GENERATING KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE ON THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

WHY THIS GUIDE?

Feminist organisations across Africa play a critical role in building innovative strategies to prevent violence against women (VAW). As such, feminist knowledges gathered over the past decades offer crucial ground and direction for relevant, inclusive VAW prevention initiatives. *Generating knowledge and evidence on the prevention of VAW: an introductory guide for African women's organisations* is a tool that serves to honour these knowledges, the process of creating and producing them, and those who make them. It ensures the continued building of interventions that are well-informed, confident, and in solidarity with one another, despite our different contexts on the continent and beyond.

This Guide builds on earlier efforts by the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) and Raising Voices in 2019, which led to the production of a primer titled *Preventing Violence Against Women: A Primer for African Women's Organisations* aimed at strengthening prevention work and supporting African women's organisations to advance VAW prevention policy and programming that is feminist, and evidence-based.[1]

Prevention of VAW in Africa has a complex history since the mid-1970s. It is closely linked to decolonisation and involving communities, individuals, states and civil society in decades of legal, economic and social justice activism to uproot and reshape structures and processes of multiple colonial institutions. The term "violence against women" includes a wide array of attitudes, behaviours, and interactions. Particularly for African women's movements and activism, the VAW debate is inextricably linked to emerging democracies, material realities of land dispossession, new forms of resource depletion driven by Northern economic interests and capitalist regimes, and the challenges of the changing shapes of patriarchies. These complex dynamics directly underpin legacies of systemic erasure, silencing and limited involvement, participation and active leadership of African women and their organisations in shaping the *what and how* of knowledge and evidence in preventing VAW.

The primary objectives for this knowledge and evidence Guide are:

- Describe key terminology, methods, tools, and approaches for evidence generation and knowledge production in the field of VAW prevention
- Broaden the conceptualisation to encourage more African feminist knowledge and evidence production and sharing in VAW prevention
- Provide steps, how-to and ways activists, feminists and African women's organisations can consciously integrate and advance knowledge and evidence-based VAW prevention.

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1 Raising Voices and the African Women's Development Fund. (2019). *Preventing Violence against Women: A Primer for African Women's Organisations*. Kampala, Uganda.

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This Guide is primarily written for African feminist organisations and activists, including but not limited to practitioners, researchers, storytellers, artists and writers looking to contribute to VAW prevention. It recognises our existence in worlds where knowledge and evidence creation, research and writing are understood as zones reserved for those with power. As such, it seeks to offer tools, methods and analysis that position African feminists as critical contributors and sources of VAW prevention knowledge and evidence.

In practice, then, this Guide is for:

- Those in leadership in African women's organisations
- Those responsible for programme-building and activist interventions on the prevention of VAW
- Those working to support African women's organisations in resource building and fundraising
- Those who take joy in creating knowledges and those who feel challenged by the idea of doing this work.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS GUIDE

This Guide covers a range of topics to respond to questions about how to create knowledges and evi
dence, as feminists, which can support VAW prevention on the African continent and beyond. It interrogates **the concepts of feminist knowledge and evidence** and **why their creation needs to be foundational to organisational activism for sustainable VAW prevention.**

In light of our diverse worlds embedded in various ways of knowledge-making, the Guide articulates primary debates around conventional approaches and feminist approaches, embedding these into the discussion of **methods and tools to facilitate how users can integrate and adapt what suits their contexts and work.**

While some organisations have long considered themselves as part of feminist knowledge and evidence creation on the continent, others are new to this. Thus, the Guide includes approaches to integrating feminist consciousness into organisational work in several ways.

WHAT IS FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE-CREATION AND EVIDENCE GENERATION?

WHAT IS FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE–CREATION AND EVIDENCE GENERATION?

Feminist knowledge and evidence creation begins with recognising that knowledges always involve power and can deploy this power against women differently. It has an explicit goal to narrate, theorise, and understand women's experiences under regimes of patriarchies in the context of economic, political and socio-cultural systems. In most cases, these are experiences of violence, injustice, and discrimination; and simultaneously, experiences of women's strategic mobilisation against dominations, of courage, imaginative and intellectual brilliance, and ways to re-vision a world free from violence. African feminist knowledge-creation situates its work within the complexity and diversity of African contexts and is committed to intersectionality and the transformation of injustices in all African-based people's lives.

SOME KEY CONCEPTS

Knowledge production refers to creating new or the interrogation and growth of information, experiences, belief systems, intuition, contextual patterns and information systems.

Evidence refers to information or facts systematically obtained to furnish proof or validation in making judgements or decisions.

Practice-based knowledge refers to the cumulative learning and knowledge acquired by activists and practitioners designing and implementing diverse programmes in different contexts.

