

## VAWG and Intersectionality

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**Query:** Please provide a quick review of rigorous evidence on VAWG and intersectionality, focusing on the following questions and with a 2-3 page summary overview:

1. What is the evidence that groups of women are at increased risk of violence due to multiple discriminations or disadvantages?
2. What is the evidence on how to prevent VAWG for the most marginalised/excluded groups of women and girls? What is the strength of this evidence base?

**Enquirer:** Emily Esplen, VAWG Team

### 1. Introduction

The term 'intersectionality' was first used by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the multiple layers of discrimination and marginalisation that African American women face in the United States. Crenshaw has described how "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there".<sup>1</sup> In order to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG), it is important to understand how gender inequality and patriarchy intersect with other systems of inequality and oppression and therefore how to design programme interventions to tackle structural barriers and prevent VAWG for the most marginalised and excluded women and girls.<sup>2</sup>

This document provides a three-day rapid review of the evidence on VAWG and intersectionality. It summarises a review of the evidence that groups of women are at increased risk of violence due to multiple discriminations or disadvantages (Annex 1), how to prevent VAWG for the most marginalised and excluded groups (Annex 2), and inputs from VAWG helpdesk alliance partner, Womankind<sup>3</sup> (Annex 3).

### 2. What is the evidence that groups of women are at increased risk of violence due to multiple discriminations or disadvantages?

Key observations include:

- There is a lack of rigorous evidence on VAWG and intersectionality from low and middle-income countries (LMIC). Particular evidence gaps include prevalence data showing which groups of women are at increased risk of violence due to multiple discriminations or disadvantages, which forms of violence they are most at risk of and at what point in their life course. Nationally representative surveys<sup>4</sup> are missing or limited for many countries, do not disaggregate data by many types of marginalisation (e.g. by disability, sexuality), and exclude some groups of women (e.g. older women over 49 years, LBT women).

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Kimberlé Crenshaw (2017): <http://www.law.columbia.edu/pt-br/news/2017/06/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality>

<sup>2</sup> For further information on how intersectionality has been conceptualised, focusing particularly on feminist reflections on intersectionality and VAWG, see: Annex 3 by Womankind; Reflections from the Gender & Development Network (2017); and AWID (2004).

<sup>3</sup> Based on evidence given to Womankind by WRO partners, in particular PaKasipiti Zimbabwe and Mitini Nepal (who work on LBT rights), Deaf Women Included (who work on the rights of women with disabilities in Zimbabwe), Femprist (who support women in prison in Zimbabwe) and the Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) in Nepal, as well as Womankind's experience of working on VAWG and some of the latest evidence and learning on VAWG and intersectionality

<sup>4</sup> Including Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) or Violence against Children Surveys (VACS)

- The global knowledge base on VAWG and intersectionality has been hampered by methodological challenges including women who experience multiple oppressions being less likely to disclose or report violence, or be able to access help due to a range of factors such as:
  - Stigma, discrimination and fear of disclosure of status, particularly the case for people living with HIV/AIDS (Orza et al, 2015) and lesbian and bisexual women (IGLHCR, 2014).
  - Dependence on partner and/or fear of losing children, especially for older women and women living with disabilities (Van Der Heijden, 2014). Older women with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias are particularly vulnerable to abuse, and violence against this marginalised group is likely to be substantially underreported (UNECE, 2013).
  - Patriarchal societies and gendered social norms (including religious and traditional beliefs) that discourages the reporting of violence.
- There is a growing body of smaller, less rigorous, studies looking at women's increased risk of violence due to discriminations or disadvantages, using a range of methodologies and tools including: surveys; interviews; focus group discussions; participatory research; and analysis of service-based data (see Annex 1).
- Where evidence exists, it tends to focus on increased risk of violence due to gender and a single form of disadvantage or discrimination (e.g. gender and disability, gender and sexuality, gender and age), rather than how multiple forms intersect (e.g. gender, disability, age). A rapid mapping of the evidence (see Annex 1) reveals that only a few studies explore the intersections between gender, sexuality, age, disability and race, and the increased risks of violence. For example, a five-country study of violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people in Asia found that complex layers of intersecting discrimination and violence exist, based on a range of identity markers (e.g. race, ethnicity, class, economic status and religion) (IGLHCR, 2014). In the United States, studies have found that LGBT people of colour are disproportionately victims of homicides, particularly transgender women.<sup>5</sup> Several studies have found that disability increases the risk of assault for older women (WHO, 2011; NSRP/Inclusive Friends, 2015), including research from Sweden that suggests an increased risk for older women with disabilities but not older men (Brå, 2008 in OHCHR, 2012).
- More research is needed on the pathways and mechanisms by which multiple types of discrimination/disadvantage reinforce each other in different contexts, including when violence is the cause of further oppression for women (e.g. when violence is the cause of disability, when sexual violence leads to HIV/AIDS, or when violence is the cause of imprisonment)<sup>6</sup>.
- There are also evidence gaps in understanding the diverse experiences of women within specific marginalised groups and how this can impact violence and the resources, opportunities and services that women can access. For example, there is growing evidence that the risk of violence is significantly higher for women with intellectual impairment than for women living with other disabilities (Powers et al, 2009; Van Der Heijden, 2014), including a systematic review that found adults with disabilities are 1.5 times more likely to be victims of violence than those without a disability and adults with mental health conditions nearly 4 times more likely (Hughes et al, 2012). The limited provision of specialist VAWG services for women, including shelters, may be exacerbated for women who face multiple discriminations and disadvantages.
- The links between intersectionality and polyvictimisation are also understudied. For example, there is some evidence that adolescent girls have specific needs and vulnerabilities, due to the

<sup>5</sup> 77% were people of colour, including 7 who were black and 3 who were Latinx. 46% were transgender women - all of whom were transgender women of colour (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), 2016).

