RESPECT

WOMEN

National Plan
Guide & Workbook

Dedicated to the prevention
of violence against women

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The National Plan Guide and Workbook provides policy makers, including UN Staff who can support Ministry partners, with practical steps to engage in national or sub-national processes to articulate an evidence-based approach to stop violence against women (VAW) from occurring. Traditional efforts to end VAW have focused, in large part, on legislative and policy reform; improved provision and access to coordinated multi-sectoral services; and better collection, analysis and use of data. These are critically important components of a comprehensive approach but are not the targeted investments needed to prevent violence from happening in the first place. Over the last decade, a tremendous body of evidence has been compiled and presented in global frameworks demonstrating that prevention is possible and that proven strategies exist.

This guide and workbook is based on those global frameworks for prevention, including the first UN Prevention Framework (2015) and its successor, the RESPECT Women Framework (2019). It is intended to support the development of a dedicated national or sub-national plan specific to prevention in order to achieve commitments made to eliminate VAW[1]. It is not intended to replace comprehensive national action plans, but to complement them by detailing out the prevention aspects as they relate to the national or sub-national context. This guide and workbook are part of a broader technical package of resources and tools designed for the implementation of the RESPECT Women Framework.

## Step 1: become familiar with the prevention frameworks

RESPECT Women: Preventing Violence against Women offers a user-friendly framework for understanding evidence-based strategies that work to mitigate risks for perpetration and victimization of violence as well as those that protect against victimization and perpetration. The Framework is based on a global compilation of information and knowledge derived from evaluations and systematic reviews covering a range of initiatives across diverse countries and contexts. The RESPECT Women Framework provides a good basis and background on the content and issues to be further explored at the national level. Some of the factors presented in the RESPECT Framework are universal and will resonate and be applicable to your context, while others will differ based on unique demographic groups and social and cultural contexts. For a more detailed exploration of entry points and the evidence-base, you can also review the Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence against Women (UN Prevention Framework).

Global Frameworks on VAWG Prevention

The UN Prevention Framework (2015) provides a resource for policymakers and programmers to plan and implement well-targeted approaches to prevention, by mapping a theory of change approach and entry points for prevention programming.

The RESPECT Women Framework (2019) builds on the above and provides a set of evidence-based strategies to help policymakers design, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate VAW programmes.
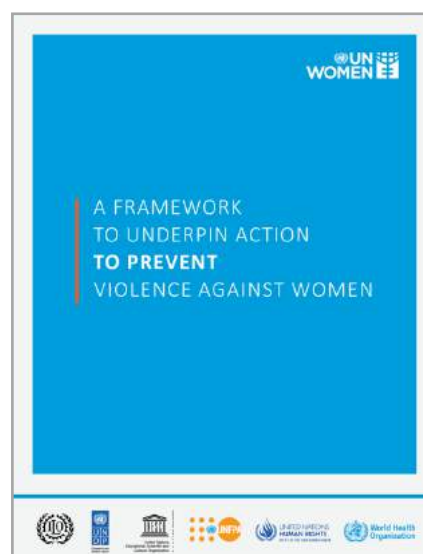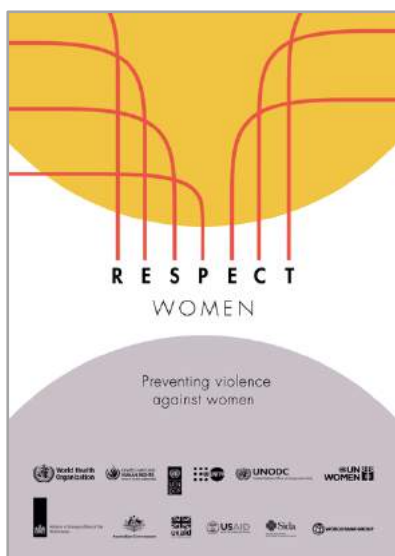
Step 2: determine the key stakeholders to engage in the process

After reviewing the RESPECT Women Framework, identify key entities and actors that work on VAW and those who would have an important role to play in prevention based on what was learned in the previous step. Key stakeholders may include the technical staff within Ministries of Women/Gender, Health, Education, Employment, Poverty, Children and Youth, as well as other government institutions, UN agency staff and civil society or women's rights organization representatives that address VAW. Stakeholders may also include key individual allies such as traditional, cultural and faith leaders.