Qualitative refers to research methods that address the why, the how and 'under what circumstances' questions. Examples of qualitative methods include open-ended questions, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.[2] Findings are commonly summarised in words or pictures and give more detailed information about relatively few people.[3]

Quantitative refers to research methods that describe 'how much', 'what' and 'for whom'. Examples of quantitative methods include cross-sectional surveys, cohort studies and randomised controlled trials. Findings are commonly summarised in numbers and tend to provide less in-depth information about many people.
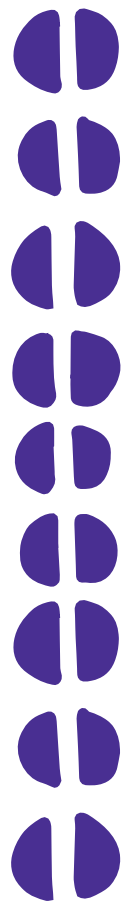
African feminisms know that knowledge comes in many forms, formats and languages. It comes in stories, in practices of being and ritual rooted in ancestries, in reflections of lived experiences, in the diversities of African languages, in the art of all genres, in digital work, in writing, and processes of communication. These can therefore be shared in many ways, including through academic study, art and digital platforms.

On the other hand, evidence emerges from knowledge production and constitutes the ground in which firm decisions about new planning are rooted. Information, data, observations and intuitions have to pass through a process of critical analysis, reflection and synthesis before they can count as evidence.[4]

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2 Raising Voices and the African Women's Development Fund. (2019). *Preventing Violence against Women: A Primer for African Women's Organisations.* Kampala, Uganda.

3 Ellsberg, M., Heise, L. (2005). *Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researches and Activists.* Washington DC USA: World Health Organisation

4 McGee, R. Edwards, D. Minkley, G. Pegus, C.M. (2015) Making *All Voices Count Research and Evidence Strategy.* Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

> "Evaluation evidence tells us if a programme works or does not work and how it might be improved. To be reliable, evaluations must scientifically gather data – either from quantitative (using numbers to document trends and patterns) and/or qualitative sources (using discussions, interviews and participatory activities to explore thoughts and ideas). Findings from rigorous studies are globally accepted as 'evidence'. When a programme is 'evidence-based', it means that the programme was subjected to an evaluation and found to have a positive impact in that setting. Just because an idea or concept is popular does not mean it is effective or 'good practice'"
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> (Raising Voices and AWDF, 2019)[5]
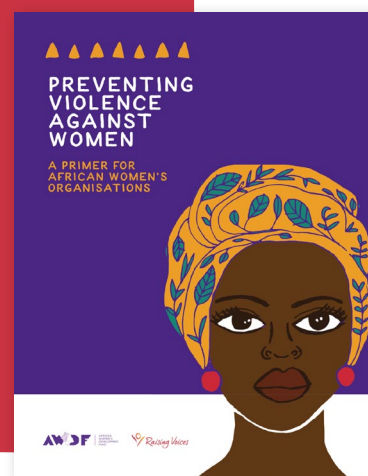
For African feminist knowledge-making, this process of transforming data, information, experiences into evidence is guided by feminist principles of decolonisation, non-hierarchical participation, accountability, and respect for social justice movement-building. It also recognises that what constitutes evidence is likely to be multidimensional, to shift from one context to another, and to be generated through careful and reflective processes.

WHY IS KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE CREATION CRITICAL IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

Finding effective ways to strengthen the capacity to *understand, use,* and *generate* knowledge and evidence is crucial to guiding VAW prevention activists' efforts. It entails using feminist processes to guide planning, programming and reflection at individual and organisational levels and collectively as a movement.
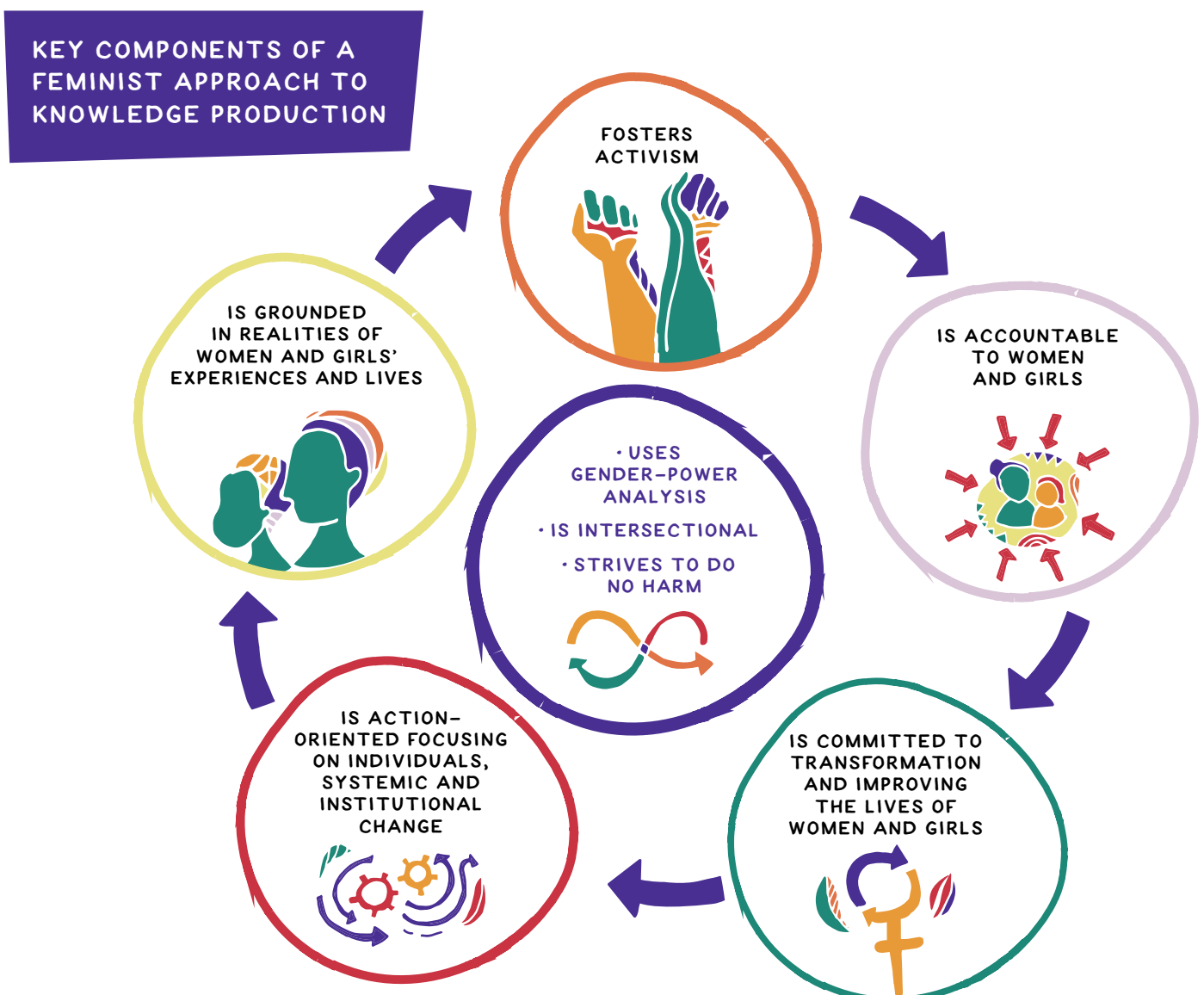
KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE CREATION AS CRITICAL TO EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING

Evidence of the scale, magnitude, whom, how, where and what works or does not work are core to ending VAW in Africa. Consensus on this evidence enables effective programmes that facilitate sustainable shifts of behaviour, power relations and gender norms. Evidence-generation is critical as it demonstrates accountability to women and communities, thereby ensuring success in prevention efforts. It enhances advocacy for policy change, ethical scaling up of innovative approaches and further financial investment. Moreover, it creates baseline positions from which activists and feminist organisations can design new strategies and reflect honestly about our preventive work on the continent.

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5 Raising Voices and the African Women's Development Fund. (2019). *Preventing Violence against Women: A Primer for African Women's Organisations.* Kampala, Uganda.

However, activists and African women organisations must ensure the following requirements when seeking effective programming for knowledge and evidence-driven VAW prevention.

- an in-depth understanding of the *problem*: the scale of who is affected; what factors increase vulnerability; what are the individual, familial and broader social factors driving male perpetration;

- a ***thorough understanding of current prevention initiatives***: what are contemporary prevention interventions used on the continent and beyond to address various forms of VAW; how effective are they; to what extent do they take an intersectional approach; what can be learned from multiple interventions, how we can use these learnings to design new initiatives/programmes;

- the ***capacity to evaluate policy and programming interventions*** to assess their effectiveness, relevance and potential for scale-up and sustainability;

- recognition that ***authorship, ownership of data and leadership*** of studies are critical areas to be consciously (re)claimed by Africans, mainly African feminists;

- sharing knowledges amongst African women's organisations whose work focuses on the prevention of VAW;

- prioritising the knowledges held in the minds, hearts and bodies of African women as VAW survivors and as champions for what works in effective prevention of VAW; and

- celebrating and sustaining the feminist knowledges developed through decades of complex and contextually diverse VAW prevention on the continent.

KEY COMPONENTS OF A FEMINIST APPROACH TO KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

FOSTERS ACTIVISM

IS GROUNDED IN REALITIES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS' EXPERIENCES AND LIVES

IS ACCOUNTABLE TO WOMEN AND GIRLS

- USES GENDER-POWER ANALYSIS
- IS INTERSECTIONAL
- STRIVES TO DO NO HARM

IS ACTION-ORIENTED FOCUSING ON INDIVIDUALS, SYSTEMIC AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

IS COMMITTED TO TRANSFORMATION AND IMPROVING THE LIVES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

CULTIVATING AFRICAN FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE CREATION FOR STRONGER ORGANISATIONAL ACTIVISM AND PROGRAMMING ON VAW PREVENTION

TO-DOS FOR MAKING THE KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE CREATION PROCESS 'AFRICAN' AND FEMINIST

- Draw on and actively cite definitions and frameworks for understanding VAW articulated in African policy and legal systems, in African feminist theory and practice and African public health research.

- Build empirical evidence on the continent for use on the continent.

- Establish partnerships between African women's organisations and African universities and research institutions to document, record and own our knowledge.

- Invest in building African women's capacity and networks around evidence and analysis of the prevention of VAW.

- Create more spaces for co-creation, programme design and collaborative innovation between African feminist activists and scholars.

APPROACHES FOR STRONGER ORGANISATIONAL ACTIVISM AND PROGRAMMING ON VAW PREVENTION

African women's organisations, activists and practitioners can utilise several approaches and practices to strengthen their capacities and grow as actors delivering knowledge and evidence-driven VAW prevention initiatives.