<sup>6</sup> A global report on prison trends highlights the causal relationship between the discrimination and disadvantage women face and their offending and imprisonment, often for non-violent crimes. There is growing evidence suggesting that women prisoners have often been victims of violence themselves, and of domestic abuse and 'coercive relationships' being a driver to women's offending (Penal Reform International and Thailand Institute of Justice, 2018)

ways in which gender discrimination intersects with age discrimination. However, this has been an evidence gap until quite recently (Ellsberg et al, 2017), and most research looks only at the impact on one form of violence (Yount et al, 2017), rather than multiple forms of violence often in different locations (home, school, community, workplace). Helpage International (2017) has also highlighted the links between cumulative<sup>7</sup> and intersectional discrimination, and the exacerbated, cumulative impact of a lifetime of violence and abuse for particularly marginalised groups of older women (e.g. older women with disabilities, older migrant or refugee women, and widowed women).

## 2. What is the evidence on how to prevent VAWG for the most marginalised and excluded groups of women and girls

- There is limited evidence on ‘what works’ in programmatic approaches to tackle violence against some of the most marginalised groups of women and girls including lesbian and bisexual women, older women, ethnic, religious and political minorities, women living with HIV, and women in prison, reflecting the scarcity of violence prevention efforts that target or account for the experiences of these marginalised groups (Fraser, 2015; Fulu et al, 2014).
- This review found that few programmes which specifically address the intersection between violence, gender and other markers of marginalisation (i.e. which target or include an explicit focus on a marginalised group) have been implemented and evaluated. For example, a 2014 systematic review of VAWG evaluations found only 10 existing evaluations with people with disabilities as their focus, only one of which was implemented in a LMIC, and none of the evaluations reviewed demonstrated an impact on levels of violence (Mikton et al, 2014).
- The review also found that many evaluations of programmes do not include measures of VAWG as an outcome, making an assessment of their effectiveness difficult. In addition, few evaluations have tested the different impacts on different types of violence (Fulu et al, 2014).<sup>8</sup>
- Evaluations of VAWG programmes do not tend to disaggregate by age, sexuality, disability, ethnic group and other markers of social position and identity, making it hard to assess their impact on the most marginalised (UNDESA, 2013; Fulu et al 2014). In 2014, the What Works to Prevent VAWG programme undertook an evidence review on violence against women with disabilities which found that “most literature on prevention of violence against women does not discuss women with disabilities as a special group with particular prevention needs” (Van de Heijden, 2014: 1). There are a few limited examples such as the Good Schools Toolkit in Uganda, which worked in mainstream primary schools to reduce violence among primary school children; an evaluation found reduced violence against children, including those with disabilities. However, the evaluation did not look at whether the programme was equally effective for children with and without disabilities (Devries et al, 2015).
- Evaluations of programmes addressing intimate partner violence (IPV) in the context of HIV tend to focus on reducing HIV risk behaviours rather than specifically looking at the reduction of violence faced by women living with HIV.<sup>9</sup> The Stepping Stones programme includes sessions that address violence and discrimination against women living with HIV, but published

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<sup>7</sup> Cumulative discrimination is where the impact of discrimination that happens more than once over a period of time, or on a number of single occasions but based on different characteristics, cumulates. It is also sometimes called ‘additive’ discrimination.

<sup>8</sup> Womankind partners have also reported the difficulties in measurement due to limited long-term core funding for women’s rights organisations. See Annex 3 and Womankind (2014) Prevention is Possible report.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Safe Homes and Respect for Everyone programme (SHARE), The Gender Roles, Equality and Transformation project (GREAT), Stepping Stones and SASA! are all programmes that have evaluations that measure (mainly) IPV reduction in the context of HIV (Heise et al, 2016; Fulu et al 2014).

evaluations of the programme do not disaggregate by HIV status and so the impact of the intervention on this particular sub group of marginalised women is unknown.<sup>10</sup>

- Where interventions targeting marginalised groups exists, they tend to be conceptualised as broader stigma reduction awareness-raising campaigns, which include prevention of violence as one of their goals - such as the Free and Equal campaign<sup>11</sup> - a global public education campaign which aims to raise awareness about violence and discrimination against LGBT people, led by the UN. However, there is a lack of evidence of the impact of such campaigns, and they often fail to address the specific *gendered* drivers of VAWG.
- Whilst there is no single programme or strategy that will work to prevent VAWG for the most marginalised and excluded groups of women and girls, programmatic guidance suggests that approaches must be tailored to the specific needs and situations of particular groups of women and girls.

In the absence of robust evidence, Annex 2 summarises the limited evidence which exists as well as programmatic approaches to targeting lesbian and bisexual women, women living with disabilities, and women living with HIV (areas of marginalisation where this review found the most published literature and resources).

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<sup>10</sup> For a video of the positive impacts of Stepping Stones in the lives of women living with HIV by the work of the Coalition of Women living with HIV and AIDS in Malawi COLWHA, see <http://steppingstonesfeedback.org/news/seeking-safety-stepping-stones-malawi/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unfe.org/>

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**About Helpdesk reports:** The VAWG Helpdesk is funded by the UK Department for International Development, contracted through the Inclusive Societies Department. This helpdesk report is based on 3 days of desk-based research and is designed to provide a brief overview of the key issues and expert thinking on VAWG issues.

VAWG Helpdesk services are provided by a consortium of leading organisations and individual experts on VAWG, including Social Development Direct, International Rescue Committee, ActionAid, Womankind, and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Expert advice may be sought from this Group, as well as from the wider academic and practitioner community, and those able to provide input within the short time-frame are acknowledged. Any views or opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of DFID, the VAWG Helpdesk or any of the contributing organisations/experts.

For any further request or enquiry, contact [enquiries@vawghelpdesk.org](mailto:enquiries@vawghelpdesk.org).

**Suggested citation:**

Fraser, E, Vlahakis, M and Holden, J (2018) *VAWG and Intersectionality*, VAWG Helpdesk Research Report No. 178. London UK: VAWG Helpdesk.

