiple time-frames. You can read more about this in the *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluating for Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* (section 2b on p.5).



Fudia Conteh, a farmer in Sierra Leone, is part of ActionAid's DFID-funded Access to Justice for Women Project. This supports women to improve their livelihoods and legal rights, and in turn strengthen their status as women in the community.

PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Most donors tend to focus on the short-term and have had success in achieving some changes (such as increased reporting of violence against women and girls) in this time.³⁰ However it is doubtful whether initially promising results can be sustained over time without longer-term planning and investment.³¹ Most of the outputs, outcomes and impacts in the Theory of Change cannot be achieved in the short to medium-term but require long-term commitments because they are about complex social change, including changes in social norms around violence against women and girls, and transforming power relations. Emerging lessons from work on social change around violence against women and girls demonstrates that long-term interventions are essential.³² See the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* and Principle 2.4 for more information.

While a long-term, coordinated and holistic approach to tackling violence against women and girls is more likely to have a greater and sustained impact, this does not mean that DFID must work at all levels and across all sectors in order to achieve results. DFID can play an important role by supporting coordination between different efforts and actors to facilitate holistic and integrated multi-sectoral approaches.³³

2.4

Social change makes the difference

This principle is especially relevant at the outputs and outcomes stages of the Theory of Change.

The Theory of Change assumes that social change is a necessary enabler: sustained reduction in violence against women and girls will only occur through processes of significant social change, including in power relations between women and men, and in the values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices (social norms) related to violence against women and girls, at all levels – from individuals to communities to institutions.

Because gender inequality and unequal power relations between women and men are the root cause of violence against women and girls, social change that shifts these is vital for reducing and ultimately eliminating violence against women and girls. The importance of women's empowerment is discussed further in Principle 2.7.

Social norms are the 'rules' and conventions that provide part of the social context within which people take decisions. They include values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices, can be explicit or implicit, formal or informal, and operate at multiple levels. Social norms can be invoked to justify particular actions, such as violence against women and girls, especially when they are dominant. In any context, social norms will not necessarily be uniform (exactly the same for all people) or universal (adopted by all people). It is common for women to negotiate, navigate, not conform to and resist dominant social norms that condone violence against women and girls for example. The penalties for transgressing social norms can be severe at times, for example when women are murdered for 'shaming' their families, while in some cases it is commonplace to transgress, for example women who have sex outside of marriage in communities where this is not publicly acceptable.³⁴

Evidence shows that social changes in gender power relations and gender equality can occur through changes to social norms.³⁵ However, social change comprises more than social norms; norms can be influenced by broader social change, for example in times of conflict, environmental stress and food crisis.

Evidence, including 'practice-based insights', reveal that social norms have a powerful effect on how violence against women and girls operates and how it can be tackled.³⁶ For instance, evidence shows incidents of rape are more common in settings where social norms condone or ignore men's sexually coercive or aggressive behaviours.³⁷ Meanwhile, evidence also shows that women's and girls' ability to resist violence, and access justice and support after violence, is highly dependent on the social norms that operate within communities.³⁸ For example, legal reforms are often insufficient to address the needs of survivors, even when accompanied by training for the police, in contexts where social norms and practices prevent women and girls from reporting violence or seeking services.³⁹

Not surprisingly, therefore, there is clear evidence of the need to transform social norms that perpetuate and condone violence against women and girls in order to produce a long-term reduction in violence against women and girls.⁴⁰ Social norm change also acts as an enabler to other types of change, including legal reform and policy change. The *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* discusses a number of examples of promising approaches to tackling violence against women and girls at the community level through shifting social norms.