However, they must remain aware of the rising trend by policymakers, international donors, and practitioners to prioritise knowledge and evidence creation restricted to conventional academic writing and commissioned research. Whilst useful, these approaches often fall short in appreciating multidimensional flexibility around tools, methods and platforms to capture broad, nuanced and unique aspects of VAW prevention.

The table below highlights some conventional and feminist approaches in light of conceptualising what counts as knowledge or not. They can be found in both international and continental knowledge-creation strategies, and within African women's organising, they are debates about the most effective route to knowledge-creation, which can impact policy and social change.

Table 1.1

SOME CONVENTIONAL APPROACHES TO KNOWLEDGE-CREATION	SOME FEMINIST APPROACHES TO KNOWLEDGE-CREATION
Knowledge is best created by accredited academically qualified researchers and is called research.	*Anyone has the right to create knowledges; this can be called research, stories, reflections, art, song, digital content, memory-making, oral and life-histories, reports, and many other terms. Each term comes with its background and its unique value.*
Credible knowledge-making demands adherence to internationally recognised research processes, which can be applied without consideration of context.	*Credible knowledge-making must be contextually rooted, accountable to participative processes, and alert to diversities within global knowledges.*
Valid/credible knowledges undergo peer reviews before dissemination.	*Knowledge is validated iteratively throughout the process, with all participants involved using rigorous feminist ethical approaches.*
Knowledges are most potent when expressed textually in colonial languages.	*Knowledges are expressed in many ways and forms, each of which has strengths and challenges.*
Specialist training and education are essential to creating excellent research.	*Practice, commitment, openness to learning and accountability to the knowledge-creation process is essential.*
Researchers must ensure the rigorous distance between themselves and those whose lived experiences they are engaged with.	*People's various roles in a knowledge-creation process must be clear, non-hierarchical, and open to discussion and flexibility to prevent abuses of power.*

PRINCIPLES FOR CULTIVATING KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE CREATION PRACTICES

Conventional approaches may influence ideas about who can or should undertake knowledge-creation within activism and organisations. They may also prevent activists and organisations from including knowledge-making as a critical component of their work on preventing VAW.

Building an organisational culture and practices for knowledge and evidence-driven programming requires recognition that VAW prevention is often crisis-driven, complex, and time-consuming. There may be very little space to concentrate on knowledge-creation within the day-to-day life of activists and organisations. Moreover, due to variations in context, capacity, resources and mission, there is no 'one guideline for all'. Nonetheless, this Guide offers the following broad principles that activists, women's organisations, and feminists can find helpful.

START WHERE YOU ARE

Building a strategy to strengthen the way knowledge-creation can drive activism and organisational planning considers what has been already created, how, and why. Some organisations fighting to prevent VAW have long integrated different kinds of knowledge-creation into their programming, often using randomised controlled trials (RCT), case-histories of their work, and other ways of representing lived experiences. Others are new to the process and could strengthen their approaches by naming the knowledges they have been creating while doing their work as a core facet of their activism over the years. It does not matter how experienced a "knowledge-creator" one is or how unfamiliar the territory may be; feminist knowledge creation simply asks for the recognition that experiences of the nature, causes and prevention of VAW are already invaluable resources that activists and organisations bring. New planning emerges through participative reflection on what knowledges are already in play and takes shape from the discussion on the meanings and value of these knowledges.

REDEFINE YOUR LEADERSHIP CULTURE

Feminist approaches champion a leadership culture that supports the organisation to imagine itself as embedded in the creation of new knowledges. Rather than top-down program building and learning, these stress that everyone involved in the organisation carries the responsibility of supporting knowledge-creation as the base from which to move forward and that everyone has a valuable role to play.

ALLOCATE MATERIAL AND NON-MATERIAL RESOURCES TO KNOWLEDGE-PRODUCTION AND EVIDENCE-GENERATION

Knowledge-creation and the generation of evidence upon which to build and strengthen programming take time and requires personnel and finances as it needs to become part of all structures and processes and inform the way people work and how they are supported. Organisations and activists working to prevent VAW often struggle to find these resources and therefore need to consciously plan for them.

BUILD SOLIDARITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Knowledge-creation, and evidence-generation, are the lifeblood of powerful organisational and activist work on VAW prevention, and there are many brave, informative, and valuable resources already in circulation. Sharing these, creating opportunities for cross-organisational partnerships, celebrating new and familiar discoveries, and encouraging documentation, writing, art-making, and visual/digital productivity is critical.

METHODS FOR CREATING KNOWLEDGE AND GENERATING EVIDENCE

Knowledge and evidence around VAW prevention can be generated in a variety of ways. Feminist researchers and activists involved in VAW prevention consider the methods best suited for local situations, conditions faced by women and girls, availability of resources, organisational capacity, clarity about the change being sought, and an understanding of how the findings will be used. Feminist knowledge-creation and evidence-generation always seeks to ensure that the work is undertaken with the safety, dignity, and secure partnership of different survivors and their constituencies at the forefront.

The methods in Table 1.2 are broadly rooted in health development models of knowledge creation and evidence generation. They can be chosen to create knowledges about the dynamics of a current community context, the impact of an intervention, or attitudes towards an issue within a community. These methods use quantitative tools (statistics) and qualitative tools (listening to what participants say about a particular topic of VAW prevention). However, using these methods in a feminist way requires prioritising gender analysis at every point and reflecting on the power dynamics coming into play through its use.