## Annex 2:

### Evidence on how to prevent VAWG for the most marginalised/excluded groups

#### Lesbian and bisexual women

- Comprehensive sexuality education programmes may indirectly impact on violence against lesbian and bisexual women by providing accurate, age-appropriate, and inclusive information about sexual orientation and gender identity, same-sex relationships, VAWG, and LGBT sexual health – although most evaluations of CSE do not measure impact on levels of violence. (Holden et al, 2014)
- A 2015 review of VAWG and LGBT people found that ‘What evidence exists seems to suggest the need to take a cautious, low-profile approach which works closely with LGBT individuals, organisations and human rights defenders to ensure their safety and security – a ‘do no harm’ approach that avoids any inflammatory action that could cause an anti-LGBT backlash’. (Fraser, 2015)
- In response to inadequate screening of lesbian and bisexual women for domestic violence, a small body of technical guidance for practitioners on addressing domestic violence and sexual abuse within lesbian and bisexual relationships exists. For example, VAWnet includes a special collection on LGBTQ and GBV, which includes information and tools for preventing and intervening in domestic violence within LGBTQ communities. It also contains information on prevention and responses in schools as well as tribal equity policy initiatives. <https://vawnet.org/sc/prevention-and-intervention>. However such guidance is almost exclusively from high income country contexts and the evidence used to develop their recommendations is unclear (see box).

**The guide for transformative prevention programming: sexual violence and individuals who identify as LGBTQ** includes the following examples of best practice:

- Language and terminology to describe violence are inclusive of LGBTQ people. For example, use of “gendered violence” or “domestic and sexual violence”; where “violence against women” is used, violence against gay men, transgender individuals, and women who identify as lesbian or bisexual is also routinely mentioned.
- Prevention educators are knowledgeable about, and comfortable with, discussing the complexities of sexuality and gender, including trans identities, and implications for violence prevention.
- Violence prevention programs incorporate examples of LGBTQ sexual violence in all exercises.
- Violence prevention organisations partner with LGBTQ advocacy organisations to promote healthy relationships and sexuality in racially and ethnically diverse LGBTQ communities.

Source: Adapted from National Sexual Violence Resource Center and Pennsylvania Coalition Against

#### Women with disabilities

The What Works Evidence Review of preventing violence against women and girls with disabilities (Van de Heijden et al, 2017) in LMIC, makes the following recommendations for disability inclusive programmes, research and evaluations:

- **Use an intersectional approach:** Research and programmes need to employ a gender lens and explicitly seek to understand the intersectional (or multiple, compounding) oppressions faced by women and girls with disabilities compared to men with disabilities, and employ a

disability lens in VAWG programmes to understand women's double oppression of gender and disability.

- **Foster partnerships:** VAWG actors need to work together with disabled people's organisations to identify context specific and disability-specific risks and needs of women and girls living with disabilities in any given setting to make programming most relevant for them.
- **Value accessibility:** Programmes can readily explore ways in which existing violence prevention research, evaluations and interventions for the general population can be made available to women and girls with disabilities, for example by requiring venues to be accessible to those with mobility impairments.
- **Monitor participation:** Violence prevention programmes should actively monitor the participation of people with disabilities in programmes activities, and actively partner with participants with disabilities and local disability service organisations to improve accessibility.

## Women living with HIV

There are three key guiding resources on addressing VAW in the context of HIV:

1. The World Health Organization has published a resource aimed at generating programming ideas on what can be done to address violence against women in HIV programmes, including in national AIDS plans, programmes and policies.<sup>12</sup> It sets out 16 programming ideas (drawing from actual examples) that jointly address violence against women and HIV through four sets of complementary strategies:

- Empowering women and girls through integrated, multisectoral approaches,
- Transforming cultural and social norms related to gender,
- Integrating violence against women and HIV services,
- Promoting and implementing laws and policies related to violence against women, gender equality and HIV.

2. In 2015, the WHO Department of Reproductive Health and Research supported a global consultation by women living with HIV regarding their SRHR<sup>13</sup> in recognition that randomised controlled trials alone do not adequately consider the 'how's' and 'why's' of people's lives. The results were used to inform the WHO Consolidated guideline on sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV<sup>14</sup>, in which there is a section on protection from violence and creating safety.

3. THE UNAIDS has also recently supported the development of the Action Linking Initiatives on Violence Against Women and HIV Everywhere (ALIV[H]E) framework<sup>15</sup>. ALIV[H]E guides users through a process to analyse, implement, monitor and evaluate evidence-informed programming and policy work on the intersections between VAW and HIV for women in all their diversity. It provides checklists, tools and sample formats to support this. It draws on rights-based tools and approaches developed by women's organisations and HIV organisations, as well as on the formal evidence base, providing examples relating to women in all their diversity throughout; and in so doing builds on the thinking and practice of communities and actors who have been deeply engaged in work on these issues for many years. The Framework was developed and piloted through partnerships between community-based organisations focused on women living with HIV and academic institutions.

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<sup>12</sup> WHO (2013) 16 ideas for addressing violence against women in the context of HIV epidemic: a programming tool.

<sup>13</sup> Referenced in Annex one of this query

<sup>14</sup> See - [http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/gender\\_rights/Ex-Summ-srhr-women-hiv/en/](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/gender_rights/Ex-Summ-srhr-women-hiv/en/)

<sup>15</sup> Salamander Trust, Athena, UNAIDS, AIDS Legal Network, Project Empower, HEARD, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Action Linking Initiatives on Violence Against Women and HIV Everywhere, ALIV(H)E framework. 2017. Available at: [http://salamandertrust.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ALIVHE\\_FrameworkFINALNov2017.pdf](http://salamandertrust.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ALIVHE_FrameworkFINALNov2017.pdf)



## Annex 3:

### Womankind Input (Prepared by Maria Vlahakis, VAWG Policy & Advocacy Manager)

#### Introduction

As a feminist organisation, intersectionality is an important pillar in Womankind's new strategy. We seek to take an intersectional approach to our work and align with partners who share these values, and ensure this is done through a feminist lens. Women's movements reflect the many realities of women affected by patriarchy, which affects women in different and unique ways depending on their age, race, sexual orientation, disability, religion, ethnicity, caste etc.