Evidence suggests that while values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices influence each other, their relationships are more complicated than a linear process.⁴¹ Evidence that attitude change produces behaviour change, for example, is relatively limited, and more research is needed to determine the relationship between the two.⁴² Evidence on working with men and boys suggests that it is possible for interventions to be effective at shifting attitudes, and in some cases also shifting behaviours, in the short-term.⁴³ Challenges remain in evaluating impact however, as evaluators often rely on self-reported attitudinal change as a proxy for evaluating behavioural change.⁴⁴ In addition, most attitude and behaviour change programmes are not yet running for a period of time that is sufficient to allow longer-term change to be assessed.⁴⁵

Social institutions play a powerful role in influencing social norms. Religious institutions, for example, can be vital allies in shifting norms around violence against women and girls, but equally can be responsible for defending violations of women and girls' rights. Other 'culture creators' include so-called 'traditional', community and religious leaders, including women, and the media. Each can have a powerful role in establishing norms – and therefore in influencing social change – and must therefore be engaged with as part of the change process.

In planning interventions, it is important for DFID and its partners to work with the groups and organisations that can influence social change, including in social norms. These include so-called 'traditional', community and religious leaders, and the media. Women's rights organisations are also critical partners, playing a key role in supporting women's organising and building the social movements that ensure that change reaches women and girls, and is sustainable. This is discussed in more detail under Principle 2.6 and also in the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls*.⁴⁶

2.5 Backlash is inevitable but manageable

This principle is especially relevant at the outputs and outcomes stages of the Theory of Change.

The Theory of Change assumes that backlash is inevitable but manageable: resistance to change and to tackling violence against women and girls, which may include increased risk of further violence against women and girls, is inevitable where root causes are being addressed but can, and should be, managed.

Backlash can in fact be an indicator of progress – a sign that prevailing power dynamics are being challenged (see Box 1 on interpreting backlash on p.20 of the *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation for Programming on Violence against Women and Girls*).⁴⁷

Some groups of women will be particularly at risk of backlash at certain times. Evidence has shown that women human rights defenders face higher threats of violence than their male counterparts, both because they are women and because they are challenging norms around gender, for example by participating in politics and the public

sphere.⁴⁸ In addition, the types of violence women human rights defenders face are often gendered to reinforce their subordination as women, for example being targeted for rape, sexual harassment and sexual assault.⁴⁹

Across all types of interventions therefore, DFID programmes need to integrate risk assessment and mitigation regarding backlash from the outset, conduct on-going monitoring for adverse outcomes, and provide intensive support for those on the frontline, such as women human rights defenders and other community activists. Emerging work in this area emphasises the benefits of building social movements and documenting incidents of backlash.⁵⁰ The accompanying *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* provides additional guidance on 'Measures to reduce the risk of violence and respond to violence if it occurs' (see p.5-6).



Catherine Selemoi (16, right), took part in an ActionAid girls' forum on FGM (female genital mutilation). Her parents wanted her to be cut but she successfully refused.

PHOTO: SVEN TORFINN/PANOS PICTURES/ ACTIONAID

2.6 Women's rights organisations create and sustain change

This principle is relevant at all points on the Theory of Change.

The Theory of Change assumes that women's rights organisations and their movements create and sustain change: supporting women's rights organisations, especially those working to tackle violence against women and girls, to make change and build strong and inclusive social movements is a very effective mechanism for ensuring sustainable change in the lives of women and girls.

Women's rights organisations are well placed to support such social change for a number of reasons, including their connections to affected communities.⁵¹ These and other reasons women's rights organisations are uniquely placed to effect change at the community level are discussed in further detail in the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* (see p.4-6).

PROJECT STATUS							
Sr. NO.	PROJECT	LOCATION	DONOR	START	END	DURATION MONTHS	REPORTING
1	WOMEN SHELTER	HERAT	UN WOMEN	JAN 2011	DEC 2011	12	QUARTERLY
2	WOMEN SHELTER	BADGHIS	INL USEMBASSY	SEP 2011	AUG 2013	24	QUARTERLY
3	ADOLESCENTS CLINIC	HERAT	INL COLOMBO PLAN	MAR 2011	FEB 2012	12	MONTHLY
4	WOMEN'S CLINIC	FARAH	INL COLOMBO PLAN	APR 2011	MAR 2012	12	MONTHLY
5	CHILDREN'S CLINIC	FARAH	INL COLOMBO PLAN	APR 2011	MAR 2012	12	MONTHLY
6	ICWI WASH	HERAT-GHOR BADGHIS-FARAH	UNICEF	NOV 2010	OCT 2011	12	MONTHLY
7	CANADA FUND	HERAT	CANADIAN EMBASSY	JAN 2011	OCT 2011	10	QUARTERLY
8	ASGP	HERAT-GHOR-BADGHIS	US EMBASSY	JAN 2011	AUG 2011	8	QUARTERLY
9	SELF IMMOLATION	HERAT	HTI UNICEF	JAN 2011	MAY 2012	12	QUARTERLY
10	LEGAL SERVICE BUREAU	HERAT	GLOBAL RIGHTS	JULY 2011	JUNE 2013	24	QUARTERLY