Table 1.2

COMMON AND TOOLS METHODS	WHAT IT IS/ WHAT IT WORKS FOR
RANDOMISED CONTROL TRIALS (RCTS)	Randomised controlled trials (RCT) measure the effectiveness of a new intervention or treatment. Randomisation reduces bias and provides a rigorous tool for examining cause-and-effect relationships between an intervention and outcome. RCTs are highly-regarded but are often costly and can create difficult 'gaps' between knowledge-creators and community participants.
CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEYS	Cross-sectional surveys provide an image of a specific time situation – like a snapshot of a community's characteristics. They can be carried out on a population at the community level or in a service context and can also provide historical information. Cross-sectional surveys are inexpensive and relatively easy to conduct, which is a strength. A challenge lies in their relative superficiality.
COHORT STUDY	Cohort Study allows knowledge-creators to follow a group of people over time, with the possibility of studying several outcomes. They are considered to be the best way to determine the multidetermined causes of a situation. Conducting such studies may be costly as they may require extensive samples with follow-up over long periods. Given that time always involves political and economic shifts, it can be hard to stabilise the study.
SITUATION ANALYSIS	Situation Analysis comprises a set of rapid assessment techniques designed to evaluate existing community attitudes and practices. It requires a combination of focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and observation to understand community attitudes and beliefs.

<table>
<tr>
<td>**RAPID ASSESSMENT**</td>
<td>Rapid Assessment is an exploratory study done in preparation for designing an intervention or as a means of supplementing or refining quantitative research. Responses to a few specific questions are elicited over a relatively short period.</td>
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</table>

MAJOR CONSTRAINTS WITH COMMON METHODS FOR KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE CREATION

OVER-EMPHASIS ON RANDOMISED CONTROL TRIALS OR RCTS poses a challenge to organisations already operating within resource-constrained environments. RCTs are resource-intensive, highly technical and may not capture the complexity of community-based change. Additionally, they may alter the activist organisations' programmatic vision and implementation. Nonetheless, the academic-driven push for evidence-based programming has resulted in organisations' adoption of RCTs as one of the standard measures for a range of prevention activities hoping that these facilitate the transformation of power relations.[6] However, an over-emphasis on one method risks hindering innovation and possibly creating harm by demanding particular interventions in communities that may not be suitable, as well as overlooking and undervaluing other critical or appropriate methods.

NORTHERN-DOMINATED RESEARCH ECONOMIES: The majority of financing for research is often directed to institutions and researchers in the global North, while most studies occur in the global South. Thus, insights derived from practice, Southern-based knowledge producers' contributions, and qualitative information and analysis may be ignored, marginalised or co-opted.

PACE AND PRIORITIES: Although academic knowledge can take longer to produce and publish, once in circulation, it can lead to relatively quick policy and funding action, including the impetus to bring models to scale. The race to scale is at odds with the need for a multi-layered approach to VAW research that encourages risk-taking, fosters critical reflection, and ensuring adaptations that maintain fidelity to original interventions.

POLITICS AND ETHICS: Knowledge production and evidence generation is a political process. Thus, it is vital to consider research and knowledge production ethics and pay attention to authorship, citation, visibility and crediting—both in name and through financial sources. Historically African and women knowledge creators are invisible and under-recognised, and therefore often un-cited/referenced and uncompensated for their contributions.[7]

Whilst extending the reach of effective interventions is essential, it is critical to prioritise a political analysis led by women and ensure it does not reinforce technical elements at the expense of a more comprehensive transformative agenda of preventing and ending VAW.

In Table 1.3, this Guide offers a combination of tools and methods that activists and organisations can utilise to deepen feminist praxis in knowledge and evidence creation for prevention VAW. It goes beyond the "common methods" discussed in the earlier table and factors the diversity of forms, formats and platforms that consider the various needs, capacities and creativity of African women's organisations and activists.

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6 Engelhardt, A., Robinson, K., & Kangas, A. (March 2012). Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation for Programming on Violence against Women and Girls What Works? Preventing Violence against Women and Girls: Gender & Development Network.

7 Mama, A., 2007. Is it ethical to study Africa? Preliminary thoughts on scholarship and freedom. *African Studies Review*, pp.1-26.

Table 1.3

TOOL	WHAT IT IS	HOW IT CAN BE USED AS EVIDENCE AROUND WHAT WORKS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
CASE STUDIES	An analysis that explores and usually examines multiple and intersecting dynamics in a particular context tells a story.	Case studies can examine similar situations in vastly different contexts. For instance, to show how different contexts can affect men's efforts to stop using violence. They can provide an in-depth picture.
STORIES/ NARRATIVES OF CHANGE/MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE	Narrative methods trace the complexities of power and surface invisible power dynamics by exploring and examining multiple and intersecting stories. They are based on storytelling as an ancient African method of sharing information and sharing customs and rituals.	Narrative methods allow anybody to tell their stories in their own words'; hence it is used with survivors to document change stories. For example, participants in training programs can be asked to track their most significant change. Increasingly the method of photo-voice is used to share narratives of change.
FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (FPAR)	FPAR is a participatory and action-oriented approach that centres gender and women's experiences both theoretically and practically. It is used to explore a new idea – the idea is to conceptualise the project and then determine spaces for documentation and reflection within the project to guide the project's action/ development further.	This tool can help with community mobilisation and development projects, youth projects that require community members and young people's participation, respectively. The community/women are involved in identifying the areas for inquiry, shaping the questions, analysing and sharing the information.
COMMUNITY SURVEYS	This method entails sending out survey questions to a target community. It can be conducted both online and physically. The purpose of community survey research is to quantify local patterns of a social (or economic or cultural) phenomenon.	These can inform and guide programming by forming the basis of a needs assessment and asset mapping. For prevention, they could ask: What types of groups exist in the community? Who or what positions in a community could/do support women experiencing violence? Who are the opinion leaders with a platform?