Fiji National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls

In 2020, the Fijian Government announced the development of a National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls, making it one of only two countries in the world (along with Australia) to have a whole of government, inclusive, evidence-based approach to preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG). The process, led by the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, brought together key partners, such as the Ministries of Health and Medical Services; Education, Heritage and Arts; and the Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports. Other important stakeholders accompanying the process include: UN Women, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, House of Sarah, Medical Services Pacific, Fiji Disabled People's Federation, Haus of Kameleon, DIVA and others.

See the Joint Ministerial Press Release.

To determine relevant stakeholders, undertake an analysis of existing actors at national and local levels who may already be working on prevention or who could potentially be engaged in prevention work. For a more detailed breakdown of which actors and entry points have been identified for prevention, see the RESPECT Strategy Summaries.

Strategy	Partnership		
Which strategy do we want to roll-out?	Who can help us achieve this?		How does what they are doing already link to this strategy?
	Sector	Actors	
Example: Respectful Relationships	Education Youth Sports	Ministry of Education Youth Clubs IOC National Committee	– The Ministry of Education has committed to Comprehensive Sexuality Education. – Youth clubs are actively advocating for gender equality and are running a campaign. – The International Olympic Committee national office is on board with the sports for generation equality initiative which includes preventing and responding to gender-based violence.

Step 3: conduct a desk review and hold consultations to determine what is known about VAW in the country

The RESPECT Women Framework is based on a global compilation of information and knowledge derived from evaluations and systematic reviews covering a range of initiatives across diverse countries and contexts. It is important to assess the situation of VAW in the country, including the forms of violence that occur; the populations that are affected; the rates of perpetration and victimization; the drivers and risk factors for perpetration and victimization (see the ecological model above) as they relate to the different populations that are affected; and other factors that help explain why it happens.

This information can be obtained by bringing together the existing information through a desk review and by holding consultations with key groups. The desk review should include a review of any large-scale population surveys that have been conducted, such as those using the WHO survey methodology; the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS); the International Men and Gender Equality Studies (IMAGES); the UN Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence; and any others that have been conducted nationally or sub-nationally to assess prevalence, contextual factors, attitudes, beliefs and norms around gender and violence (see additional resource suggestions in the Annex). Other important sources of information include: research conducted by national or international NGOs, academic institutions and the UN. You can use Google and other relevant electronic databases (PubMed, Science Direct and others) to identify quantitative and/or qualitative studies that are relevant to understanding VAW and what factors drive it.

Where the existing evidence-base is limited, policy makers may wish to consider funding further research to address gaps to inform policy and design of the national plan. All research on VAW must meet ethical standards and ensure the safety of women. Key questions to ask when commissioning research include:

- How do the patterns (types, levels, survivors, perpetrators) of VAW vary across the country?
- Where does violence occur i.e. private (e.g. home) and/or public spaces (e.g. on streets, in markets, libraries and recreation centres, in and around public transport, workplaces, social or political events and schools)?
- Which groups of women are more likely to be at risk of violence? (e.g. by age, race, ethnicity, marital status, HIV status, religion, (dis)ability, socio-economic status, migrant status, sexuality and gender identity)?
- What factors put women more at risk of experiencing violence?
- What factors put men more at risk of perpetrating violence?
- What factors decrease the risk (i.e. protective factors) that men will perpetrate violence and that women will experience violence?
- What are the specific social norms[2] and attitudes which underpin violence and who upholds them?

The answers to these questions can also help to further identify which stakeholders need to be engaged in consultations and in rolling-out prevention initiatives.

Identify a skilled and knowledgeable facilitator that can bring stakeholders together, in a workshop format, to share, analyze and document the evidence, research and experiences being contributed. Aim for a shared definition and conceptualization of VAW, with agreed language to describe it, that is validated within the country context by the key stakeholders. Achieving this may take several gatherings over time and may also include validating information with groups (e.g. on disability) who were not able to attend.

Consultations should include meaningful representation from groups that embody intersecting identities and who can inform the strategy from lived experience. Consultations should be ongoing with an aim to build robust multi-stakeholder alliances and networks that can potentially be sustained through an established coordination mechanism.

Use the worksheet below to document the information

When analysing risk and protective factors, special attention must be paid to particularly marginalised groups of women who may be more vulnerable to experiencing violence because of sex and gender inequalities and experiences of discrimination which intersect with other inequalities based on age, race, sexuality and gender identity, ethnicity, income, citizenship status, disability and/or other factors. The table below can be replicated to identify the risk and protective factors for different women (and perpetrators) within the population as needed.