Suraya Pakzad is founder of ActionAid partner, the Voice of Women Organization in Afghanistan – which is one of the most dangerous places to be a woman: 87% of women experience domestic abuse and 1 in 11 dies in childbirth.

PHOTO: JENNY MATTHEWS/ACTIONAID

2.7

Empowering women is both the means and the end

This principle is relevant at all points on the Theory of Change.

The Theory of Change assumes that empowering women is both the means and the end: focusing on the rights of, and being accountable to, women and girls is the most effective way of tackling gender inequality as the root cause of violence against women and girls.

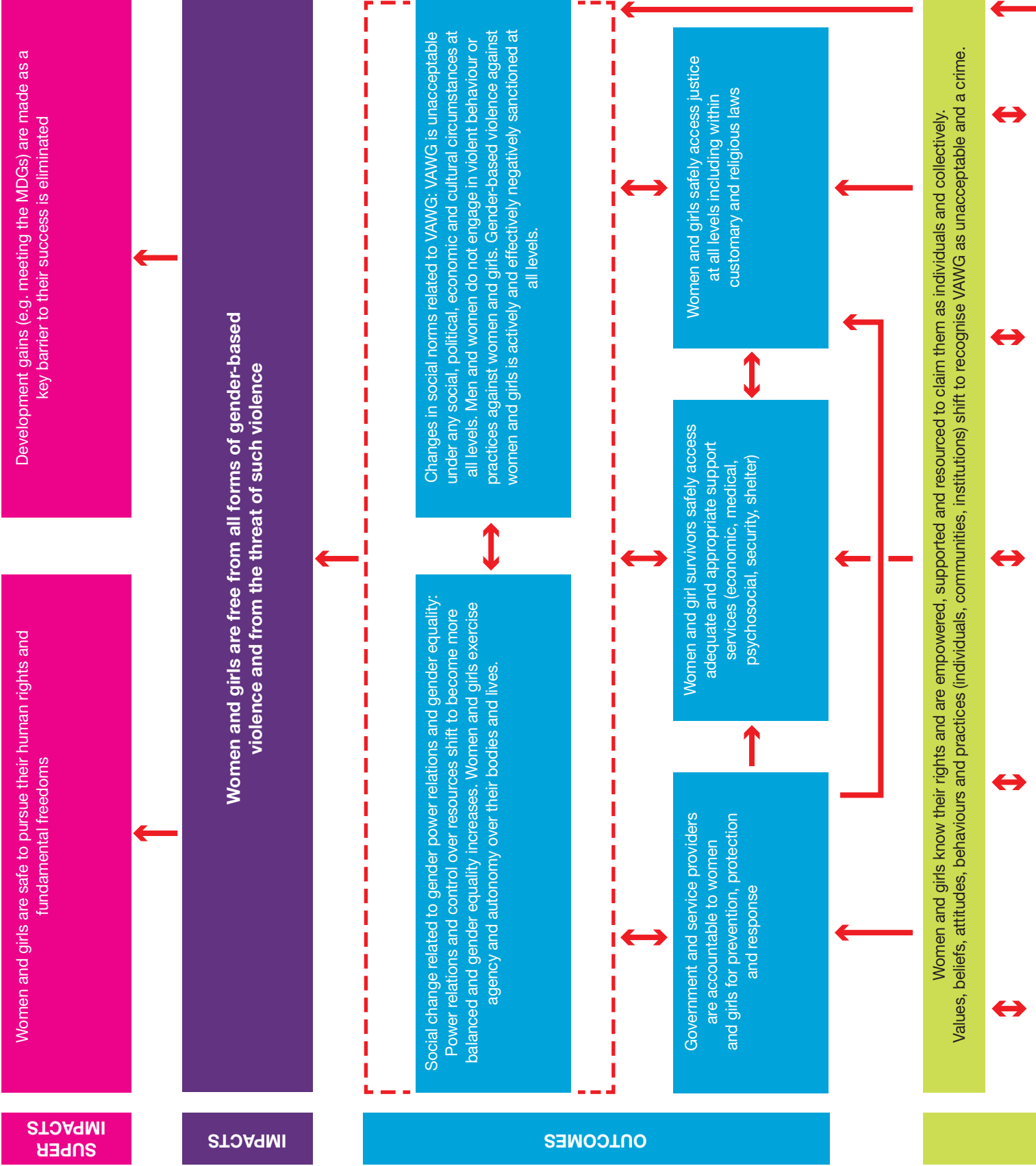
Evidence confirms that gender inequality increases the risk of gender-based violence against women and that building women's and girls' resources, assets and agency is critical to transforming unequal power relations and preventing violence against women and girls.⁵² It can therefore be helpful to fund broader women's rights and empowerment initiatives as a contribution to addressing the root cause of violence against women and girls. See the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* for more information on the role of asset-building in protecting girls at risk in Ethiopia, for example (p.22-23).