TOOL	WHAT IT IS	HOW IT CAN BE USED AS EVIDENCE AROUND WHAT WORKS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
COMMUNITY MAPPING	Community Mapping is a visual research method that provides a description or explanation of a social phenomenon's location.	In social norm change programming or community mobilisation to determine where resources are allocated, for example, community mapping can be used to identify helping agencies such as the police and health centre.
DOCUMENT REVIEWS	Surveying of literature through the analysis of documents.	It can be used when embarking on a new project to get a sense of what currently exists and what best practices exist or situate learning from practice in broader debates and knowledge.
FOCUS GROUPS	Group discussion provides an opportunity for input by multiple people at the same time. It also helps participants share information amongst themselves.	It can be used to get different groups such as youth or men or specific groups like women to input on a particular programme direction or dynamics in the community and is often used in qualitative research.
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION	Becoming part of a community, with their permission, and observing daily interactions and dynamics.	It can be used to understand the lived experience of engaging in prevention and the complexities faced by individuals and groups doing this work.
INTERVIEWS	A set of (usually) open-ended questions to guide a conversation with participants, one at a time. Interviews vary in length and structure and need to consider the context in which dialogue can happen, and the participants' language, safety and comfort.	It can generate in-depth information about how participants understand their experiences and how they represent these. The latter illustrates priorities and tensions within a participants' own sense-making, which helps guide VAW prevention work.
MAPPING	This tool entails supporting participants to draw concept maps of their physical, social and emotional spaces.	It can be used to understand the physical paths through which people move, travel, create economic opportunities and encounter others. It is instrumental

in understanding issues of safety and vulnerability to public violence |

TOOL	WHAT IT IS	HOW IT CAN BE USED AS EVIDENCE AROUND WHAT WORKS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
VISUAL DOCUMENTATION	There are many kinds of visual documentation –and these include photographs, videos, documentaries and performative work. In 2021, these often blend into the tools used by social media to represent lived experiences.

Visual sense-making can also be used within focus groups, photo-voice, and interviews. | It is participative and can enable participants to reveal understandings of experience and context; it can be used as a supplement to other tools or independently to bring voices around VAW closer to policymakers. There are challenges in engaging power with this tool, and visual images are often used in stereotypical or stigmatising ways. Feminist use of this tool includes the insistence that people imagined have the ownership of images, alongside those who created them, and clear agreements about the circulation and use of visual images.

When used in combination with other tools, visual sense-making deepens access to meaning and individual voice. |
DIGITAL ANALYSIS	Social media uses multiple versions of content, which is rapidly produced, circulated, and (primarily) stored in digital form. Different apps (such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook) allow for uploading multiple swift-moving information forms. Digital analysis is a tool that can be used to explore specific threads of content on particular issues.	It can be used to map a set of attitudes, or perspectives, on a current political issue, understand particularly young people's modes of knowledge-making and contribute to culture, activism, and social debate.
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATIVE THEATRE	A facilitated and prepared event in which the public is invited to watch/participate in a dramatic piece, usually performed by community members, which explores a story, debate or issue.	The performance and the responses can work to surface opinions and attitudes to an issue. Invitations to participate in the drama and to suggest possible resolutions to a subject can also be evidence of the public's engagement with the issue.
STORY–TELLING	Sharing stories of experiences within a workshop or performative setting.	Where they can be documented (with permission of the narrators), stories create knowledges about the shape and meaning of violence against women and about survivors' strategies to combat this.

HOW CAN ACTIVISTS BENEFIT AND INFLUENCE APPROACHES FOR KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION ON VAW PREVENTION?

Activists and African women's organisation may start by recognising their unique value addition to shaping VAW prevention agenda linked to knowledge and evidence creation. This Guide highlights the critical value that Activists and African women's organisation can bring to the table through their experience and work.

- A deep understanding of the communities with particular reference to cultural and language nuances;

- Long-standing relationships of trust that enable deep engagement on a sensitive issue such as VAW providing a strong foundation for ethical research;

- Ability to identify critical local activists who could assist with data collection;

- Community engagement and participatory research practice that embraces transformative feminist practices of redistributing power;

- Location and proximity to the community enables reflexive research practice in which organisations can work in ways that understand the long-term nature of change whilst being responsive to the immediate issues facing communities; and

- Research practices and processes that consciously aim to build agency and create a firm foundation for collective ownership of findings and commitment to using these findings.