It is an issue that our partners (all of whom are women's rights organisations in the Global South) are focusing on with our support. 67% of our partners (many of whom work on VAWG) who responded to a recent internal survey said they had held at least one discussion or activity on intersectionality over the last year.<sup>16</sup> One partner in Nepal highlighted the multiple forms of discrimination women with disabilities face and another partner in Kenya highlighted the importance of promoting social inclusion in tackling discrimination. Respondents highlighted a number of different social identities and resulting discriminations, including marital status, disability, caste, ethnicity, indigenous, age (adolescents specifically), religion (Muslim specifically), geography (rural women specifically) and the role of conflict.

This submission highlights recent evidence given to us by a number of our newer WRO partners, in particular PaKasipiti Zimbabwe and Mitini Nepal (who work on LBT rights), Deaf Women Included (who work on the rights of women with disabilities in Zimbabwe) and Femprist (who support women in prisons in Zimbabwe), and also one of our long-standing partners the Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) in Nepal. It also draws on extensive experience of Womankind in the area of VAWG during our history and latest evidence and learning on VAWG and intersectionality. The experiences of our partners compliments the other global evidence we have highlighted on VAWG and intersectionality.

#### Understanding intersectionality and taking a feminist approach

A recent Gender and Development Network (GADN) thinkpiece on intersectionality highlights that this is a term increasingly used by feminists but often undefined.<sup>17</sup> The paper, which relies on the work of women's rights network AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development), sets out to help its members define the concept and support them in thinking about how an intersectional approach can strengthen their work. At its heart is understanding the systemic nature of oppression and the very different and unique experiences of women at the points of intersection. Whilst this paper was not directly about VAWG its reflections are relevant to any work on VAWG.

As highlighted in the GADN think piece on intersectionality AWID have contributed significantly to thinking of intersectionality as a feminist theory. They have produced a primer which explains what intersectionality is, including its critical role in work for human rights and development, and suggests some different ways in which gender equality advocates can use it.<sup>18</sup>

A paper by The Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM) highlights that "Feminism offers a critical examination of how intersectional inequalities of gender, race, ethnicity, ability, colour and sexuality impact power and identity. Lack of accountability to these feminist principles results in

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<sup>16</sup> In response to the question: 'Has there been at least one discussion/activity around intersectionality, involving all or most of the staff in your organisation in the last 12 months?'. The responses were anonymous.

<sup>17</sup> *Intersectionality: Reflections from the Gender and Development Network*, November 2017

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/536c4ee8e4b0b60bc6ca7c74/t/5a130e9d53450a0abd9c0f8f/1511198367912/Intersectionality+GADN+thinkpiece+November+2017.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/intersectionality\\_a\\_tool\\_for\\_gender\\_and\\_economic\\_justice.pdf](https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/intersectionality_a_tool_for_gender_and_economic_justice.pdf)

privileging men who already benefit from patriarchy rather than dismantling the very systems of power (including gender inequality) that produce VAWG.<sup>19</sup>

Imkaan, a feminist London based Black and 'minority ethnic' women's organisation, has said: "An intersectional feminist approach demands that we centre our thinking not just on how women as a social class are positioned, but that we also attend to other inequalities in order to ensure that all women have a voice in the struggle."<sup>20</sup>

### **Question 1: What is the evidence that groups of women are at increased risk of violence due to multiple discriminations or disadvantages?**

VAWG is one of the most widespread human rights violations with 35% of women globally experiencing violence in their lifetime. 30% of women experience intimate partner violence.<sup>21</sup> Violence denies women and girls the right to a life free of abuse and subjects them to inhuman and degrading treatment. It also inhibits their ability to enjoy rights and freedoms equally to me, and to live their lives with dignity and respect. Violence against women, and the fear of violence, affects all women, because they are women and because of the patriarchy and gender discrimination they are subjected to.

VAWG is rooted in unequal power relations between women and men, and serves to control women's bodies, choices and lives. Gender discrimination intersects with other forms of discrimination, for example race, religion, income, disability, age etc. Whilst the starting point is patriarchal control, evidence suggests that intersecting oppressions and discriminations based on women's different identities and social positions can increase the likelihood, the severity and the outcomes of violence.

In 2014 Womankind published *Prevention is Possible*, a synthesis report bringing together findings and learning from three linked research studies of partners in Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia looking at the effectiveness of their programmes and crucially the role of WROs in VAWG prevention.<sup>22</sup> Whilst the programmes and evaluative research didn't look specifically at VAWG and intersectionality, country context analysis for the report revealed that some women were at increased risk of violence, with issues of homelessness, age, marital status and geographical location all cited:

- Ethiopia: A survey on rape among homeless women in Bahir Dar found that homeless women were at greater risk of rape.<sup>23</sup>
- Ghana: A qualitative study found that women are most at risk of sexual violence between 10-18 years old;<sup>24</sup> DHS data showed a strong association between being currently or formerly married with experience of violence;<sup>25</sup> Urban women are slightly more likely to experience each type of violence than rural women.<sup>26</sup>
- Zambia: Geographical location, marital status, age, and socio-economic factors were all highlighted as risk factors to violence. See report for full details.