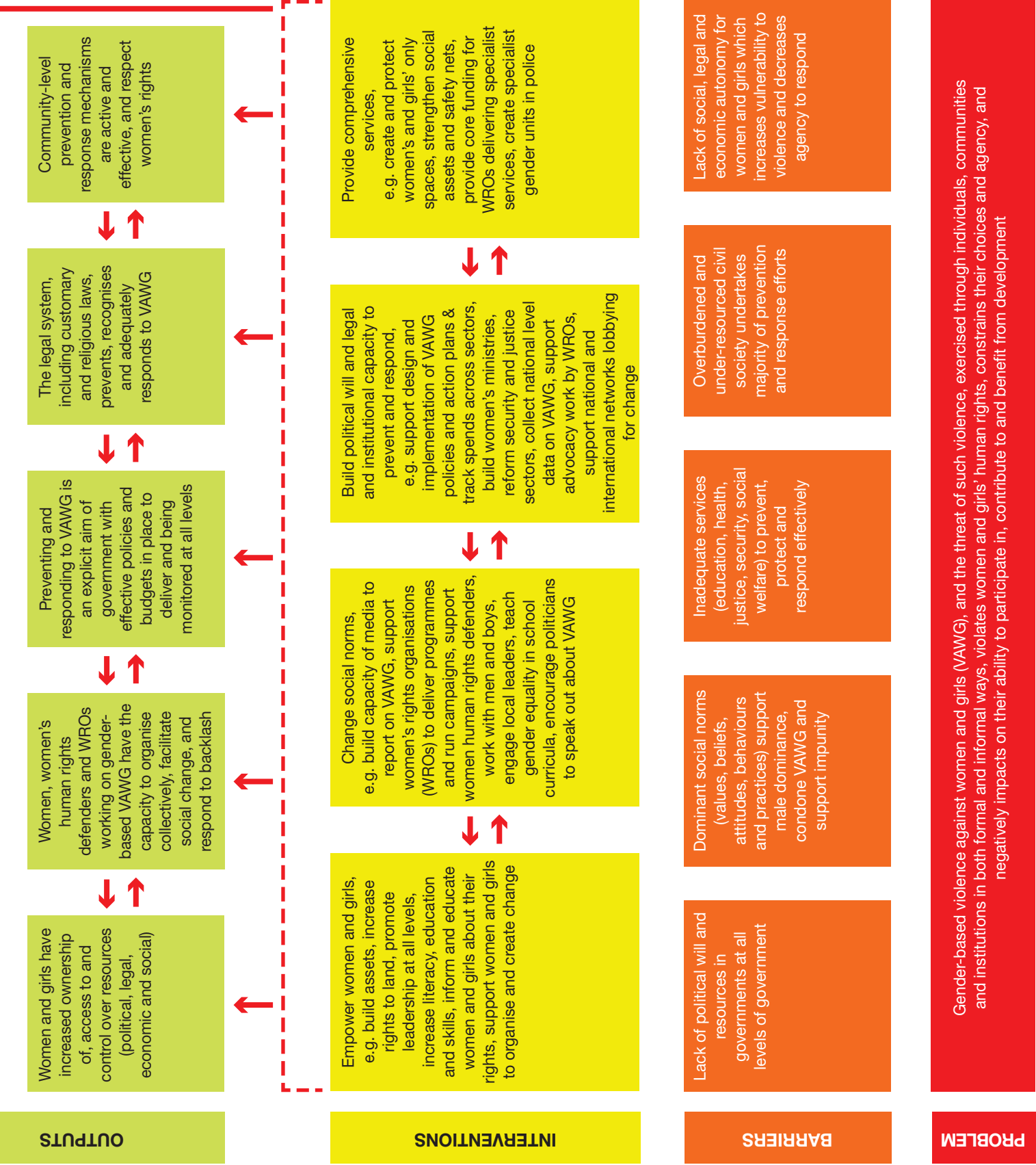
Work by the Pathways of Women's Empowerment programme has found that the process of challenging violence can itself support women's empowerment as women build political agency by organising and mobilising against violence against women and girls.⁵³ Nevertheless, as discussed earlier in this narrative, backlash and increased risks to women and girls challenging violence is likely and must be planned for.