Risk Factors	Identify the population group: **All Women** **Migrant Women** **Women with Disabilities** **Ethnic or Racial** **Minority Women**	Protective factors
Ask yourself: What factors and conditions contribute to perpetration and victimization?		**Ask yourself:** What conditions contribute to reducing the likelihood of perpetration or victimization?
	Individual	
	Interpersonal	
	Community	
	Societal	

The diagram below shows the multiple risk and protective factors consolidated from global research for violence at the individual, relationship, community and institutional levels using the ecological model. This can be used to further validate the findings documented at the national level.

Understanding the ecological model

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

Societal
- Lack of women's economic rights
- Discriminatory family law
- Collectivist cultural orientation
- Women have low access to paid employment

Interpersonal
- Unequal decision-making
- Poor communication skills
- High relationship conflict

Women (VAW experience)
- Young
- Experiencing violence in childhood
- Witnessing violence in childhood
- Attitudes accepting violence / VAW
- Low social support

Woman – risk or protective factors in different contexts
- Women's employment / income generation
- Asset ownership
- Access to credit
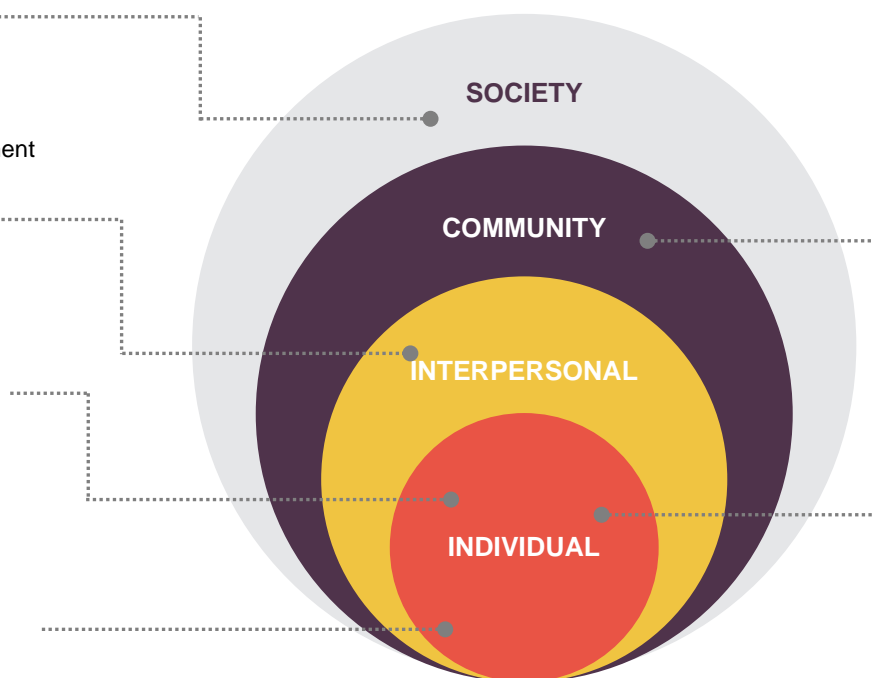
RISK FACTORS

Community
- Norms condoning male authority over women
- Norms linking men's honour to women's dignity
- Norms conditioning VAW
- Stigma for divorced / single women
- Norms of family privacy
- Local poverty + unemployment
- Wider neighbourhood violence
- Lack of social or legal sanctions for VAW

Men (VAW perpetration)
- Young
- Low education level
- Experiencing childhood violence/Witnessing violence in childhood
- Gender inequitable attitudes
- Attitudes accepting violence
- Psychological dysfunction
- Alcohol / substance abuse

SOCIETY
COMMUNITY
INTERPERSONAL
INDIVIDUAL

ROOT CAUSES OF VAWG
Gender inequality and discrimination against girls and women shaped by: Economic, political and social factors, systems and norms, including policy and legal frameworks and structures. Historical factors (e.g. deep-rooted cultural practices, war, colonization). Structural distinctions on the basis of age, income, location, race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation and other characteristics.

Step 4: assess the international evidence on interventions against the national context

Your national or sub-national VAW prevention plan should be based on internationally consolidated evidence of promising practice[3] of what works to prevent VAW. Over the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the global evidence base[4] on violence prevention programming, which has informed the development of the UN Prevention and RESPECT Frameworks, as well as tools and resources to adapt and scale-up approaches.

The RESPECT Framework provides a current summary of the evidence-base organised around the seven pillars of the strategy, as simplified in the diagram below.