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<sup>19</sup> COFEM. *Feminist perspectives on addressing violence against women and girls: How a lack of accountability undermines work to address violence against women and girls*. 2017. [http://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Paper-1-COFEM.final\\_sept2017.pdf](http://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Paper-1-COFEM.final_sept2017.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> <https://thelondonvawgconsortium.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/CORRECT-Good-Practice-Briefing-Imkaan-Intersectionality.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (2013) Violence against women: a global health problem of epidemic proportions, available at: [http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2013/gender\\_violence\\_report.html#sthash.DiS5epMy.dpuf](http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2013/gender_violence_report.html#sthash.DiS5epMy.dpuf)

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/reports/prevention-is-possible-\(1\).pdf?sfvrsn=2](https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/reports/prevention-is-possible-(1).pdf?sfvrsn=2)

<sup>23</sup> Alemayehu, M.C. and Yalew, A.W. (2013) Assessment of sexual violence among street females in Bahir-Dar town, North West Ethiopia: a mixed method study, *BMC PublicHealth* 13:825

<sup>24</sup> Ardayfio-Schandorf, E. (2005) Violence against women: The Ghanaian case

<sup>25</sup> Formerly married women (divorced, separated, or widowed) are nearly twice as likely (55%) to have ever experienced physical violence since age 15 as currently married (33%) and never-married women (36%). Formerly married women are also more likely to have experienced physical violence in the past 12 months (25%) than currently married women (18%). Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Ghana Health Service (GHS), and ICF Macro. 2009. Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2009. Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2008.

The following section highlights some evidence in relation to specific marginalised groups, including some examples of Womankind partners focusing on ending discrimination and VAWG for these groups:<sup>27</sup>

- Pakasipiti Zimbabwe (*Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms for LBT women in Zimbabwe* project) <https://pakasipitizimbabwe.wordpress.com/author/pakasipitizimbabwe/>
- Deaf Women Included (DWI) (*Amplifying Voices: Combatting Violence Against Women with Disabilities in Zimbabwe* project) <https://www.womankind.org.uk/what-we-do/our-approach/partners/detail/deaf-women-included>
- Mitini Nepal (Lesbian Organisation of Nepal) <http://www.mitininepal.org.np/>
- Female Prisoners Support Trust (Femprist) in Zimbabwe [https://www.womankind.org.uk/what-we-do/our-approach/partners/detail/female-prisoners-support-trust-\(femprist\)](https://www.womankind.org.uk/what-we-do/our-approach/partners/detail/female-prisoners-support-trust-(femprist))

### (i) Lesbian, bisexual and trans people

As shared with the helpdesk previously, during Womankind's in-country scoping we had discussions with leaders of organisations representing LBT women who talked of their 'double marginalisation' in social movements – firstly as women in the LGBTI movements and secondly as LBT women in the women's movement. More than one organisation asked Womankind to 'broker' relationships with the more mainstream women's movements, and help combat homophobic prejudices in so-called feminist spaces.

Research carried out by Human Dignity Trust in 2016, including with leading lesbian human rights activists, highlights that lesbians and bisexual women can be at increased risk of violence, particularly sexual violence, including targeted or 'corrective' rape, because of the intersection between their gender and sexual orientation.<sup>28</sup> The report looks at the multiple discriminations these women face and finds that discriminatory social attitudes and harmful gender norms, particularly around women's reproductive role, put lesbian and bisexual women at increased risk of abuse, particularly from family members and others they know. These crimes often go unreported and unpunished, and due to criminalisation creates a climate of state sanctioned homophobia. In addition, it finds that laws criminalising adultery, abortion and prostitution, and laws that permit child marriage and marital rape, amplify the criminalisation of lesbian and bisexual women because of their sexuality.

As set out in the VAWG Helpdesk Paper No 156, data on violence against LGBT people is limited and under-reporting is an issue, particularly where homosexuality is illegal.<sup>29</sup>

### ***PaKasipiti Zimbabwe***

PaKasipiti is one of Womankind's newest partners. Established in 2011, Pakasipiti champions the cause of LBT people and promotes social acceptance of sexual diversity. They work to increase the voice, agency and autonomy of LBT people, recognising that LBT people experience patriarchy differently.

Womankind is supporting PaKasipiti on a project called 'Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms for LBT women in Zimbabwe'.<sup>30</sup> PaKasipiti have highlighted the role of religion and culture in driving negative attitudes and discrimination against LBT people in Zimbabwe, resulting in their social, cultural, religious, economic and political exclusion, and creating stigma and violence. PaKasipiti also looks at the intersecting oppressions, where sexual orientation and gender identity

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<sup>27</sup> This is not an exhaustive list but those partners referenced in this submission

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.humandignitytrust.org/uploaded/Library/Other\\_Material/Breaking\\_the\\_Silence-Criminalisation\\_of\\_LB\\_Women\\_and\\_its\\_Impacts-FINAL.pdf](http://www.humandignitytrust.org/uploaded/Library/Other_Material/Breaking_the_Silence-Criminalisation_of_LB_Women_and_its_Impacts-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.sddirect.org.uk/media/1520/vawg-helpdesk-156-legislation.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> The project started on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018 and will run until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

intersects with, for example, class, race, geography, sex, dis(ability). They are particularly concerned about the intersection with sex work, HIV, age (youth specifically) and sexual exploitation/forced marriage.

Other key points that PaKasipiti have highlighted to us/will be addressed in the project:

- The LGBTI discourse and action has focused on gay and bisexual men/MSM whilst LBT issues have been left behind. As such the above project will focus on strengthening collaboration with women's movements in Zimbabwe, women's coalitions and women HRDs.
- LBT people in Zimbabwe are often falling through the cracks in the larger LGBTI and women's movements.
- LBT people's experience of violence in Zimbabwe is normally ignored.
- Bodily integrity is a key part of the struggle for LBT rights and freedom from violence.