The increasing focus on working with men and boys presents both an opportunity and a challenge in terms of ensuring a focus on women's and girls' rights as well as accountability to them. There is evidence that programmes targeting men and boys are effective at tackling violence against women and girls only where they explicitly focus on transforming unequal power relations between women and men, including promoting alternative notions of masculinity.⁵⁴ Conversely programmes targeting men and boys that are less accountable to women and girls risk reinforcing unequal power relations.⁵⁵ See the detailed discussion in the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* on working with men and boys for more information, including the section on 'Principles for supporting work with men and boys to end violence against women and girls' (p.15).

Since the empowerment of women and girls is recognised as core to challenging violence against women and girls, with all DFID interventions including work with men and boys it is essential to ask: how does the proposed intervention empower women and girls as the means as well as the end?

3. A Theory of Change for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls





4. Using the Theory of Change diagram

This Theory of Change narrative is accompanied by a diagram to illustrate the Theory of Change. The diagram should be read vertically from bottom to top.

In order to demonstrate key milestones and concepts, the Theory of Change diagram is linear. In reality however, the processes of change around violence against women and girls are complicated, multi-directional and highly context-specific. As one gender activist has stated ‘it’s two steps forward – if you’re really smart and very lucky! – and at least one step back’.⁵⁶ The Theory of Change should therefore be treated as an analytical framework that can be interrogated and adapted to the particular context that a DFID office is working in rather than as a strictly prescriptive map. This is especially important given the interdependence between pathways of change, and the fact that ‘recursive causality’ operates throughout the Theory of Change – there are multiple feedback loops within and between the different elements in the Theory of Change.

The discussion below expands on each stage of the Theory of Change and provides example indicators. Detailed analysis of how these can be applied in practice is examined further in the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* and the *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation for Programming on Violence against Women and Girls*. However, it must be remembered that the process of developing indicators can itself be complicated, political and necessarily context-specific.⁵⁷

Stage 1: Problem

The base of the Theory of Change begins with a problem definition to establish that both the reality and threat of gender-based violence against women and girls operate to violate women and girls’ rights and constrain their choices and agency, affecting their ability to participate in and benefit from development.