Each letter of **RESPECT** stands for one of the following seven strategies:

R elationships skills strengthened
E mpowerment of women
S ervices ensured
P overty reduced
E nvironments made safe
C hild and adolescent abuse prevented
T ransformed attitudes, beliefs and norms

Step 5: develop a prevention plan

Informed by the evidence-base and consultations, policy makers can now develop a strategy or plan to guide VAW prevention programming, which identifies priority forms of VAWG, strategies, settings and populations. National and sub-national prevention strategies should be far reaching, inclusive of different forms of VAW and aimed at whole populations, adhering to the principle of leave no one behind.

Evidence shows that to be effective and sustainable, primary prevention strategies must include work through multiple channels to transform the individual attitudes and organizational, social and cultural practices which support, tolerate or excuse violence, including sustained work to transform gender discriminatory and stereotyping cultures, attitudes and behaviours. Strategies should be aligned with and aim to strengthen the legislative framework; target different groups of people in different environments where they live, work and socialize; work across a range of settings (such as schools, workplaces and the media); and engage different groups of people (such as men and boys, parents, children) at the individual, organizational, community and societal levels of the ecological framework.

The Australian state of Victoria's Plan to Prevent VAW (2010–2020) is a long term and multi sectoral framework for primary prevention, which spans a whole of government approach. The Plan was informed by an evidence review which drew on the socio-ecological model of health promotion and violence prevention. The plan identifies proposed settings and population groups for action, and includes mutually reinforcing strategies at societal, community/organizational and individual/relational levels.

Framework to guide primary prevention of violence against women

KEY DETERMINANTS OF VIOLENCE AND THEME FOR ACTION

PROMOTING EQUAL AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Individual/relationship determinants	Community & organisational determinants	Societal determinants
• Belief in rigid gender roles and identities, weak support for gender equality • Masculine orientation/sense of entitlement • Male dominance and control of wealth in relationships	• Culturally-specific norms regarding gender and sexuality • Masculine peer & organisational cultures	• Institutional & cultural support for, or weak sanctions against, gender inequality and rigid gender roles

KEY CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND THEMES FOR ACTION

PROMOTING NON-VIOLENT NORMS / REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF PRIOR EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

Individual/relationship contributors	Community & organisational contributors	Societal contributors
• Attitudinal support for violence against women • Witnessing or experiencing family violence as a child • Exposure to other forms of interpersonal or collective violence • Use and acceptance of violence as a means of resolving interpersonal disputes	• Neighbourhood, peer & organisational cultures which are violence-supportive or have weak sanctions against violence • Community or peer violence	• Approval of, or weak sanctions against, violence/violence against women • Ethos condoning violence as a means of settling interpersonal, civic or political disputes • Colonisation

IMPROVING ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

Individual/relationship contributors	Community & organisational contributors	Societal contributors
• Social isolation and limited access to systems of support • Income, education, occupation • Relative labour force status • Alcohol and illicit drug use* • Poor parenting • Personality characteristics and poor mental health* • Relationship and marital conflict • Divorce/separation	• Weak social connections and social cohesion and limited collective activity among women • Strong support for the privacy of the family • Neighbourhood characteristics (service infrastructure, unemployment, poverty, collective efficacy)	• Support for the privacy and autonomy of the family • Unequal distribution of material resources (e.g. employment, education)

POPULATION GROUPS AND PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS

Preventative actions

• Research, monitoring and evaluation
• Direct participation programs
• Organisational and workforce development
• Community strengthening
• Communications and social marketing
• Advocacy
• Legislative and policy reform

Population groups

• Children
• Young people
• Women and men
• Neighbourhoods affected by disadvantage
• Indigenous communities
• Rural communities
• Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
• Women with disabilities

SETTINGS AND SECTORS FOR ACTION

• Community services
• Corporate
• Faith communities
• Education
• Workplaces
• Cultural institutions & networks
• Arts
• Sports and recreation
• Media & popular culture
• Local government
• Health
• Cyberspace/New technologies
• Justice
• Academic
• Military/like institutions

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Individual/relationship	Organisational	Community	Societal