### ***Mitini in Nepal***

Mitini works to secure lesbian rights and achieve social justice. They provide services to LBT survivors of violence, including the provision of psychosocial counselling services, legal service and emergency shelter services. They raise the voices of lesbian women on issues of violence, including sexual exploitation, trafficking, rape, physical and mental harassment. In a recent Womankind interview with Mitini the following points were highlighted in relation to VAWG and intersectionality:

- It is very difficult for openly LBT women to get employment.
- Although Nepal was one of the first countries to recognise the LGBT community, LBT people are still very marginalised within the women's movement and have limited visibility and support.
- A lot of CSOs are looking at intersectionality, however in practice they are not specifically addressing issues of LBT women; their issues are hidden or not covered in enough detail. The women's movement needs to be more inclusive of LBT women.
- There is homophobia in the women's movement which obstructs intersectionality.
- Issues with categorizing and recognising LGBT women – that's why Mitini is focusing on in depth research on how to understand the LBT community.
- LBT women face abuse when they come out and it can lead to death
- There is a need for shelters/safe homes for LBT women but Mitini does not have funds for these and there aren't any state sponsored shelters for LBT women.
- Difficult to get funding for LBT issues due to lack of research and evidence, and more funding goes to gay men and trans community, and those living with HIV and AIDS.
- There is a need for more documentation of LBT women's experiences, including of violence.

### **(ii) Women with disabilities**

Evidence suggests that women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience violence and abuse because they are discriminated against because of their gender and their disabilities. As set out in a What Works Evidence Review in 2017, women with disabilities are at least twice as likely as non-disabled women to be survivors of rape, sexual abuse and intimate partner violence. Girls with disabilities are more likely to experience physical and sexual violence than boys with disabilities.<sup>31</sup>

Human Rights Watch report that many factors contribute to this heightened risk of violence, including limitations in physical mobility, communication barriers, isolation, and common myths that persons

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<sup>31</sup> What Works Evidence Review: Preventing violence against women and girls with disabilities in lower and middle income countries, 2017

with disabilities are weak or asexual. In many countries women with disabilities are denied their sexual and reproductive rights through the practice of forced sterilisation.<sup>32</sup>

Mobility International USA (MIUSA) report that women with disabilities are at greater risk of exposure to violence as a result of living in institutions, residences and hospitals and have less credibility when reporting violence occurring in institutions. They report that women with disabilities are more likely to be trapped in abusive relationships because of their dependence on their partners for financial and social reasons.<sup>33</sup> Other organisations, such as ADD International, have highlighted the invisible violence that many women with disabilities face as a result of their intersecting identities.<sup>34</sup> The isolation and invisibility of women with disabilities has been highlighted by our new partner Deaf Women Included.

Women with disabilities who are survivors of violence are less able to access VAWG services. In Ethiopia, the majority of shelters do not provide services to women with disabilities.<sup>35</sup>

### **Deaf Women Included**

Womankind is partnering with Deaf Women Included, a grassroots deaf women's organisation founded in 2014 that works with deaf women from across all provinces in Zimbabwe. We are supporting them on a project to combat violence against women with disabilities, with a particular focus on building the capacity of young women and service providers to prevent and respond to VAWG.

Deaf Women Included have highlighted the following to us:

- Women with disabilities in Zimbabwe face discriminatory social attitudes and stigma. There are deeply held social beliefs that disabled people are the result of a family curse, witchcraft or acts of evil which means disabled people are looked down upon and shunned. In urban areas they often become homeless and in rural areas they are often isolated and hidden from society.
- Mainstream WROs have tended to marginalise their counterparts with disabilities, often believing that issues to do with women and girls with disabilities belong to the disability rights movement and not the mainstream women's rights movement.
- VAWG programming has often not taken disability into account which has resulted in the exclusion of women with disabilities and has deepened violence against women and girls.
- Disability disaggregated data is not readily available in Zimbabwe. However, the World Disability Report estimates that 16.9% of the Zimbabwean population have a disability, many of whom are women.<sup>36</sup> The 2012 National Census reports that 52% of the population are women, which may roughly be taken as indicative of proportion of the number of women with disabilities.

### **(iii) Dalit women**

The intersection of caste and gender based discrimination increases women's risk of violence. Nowhere is this clearer than with the situation of Dalit women in Nepal. The Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) of Nepal, one of Womankind's longstanding partners, works extensively on this issue.

To support their attendance at the HLPF in 2017, FEDO produced a policy briefing outlining the concerns of Dalit women in relation to the SDGs.<sup>37</sup> This paper was produced in consultation with Dalit

<sup>32</sup> Human Rights Watch, *One Billion Forgotten Protecting the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2014 [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related\\_material/2014%20disabilities\\_program\\_low.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/2014%20disabilities_program_low.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> See MIUSA website at <http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/womenshealth>

<sup>34</sup> ADD International, *Disability and Gender-Based Violence. ADD International's Approach. A Learning Paper.* [https://www.add.org.uk/sites/default/files/Gender\\_Based\\_Violence\\_Learning\\_Paper.pdf](https://www.add.org.uk/sites/default/files/Gender_Based_Violence_Learning_Paper.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Draft report UN Women. Assessment on the Availability, Accessibility, Quality and Demand of Rehabilitative and Reintegration Services for Women and Girls Survivors of Violence in Ethiopia.

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/en/](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/)

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/briefings/fedo-lobby-document.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

women's groups and highlights the multiple discriminations faced by Dalit women and their increased risk of violence: "Dalit women suffer from triple discrimination as oppressed by the so-called high caste people (which affects both male and female Dalits), oppressed by the design of the Hindu patriarchal system and oppressed by Dalit male counterparts. We face the problems led by Untouchability, caste and gender-based discrimination in our daily lives, and excluded from both the public and private spheres."

The report highlights that Dalit women are excluded from social, political and economic life and experience high rates of gender-based violence and physical, sexual and psychological abuse, and are at risk of trafficking and child marriage. Dalit women are at risk of unsafe migration (and migrant status can create another level of discrimination). FEDO research in 2013 found that 30.7% of Dalit women are discriminated on a daily basis, which rises to 50.6% in the eastern part of Nepal. Forms of violence include physical and sexual, verbal and psychological abuse, harassment...and socio-cultural practices such as child marriage, abuse from in-laws, dowry-related violence, polygamy, Chhaupadi (the practice of keeping menstruating women in a small shed away from the main house), accusations of witchcraft and trafficking.