Example indicator:

> The proportion of women who have experienced violence. This indicator should be disaggregated by form of violence (physical, sexual, psychological, financial, etc); severity (moderate/severe); perpetrator (intimate/other relative/other known person/stranger/state authority); population (age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, migration status, HIV status, class, minority status, etc); time period (last year/life-time); and frequency (one/few/many time(s)).⁵⁸

The Theory of Change uses the established UN definition of violence against women and girls⁵⁹ as its basis, recognising that ‘gender-based violence’ against women and girls is violence directed against women and girls because of their gender – i.e. because they are women and girls.

Stage 2: Barriers

The barriers section of the Theory of Change outlines five key obstacles to effective violence against women and girls' prevention, protection and response.

Example indicators:

- > Services to shelter and support victims e.g. the number of shelter places per 100,000 population or the package of services provided.⁶⁰
- > The actions of the justice and health systems e.g. whether the legal system reaches CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) standards in relation to gender-based violence against women and girls, the attrition rate of violence against women and girls cases in the legal system, the budgetary allocations to support services for women and girls who have experienced violence.⁶¹
- > Proportion of a donor's total funding spent on tackling violence against women and girls, disaggregated by country.⁶²

These barriers are based on the evidence available, including work by DFID and its partners, as well as work by women's rights organisations working on violence against women and girls. The principle that the state has ultimate responsibility for human rights is especially key here, and is discussed in more detail in Principle 2.2.

Protection and support to survivors and to women at risk of violence continue to be under-resourced areas. There is also increasing acknowledgement of the additional need for greater investments in prevention and tackling the root causes of violence against women and girls.⁶³

Stage 3: Interventions

Four areas of intervention are outlined in the Theory of Change with examples of programme entry points and objectives that could apply to each type of intervention.

Example indicators:

- > Proportion of women who are aware of their rights.
- > Number of teacher training programmes that include violence against women and girls in their curriculums.⁶⁴
- > Proportion of women who know of a local organisation that provides legal aid to survivors.⁶⁵
- > Proportion of reported violence against women and girls cases that receive essential health services within 72 hours in emergency settings.⁶⁶

The interventions suggested support the creation of an enabling environment (see DFID's *Strategic Vision for Girls and Women*⁶⁷), as well as targeting specific barriers to tackling violence against women and girls. They are not exhaustive as effective programme design will need to respond to a range of context-specific factors. For example, in some situations, women's economic empowerment is key, as economic dependency can be a factor in preventing women from reporting violence, seeking help or exiting abusive relationships and situations.⁶⁸ On the other hand, there is also evidence that increases in women's economic empowerment can escalate the violence they experience in certain instances, at least in the short-term.⁶⁹

Across all types of interventions, programmes should assess the risk they may generate for women and girls, and put in place measures to avert and respond to this risk. Principle 2.5 on backlash is relevant here. See also the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* for guidance on 'Measures to reduce the risk of violence and respond to violence if it occurs' (p.5-6).

The causal arrows between interventions apply across all the interventions; each intervention box can affect every other intervention box. For example, interventions to empower women and girls can support and influence interventions to change social norms, as well as interventions to build political will, and legal and institutional capacity to prevent and respond, and interventions providing comprehensive services.⁷⁰

Together, the interventions lead to six outputs. Each intervention can on its own influence each of the six outputs.

Stage 4: Outputs

Each of the six outputs in the Theory of Change is influenced to some extent by each of the four interventions leading into them.

Example indicators:

- > Proportion of people who say that using physical violence is an acceptable way for men to 'discipline' their partners, disaggregated by gender.⁷¹
- > Proportion of people who would assist a woman being beaten by her partner, disaggregated by gender.⁷²
- > Proportion of women who survive violence who report the violence, and to whom.⁷³

The causal arrows between outputs apply across all the outputs; each output box can affect every other output box.

The output box at the top of the output section focuses on the social change that is essential for the outputs to produce the desired outcomes.

Each of the other outputs is supported and influenced by this social change output and cannot effectively achieve the desired outcomes without this social change output. The importance of social change in preventing and effectively responding to violence against women and girls is discussed under Principle 2.4.