Whilst utilising their varied positionalities, capacities and experiences to influence knowledges and evidences listed above, African feminist researchers and activists can contribute to the process through the following ways;

1. Strengthening the *documentation* of work at all levels through written and audio or visual means;

2. Clearly defining and documenting the *analysis* of the problems being addressed, using both secondary research and community processes to engage with various constituencies;

3. Adopting a *clearly defined theory of change* and the **pathways towards realising it**;

4. Conducting a baseline assessment, where possible, to establish a clear understanding of the situation before the commencement of the programme;

5. Applying a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan that defines the programme's resultant changes and provides a framework for reflecting on learning;

6. Integrating procedures for reflection and documentation in the implementation of the programme;

7. Acknowledging accountability to the communities involved and all institutional actors (internal and external), using various tools and processes; and

8. Integrating a rigorous process for collecting *change stories* at an individual, institutional and community level as an ongoing organisational process.
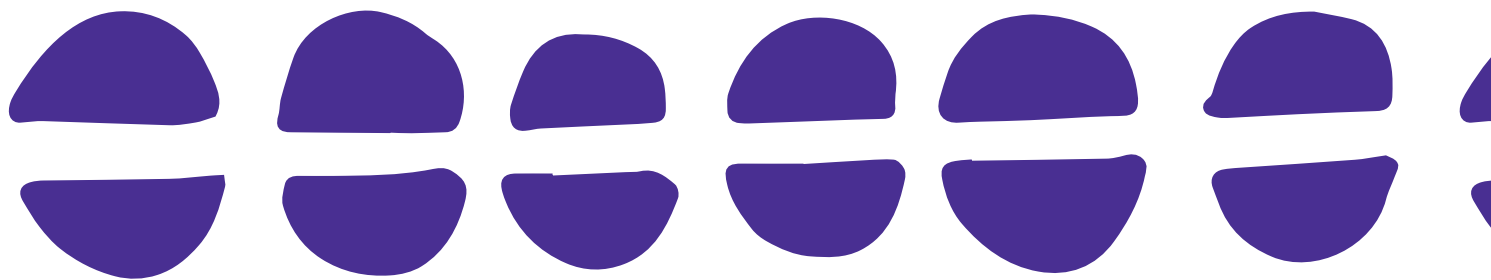
DESIGNING THE PROCESS OF FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE CREATION

Creating knowledges, which lead to evidence generation upon which to build activism and organisation-based VAW prevention programming, is a process. Context, resources, and capacity influence the process, but it is usually one full of excitement, unexpected challenges, and deep learning for everyone involved. Collective knowledge-creation is a powerful team-building practice. There are at least eight stages to most knowledge-creation processes within organisational work.

Table 1.4

CONVENTIONAL STAGES?	MAKING THE PROCESS FEMINIST AND AFRICAN–CENTRED
Gathering information about the issue from a range of outside sources and surveying what that information suggests	Searching for information from feminist researchers and writers; engaging with reports and other materials offered by other NGOs and activist hubs. Looking in "informal" places for the representation of women's experiences – church magazines, letters, memory, language (metaphors, popular sayings) Reading "against the grain" of formal documents – court records, official documents, medical records, colonial archives, news and media stories.
Articulating the purpose and focus of the knowledge-creation project	Including clarification on why the project is being undertaken, with whom, and by whom; ensuring that the focus does not seek to rehearse any stereotypes about women and violence; ensuring that intersectional gender analysis informs how the project is articulated.
Considering ethics, designing the broad approach and choosing the research(?) methods.	The question of ethics takes a central role and is further discussed in p. 20. Three feminist principles guide the approach and choice of method. These are; **positionality**, **accountability** and **partiality.**[8]
Implementing the chosen approach and methods	Including continual reflection on questions of safety and security for everyone involved; debriefing and reflecting on what is being learned; staying alert to the impact of implementation of the approach/method; maintaining the position that all participants "own" the material shared; being attentive to the issues of power that come with multi-lingual knowledge-creation processes and ensuring that sensitive material is stored safely.

8 See Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Feminist Objectivity: She writes about the idea that using **positionality** means understanding the complex power dynamics that a new knowledge-creation project might bring into play and reflecting on how to minimise/eradicate hierarchical or potentially abusive/exploitative work. Using **accountability** means that all methods need to take account of everyone's safety, dignity and personhood, and it also means being accountable to the goals of preventing VAW. Using partiality means understanding that knowledge-creation is situated, never about universality, and is only part of any broad grasp of our worlds and environments - more learning is always possible.

Analysing material gathered	Including gender-analysis at every point; recognising in quantitative analysis that the terms "man" and "woman" may lead to stereotyping, decontextualisation, or invisibilisation. In qualitative analysis, paying attention to silences, contextual areas of taboo or sensitivity, paralinguistic communication, and symbolic language.
Synthesising the learning from the analysis in text or visual formats	Includes generation of drafts, feedback sessions, clarification of implications of learnings for participants; active choices about the genre of writing/textual description of the project to be used such as academic style or one required by a critical partner like the government; discussion about the various "forms" the synthesis needs to consider to be accountable to all participants; takes particular care not to use images which can stereotype, or put any participant or community into a position of increased vulnerability.
Disseminating /sharing the output of the knowledge-creation project	Recognition that report, write-up, visual/textual document is only one of the project "outputs". Sharing the project's learnings in multiple ways, using approaches such as outcomes harvesting to understand the project's complexity, variety, and achievements. Prioritisation of sharing of new knowledge with community/participants in ways that can strengthen partnership building.
Turning knowledge into evidence	This process involves choosing critical learnings from the knowledge creation project, refining and packaging them to inform more relevant VAW prevention programming, advocacy, policy-making and fundraising. Includes reflection on political/cultural contexts to prioritise evidence to be drawn upon to strengthen VAW prevention; discussion of new potential partnerships for whom the evidence might be valuable; explicit consideration of the project's costs to all participants (this includes organisationally-based participants) well-being.