#### **(iv) Young women**

Some of Womankind's partners have also highlighted that young women can feel excluded from the more mainstream women's movement. In Kenya, Womankind is supporting young feminist activists in solidarity and partnership with a range of national WROs and FEMNET, the Africa Women's Development and Communication Network.

In *More than a roof* Womankind documented the work of two of our partners providing holistic VAWG services, particularly shelters, in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.<sup>38</sup> In carrying out research for the report we were told of difficulties pregnant girls and young women face in accessing VAWG services. In Zimbabwe we were told that girl survivors of violence (under 18) may go to a children's home but girls who are pregnant cannot access these services. Musasa, our partner, estimated that about 70% of rape survivors coming to its shelter (the only women-only shelter for VAWG survivors in Zimbabwe) were pregnant, with a large number being under 18. In Ethiopia, some of the estimated 12 shelters do not provide services to pregnant women. Our partner AWSAD runs women-only shelters, with the largest age group being between 11 and 18 years old – 57% of survivors AWSAD supports are below the age of 18, many of whom are pregnant. The majority of these come from communities outside Addis and came to the city to work as maids or were trafficked.<sup>39</sup>

Our partners' evidence is supported by evidence emerging from the What Works programme, which has shown that programming with adolescents is crucial to address the heightened risks faced by this age group, including safety in public spaces and increased risk of sexual violence.<sup>40</sup> However, there is limited evidence as to the types of interventions that work for adolescent girls in VAWG prevention.

#### **(v) Geographical location – rural and urban women**

In 2017 the Zimbabwe Women's Lawyers Association (ZWLA), supported by Womankind and Comic Relief, published *Routes To Justice: Response to Violence Against Women*. This research report found that women in rural areas face additional disadvantages in accessing justice. They travel long

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<sup>38</sup> Womankind, Musasa and AWSAD, *More than a roof: Documenting the work of specialist women's organisations providing holistic shelter services in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe*, July 2016. <https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/reports/womankind-report-more-than-a-roof.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

<sup>39</sup> Association for Women's Sanctuary and Development (2014) *Lessons Learnt: Building Safer and Supportive Communities for Women and Girls in Ethiopia*.

<sup>40</sup> What Works Evidence Review: Intersections of violence against women and violence against children, 2017

distances to report cases and even longer to go to courts, as these services are centralised, there is poor transport infrastructure, and women have to pay to get to court.<sup>41</sup>

The ZWLA Court Watch Report 2015–2016 on the Effectiveness of Protection Orders highlights the challenge survivors face in accessing courts. It notes that for women travelling from rural areas, the situation is dire as they need to cover transport costs. On average, a woman would need US\$6 to pay to go to and from court if seeking help at Murewa, Rusape and Chitungwiza courts. The further the women are from the urban centres, the more costly it becomes for them to access the court. After they make this long journey, there are very few to no safe houses for survivors, forcing them to go back and stay in the same house with the perpetrator. This exposes them to repeated abuse or influence to drop the case. For those who try to overcome these challenges, they have to contend with an overnight stay at the magistrate courts as their cases continue, without money to pay for overnight accommodation.

#### **(vi) Women in prison**

In Zimbabwe Womankind is partnering with the Female Prisoners Support Trust (Femprist), a WRO which works with women in prison providing counselling and support for rehabilitation and reintegration. Femprist have told us that:

- The majority of women they support in prisons in Zimbabwe are survivors of violence, particularly domestic violence, and that for many women their experience of violence contributes to their offending and imprisonment.
- Poverty plays an important role as most of the women they work with are financially dependent on their husbands and they end up committing petty crimes to feed their children.
- Young women commit infanticide and abortion because their families and partners reject them upon falling pregnant. In some cases women are incarcerated for drug dealing and stock theft which their male counterparts are rarely incarcerated for.
- Deeply entrenched patriarchy, social norms and gender roles result in the underreporting of violence in Zimbabwe as VAWG survivors face stigma and discrimination. In addition, women are more likely to be held culpable for their actions and punished more severely by the justice system, even if their actions may have been in self-defense.
- Harsh prison living conditions further discriminate and disadvantage women in prisons, affecting their dignity, self-respect and health and wellbeing, and ultimately their rights. Women prisoners are at high risk of abuse and violence in prison, including from prison staff.
- Rehabilitation systems are not gender-sensitive and many women return to abuse relationships on release, continuing the cycle of violence.<sup>42</sup>

Womankind is currently supporting Femprist on a proposal to carry out further research into the living conditions in prisons in Zimbabwe and the barriers to effective reintegration systems. This evidence will be used to advocate for the prison system to address the specific needs of women and their situations.<sup>43</sup>

Femprist's evidence is supported by a growing body of global evidence which highlights the discrimination and violence that women in prison face. In particular, reports by Penal Reform International, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Prisons Report Trust in the UK have highlighted the discrimination and disadvantage women prisoners face and the link between violence and their offending and imprisonment.<sup>44</sup> Women in prison have different needs to men

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/reports/zwla-action-research-on-women's-access-to-justice.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> This evidence come from dialogues that Femprist have with female prisoners nearing release and with ex prisoners.

<sup>43</sup> This project is not yet funded. For more information about Femprist please see <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2015/09/giving-life-back-to-female-prisoners/>

<sup>44</sup> See in particular: *Penal Reform International, Women in prison: incarcerated in a man's world* <https://www.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/brf-03-2008-women-in-prison-en.pdf>; *Penal Reform International and Thailand Institute of Justice, Global Prison*

however criminal justice systems, including prisons, routinely overlook the specific needs and situations of women, and prisons are generally designed for men. The circumstances of women's offending are different: many women are in prison as a result of discrimination and deprivation, are imprisoned for criminal activities that are non-violent and the majority of women prisoners have experienced violence themselves.