Linked to the importance of social change is the critical role played by women human rights defenders and women's rights organisations at

the output level, and the need for DFID to support this. Social movements, and specifically women's rights and feminist movements, are necessary to ensure that policy change actually impacts on women and girls' everyday lives and that this change is sustainable.⁷⁴ This is explored in more detail in the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* and under Principle 2.6.

Stage 5: Outcomes

The social change outputs, supported and influenced by each of the other five outputs, lead to five outcome boxes in the Theory of Change.

Example indicators:

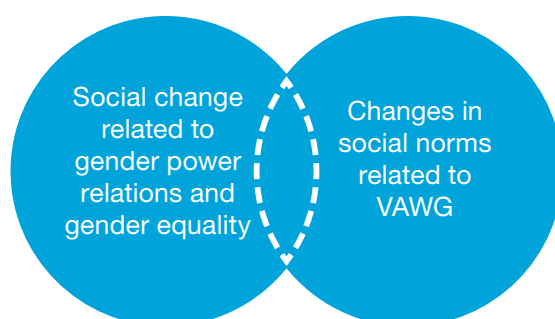
- > Number of service providers trained to identify, refer, and care for survivors.⁷⁵
- > Proportion of prosecuted cases of violence against women and girls that result in a conviction.⁷⁶
- > Proportion of men and boys who agree that violence against women and girls is never acceptable.⁷⁷
- > Proportion of women aged 18-24 who were married before age 18.⁷⁸

The first outcome – government and service providers are accountable to women and girls for prevention, protection and response – supports and influences each of the other outcomes. This relates to Principle 2.2 that the state has primary responsibility for action on violence against women and girls.

The second and third outcomes – women and girl survivors safely access adequate and appropriate support services, and women and girls safely access justice at all levels – support and influence each other. Access to justice in this scenario includes formal and informal avenues, including within customary and religious laws, that uphold women's human rights and combat impunity, for example by providing reparations.⁷⁹ See the *Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls* for a discussion of non-formal, alternate arbitration systems in India, for example (p.19-20).

The two outcomes boxes at the top of the outcome section focus on social change that is essential for the outcomes to produce impacts. The two social change outcome boxes are linked: each supports and influences the other (see Figure 2 below) and both are supported and influenced by the first, second and third outcomes under them.

Figure 2: Social change outcomes:



Each of the first, second and third outcomes is in turn supported and influenced by these two sets of social change outcomes. None of the other outcomes can effectively achieve the desired impacts without these social change outcomes. The importance of social change is discussed in Principle 2.4 above.

Stage 6: Impacts

The social change outcomes in the Theory of Change, supported and influenced by each of the other three outcomes, lead to a reduction in violence against women and girls and ultimately women and girls being free from all forms of gender-based violence and from the threat of such violence.

Example indicator:

- > The proportion of women who have experienced violence. This indicator should be disaggregated by form (physical, sexual, psychological, financial, etc); severity (moderate/severe); perpetrator (intimate/other relative/other known person/stranger/state authority); population (age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, migration status, HIV status, class, minority status, etc); time period (last year/life-time); and frequency (one/few/many time(s)).⁸⁰

The focus of the impact is on the prevention of violence so that even the threat (and fear) of violence against women and girls is eliminated. This goes beyond women and girls being 'safe', which could be a reflection of more effective protection efforts but does not address the threat of violence, towards the elimination of gender-based violence against women and girls altogether.

Stage 7: Super impacts

While the impact in the Theory of Change is a valuable end itself, the Theory of Change highlights two super impacts that result from women and girls being free from all forms of gender-based violence and the threat of such violence.

Example indicators:

- > Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.⁸¹
- > Proportion of girls who complete primary school.⁸²

Key to these super impacts is women and girls' participation. For example, if women were free from violence, they would be able to be more involved in decision-making at all levels without fear for their safety and could help shape social and development goals and gains.⁸³

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“Violence against women is... embedded in our cultural practices. It has lived with us, and I would say will die with us, if we don’t take action now.”

Zynab Sennesie, Reducing Violence Against Women project coordinator,
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