• Improved connections to resources and support
• Respectful and equitable gender relations
• Improved attitudes toward gender equity, gender roles and violence/violence against women
• Improved skills in non-violent means of resolving interpersonal conflict
• Responsible alcohol use
	• Organisations that:
	  – Model, promote and facilitate equal, respectful and non-violent gender relations
	  – Work in partnerships across sectors to address violence
	  – Implement evidence-based violence prevention activities
	  – Are accessible to and safe and supportive for women
		• Environments that:
		  – Value and support norms which are non-violent and build respectful and equitable gender relations
		  – Build connections between people and between them and sources of formal and informal support
		  – Take action to address violence
			• A society in which there are strong legislative and regulatory frameworks and appropriate resource allocation for supporting:
			  – Gender equity
			  – The prevention and prohibition of violence
			  – The positive portrayal of women (e.g. in advertising)
			  – The development of healthy relationships between men and women

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Individual/relationship	Organisational	Community	Societal
• Reduction in violence-related mental health problems & mortality • Improved interpersonal skills & family & gender relations • Reduced intergenerational transmission of violence and its impacts	• Violence prevention resources and activities integrated across sectors and settings • Organisations that value and promote respectful gender relations • Improved access to resources and systems of support	• Communities that value gender equity and respectful relationships between men and women • Reduced social isolation and improved community connections	• Reduced gender inequality • Improved quality of life for men and women • Reduced levels of violence/violence against women • Improved productivity

* denotes increased risk of perpetration only

Resources for prevention

Step 1: global frameworks and evidence

- The UN Prevention Framework (2015) provides a resource for policymakers and programmers to plan and implement well-targeted approaches to prevention, by mapping a theory of change approach and entry points for prevention programming.
- The RESPECT Women: Preventing Violence against Women Framework (2019) builds on the UN Prevention Framework and provides a set of evidence-based strategies to help policymakers design, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate VAW programmes.
- The Global Framework on Women's Safety in Rural Spaces (2019) focuses on prevention of VAWG in public spaces, including harassment, The framework helps to build a common understanding in the tea sector that is applicable to other commodity sectors in agricultural value chains.
- The What Works to Prevent VAWG Evidence Hub shares findings from the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) flagship global research and innovation programme across 13 countries. Quarterly VAWG Evidence Digests produced by DFID's VAWG Helpdesk provide an overview of the latest research, policy and news.
- The UN Trust Fund (UNTF) to End VAW's Evidence and Learning Hub provides a library of evaluation reports from VAWG prevention initiatives in 80 countries and territories.
- The Prevention Collaborative's Knowledge Platform provides a curated and accessible selection of key evidence and practice resources on VAWG prevention, including programme approaches.

Step 2: assess the national context and evidence

- The International Men and Gender Equality Studies (IMAGES) provides population-based data on men's (and women's) attitudes on gender equality and VAWG.
- The UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence implemented in 7 countries using quantitative and qualitative methodologies to understand men's VAW. Toolkits for its replication are available.
- WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women includes questions related to attitudes and other risk factors for intimate partner violence.
- The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) provide population-based data on VAWG, including on attitudes and beliefs.
- The Fundamental Rights Agency Survey on Violence against Women covers 28 countries in the European Union.
- Understanding masculinities, results from the International Men and Gender Equality Study in the Middle East and North Africa.
- OSCE Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women implemented in 7 countries to understand prevalence and drivers of violence in South Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe.
- The Oak Foundation and Economist's Out of the Shadows 60 country benchmarking index examines national policies, practices and standards around child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Additional resources

- The Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) is a global network to advance quality research on sexual violence in low and middle-income countries.
- The Community for Understanding Scale Up (CUSP) is a group of nine organisations sharing knowledge and lessons for scaling up prevention interventions in different contexts.
- UN Women's Virtual Knowledge Centre to End VAW provides step-by-step guidance on 'how to' design, implement, monitor and evaluate initiatives including guidance on working with specific sectors, groups or areas of intervention.
- The Equality Institute (EQI) is a global research and creative agency working to advance gender equality and prevent VAWG.
- Partners for Prevention was an inter-agency initiative of the UN focused on preventing VAWG in the Asia Pacific Regions, producing in-depth research on the drivers of violence and briefs on lessons learned from programming.

Endnotes

[1] Such as CEDAW, the SDGs, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Maputo Protocol (Africa), Belém do Pará (Americas) and Istanbul Convention (Europe).

[2] See DFID's (2016) Guidance Note on Shifting Social Norms to Tackle VAWG.

[3] Promising practices may include those for which rigorous evaluation is not available; be based on practice-based knowledge; and/or may have demonstrated results in proxy outcomes (e.g. shifting social norms).

[4] Evidence-base refers to programmatic interventions that have demonstrated reductions in violence using rigorous evaluation methods.

[5] The "Framework to Guide Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women" is taken from the 'Preventing violence before it occurs. A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria.' Published by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

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