## **Question 2: What is the evidence on how to prevent VAWG for the most marginalised/excluded groups of women and girls? What is the strength of this evidence base?**

As set out earlier in this briefing, interventions to address gender inequality and prevent VAWG for the most marginalised and excluded groups should be rooted in a feminist intersectional approach. VAWG prevention measures need to dismantle patriarchy and address structural barriers to gender inequality and the achievement of women's rights. "Social change that redresses power imbalances and structural inequality between women and men is therefore vital for reducing and ultimately eliminating VAWG."<sup>45</sup>

### ***Limited evidence and disaggregated data***

As evidenced from the What Works programme 2014 Evidence Review there is limited evidence on the types of interventions that would be most relevant for particularly marginalised groups of women and girls. It also found that, as some forms of violence are perpetrated by a particular sub groups of men it is important to 'design specific interventions targeted at high-risk youth, who will likely require very different approaches to the general population.'<sup>46</sup> However, the What Works programme has generated further evidence in this area, including on preventing VAWG against women and girls with disabilities, and also the intersection of VAW and violence against children. Through our new more diverse partnerships Womankind will be able to contribute to this growing evidence base.

Womankind research into the role of WROs in VAWG prevention highlights that the lack of core funding for WROs has an impact on the ability of WROs to measure the impact of interventions on prevalence of VAWG.<sup>47</sup>

There appears to be a general lack of disaggregated data on the specific experiences of different marginalised and excluded groups. For example, the Human Rights Trust has highlighted a lack of systematic attention, research and disaggregated data collection on the specific experiences of lesbians and bisexual women.

### ***Defining marginalisation and exclusion***

In terms of identifying and defining 'marginalised' and 'excluded' women and girls it is important that this work is led by local WROS as it needs to be context specific and not based on donor, government or INGO assumptions. It is also important to look beyond categories of women and look at the different types of discrimination and oppression that women face during their life. Finally, it is important to recognise the fact that women can move in and out of certain marginalised groups and develop additional social identities during their life course (for example pregnant women may find it

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*Trends 2018* [https://www.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PRI\\_Global-Prison-Trends-2018\\_EN\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PRI_Global-Prison-Trends-2018_EN_WEB.pdf); UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Non-discrimination and the protection of persons with increased vulnerability in the administration of justice, in particular in situations of deprivation of liberty and with regard to the causes and effects of overincarceration and overcrowding*, 21 August 2017; Prison Reform Trust "There's a reason we're in Trouble: Domestic abuse as a driver to women's offending", 2017. [http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Domestic\\_abuse\\_report\\_final\\_lo.pdf](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Domestic_abuse_report_final_lo.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> *Turning Promises into Progress Report* Gender and Development Network, Gender Action for Peace and Security, UK SRHR Network, London, March 2015 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/536c4ee8e4b0b60bc6ca7c74/t/550ab0f6e4b048091fe0b18d/1426764022144/Turning+Promises+into+Progress+FINAL.pdf>. Womankind contributed to this report.

<sup>46</sup> What works to prevent violence against women and girls? Evidence Review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls (Annex F). June 2014. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-works-in-preventing-violence-against-women-and-girls-review-of-the-evidence-from-the-programme>

<sup>47</sup> Womankind November 2014



harder to walk and therefore have a temporary disability using the Washington Group questions; disability can be as result of violence or ageing etc).

### ***The crucial role of women's rights organisations***

Womankind's *Prevention is Possible* report, based on three linked research studies in Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia, found a number of key factors in the effectiveness of VAWG prevention interventions:

- Implementation by local women's rights organisations;
- Using rights-based approaches that empower women;
- Promoting self-led change to support women;
- Long-term commitment to communities;
- Gaining the full support of the traditional and religious leadership from the onset;
- The presence of the intermediary community-level groups, composed of community members;
- Use of a community-based approach including men and women.<sup>48</sup>

Whilst the report did not have a specific objective around evidencing the impact of the interventions on the most marginalised and excluded women, a number of learnings can be taken from this in relation to increased difficulties in accessing interventions and in reporting violence. In particular:

- It is a challenge to reach all members of the community, outside the specific intervention, particularly reaching marginalised women, youth who leave the community (for example, for work) and new members. Siiqquee's programme in Ethiopia also found that those who were extremely marginalised were unlikely to be able to access a community conversation or self-help group. For these women reporting violence was still not an option. Siiqquee successfully engaged with marginalised and poorest women but this put a strain on its limited resources.
- In Ghana there were a significant number of women who remained silent about the abuse they were suffering. Some community members did not know about the COMBAT team (Community Based Action teams who carried out crisis intervention and community sensitisation), those new to the community or who spend time out for schooling or work, particularly young people.

### ***Other useful resources***

- In 2016 a group of feminist academics, activities and practitioners from across the world held a convening and reported that there is "a failure to link acts of sexual or physical violence to the broader context of intersecting oppressions of race, class, patriarch and post-colonial power. Thus limiting the ways that women and girls can be centred in conversations about their own lives, as they face marginalisation and exclusion across different sphere of their lives."<sup>49</sup> They highlighted the shrinking space for WROs, movements and initiatives that are women-centred, women-led and rights drive, and the need to reassert a feminist understanding of VAWG.
- Oxfam's briefing note on *Re-Politicising Intersectionality* which looks at how taking an intersectional approach can help INGOs better support women's movements.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Womankind 2017

<sup>49</sup> *Patriarchy, Power and Keeping Women and Girls Centered in Addressing VAWG in Humanitarian and Development Settings: A critical conversation between feminist academics, activists and practitioners*, June 2016. Report produced by members of COFEM who attended the convening: <http://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/COFEM-Final-Report-March-2016-Convening-181028.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/re-politicising-intersectionality-how-an-intersectional-perspective-can-help-in-594583>