FEMINIST RESEARCH ETHICS

Feminists are cognisant that knowledge-creation initiatives are inherently political; they involve complex power dynamics, a range of actors, and interests. The question of ethics thus becomes central. The following essential elements can help women's rights organisations, and activists integrate feminist research ethics in knowledge and evidence creation for VAW prevention.[9]

- CLARITY AND OPENNESS ABOUT THE PURPOSE AND INTENTION OF THE PROCESS;

- INFORMED CONSENT, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO REFUSE PARTICIPATION AND THE RIGHT TO RECALL MATERIAL THAT HAS BEEN SHARED;

- ASSURED CONFIDENTIALITY;

- SAFE DATA PROTECTION AND STORAGE;

- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MULTIPLE WAYS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION;

- CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE DYNAMICS OF INCLUSION/ EXCLUSION AND ENSURING VOICE AND ACCESS;

- AWARENESS OF WHO IS REPRESENTED AND WHO IS NOT, AND WHY;

- RESPECT FOR THE COMMON HUMANITY OF ALL INVOLVED;

- SELF–AWARENESS OF ROLE AS A RESEARCH AND THE DYNAMICS OF INSIDER/OUTSIDER RELATIONSHIPS;

- USE OF INTERSECTIONAL GENDER POWER ANALYSIS TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF VARIOUS SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION INTO ALL STAGES OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS;

- PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE REFLECTION BUILT INTO THE RESEARCH PROCESS;[10]

- SHARING AND DISTRIBUTING THE KNOWLEDGE HAS BEEN PRODUCED;

- TRANSPARENCY ABOUT FUNDING AND OPPORTUNITIES ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH PROCESS;

- ABIDING BY THE 'DO NO HARM' PRINCIPLE, ESPECIALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF TRAUMA AND FEAR GENERATED BY VIOLENCE; AND

- SELF–CARE AND DEBRIEFING OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED.

9   Evans, M., Guerra, F., Moolman, B. and Sanger, N. (2015) Gender Toolkit for Researchers, Human Science Research Council.

10   Raising Voices and the African Women's Development Fund. (2019). Preventing Violence against Women: A Primer for African Women's Organisations. Kampala, Uganda.

SHARING VAW PREVENTION KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE

Once VAW prevention knowledge and evidence is produced, it is vital to share it! Sharing (re) positions African feminist researchers and activists as key global players in shaping thinking, strategy, approaches and knowledge on VAW prevention on the continent; creates greater access to new and emerging evidence; demonstrates the increasing participation of African women's rights organisations in the field; can influence policy and advocacy agendas, and contributes to coordinated approaches and networking.

Most critical to feminist knowledge and evidence generation is sharing with women and communities involved in the process of its creation. It recognises women as experts and co-producers of VAW knowledge rather than merely as individuals from whom data is extracted.[11] Women's rights organisations and activists can produce and circulate VAW prevention knowledge and evidence directly in community events to launch and discuss findings, produce information sheets, hold radio talk shows, and produce visual formats like short films or comics for audiences that may find these more accessible.

Consider accessible forms of dissemination, including infographics and visual media, to communicate fundamentals of prevention approaches using a range of platforms, including print, electronic and social media. Translation and disability access, such as producing audio versions for more people to engage with VAW knowledge and evidence, is critical.[12]

CITATION

Activist and feminist organisations are encouraged to include complete publication information (authors, date, location of publication) in citation form in materials produced so that their work can be easily cited. Citation or referencing acknowledges the intellectual work that has been done and informs the current knowledge or practice to show the activist or women's organisation as 'in conversation' with others who have also had an interest in that idea. It means engaging with African feminists' works (authors, filmmakers, storytellers, artists, among others), familiarising oneself with where they publish their work and quoting them in formal and informal documents so that African scholarship and particularly African women's rights organisations and activist knowledge production is normalised and prioritised.

COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

It is essential to consider how to copyright knowledge. Traditional copyright can help protect work from being used without recognition or being used in harmful or unintended ways. However, it can create barriers to onward use and oblige people to seek permission or pay for usage. An alternative is to use open content licenses such as Creative Commons, which allow free use of knowledge and evidence materials according to their creators' restrictions. This serves to encourage knowledge sharing and access while attributing and acknowledging that. contribution of African feminists and women organisations championing VAW prevention.

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11 *Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM). (, 2018). Feminist approaches to building knowledge and evidence on GBV. Feminist Pocketbook Tip Sheet 5*. Coalition of Feminists for Social Change.

12   See, for example, the website Visualising Information for Advocacy. [website].
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