

What is the discussion series?

The discussion series is a peer to peer monthly sharing and learning event across UK Aid Direct and UK Aid Match grant holders. Based on grant holder topic requests, each month two grant holders who have relevant experience on the topic will present their work and answer questions from fellow grant holders, downstream partners, and other attendees.



ActionAid

The central thread to ActionAid (AA)'s work is to be guided by a women's rights and women's-based approach, facilitating the agency and leadership of women. AA's work is inherently committed to shifting power, and guided by communities.

ActionAid (AA) explained their work in refugee camps in Bangladesh, which ensure that women-friendly spaces are kept open as a priority so survivors can have access to psychosocial support and relevant resources. AA have also set up a community-led sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) monitoring and referral intervention, with links to legal advisors and relevant authorities. AA's partner in Palestine conducted a women-led participatory needs-based assessment, leading to the setting up of toll-free helplines, distributing food and hygiene items, and providing counselling and legal advice to survivors. In Zimbabwe, AA's partner Jekesa Pfungwa Vulingqondo have used roadshows & radio shows to disseminate information and used bulk SMS system to spread awareness of relevant services to women and girls.



Women's Empowerment Link

Women's Empowerment Link invests in empowering women and girls to realise their full potential, worth and strength politically, socially and economically through advocating for their human and social justice rights.

As COVID-19 became a national health priority in Kenya, survivors have not been able to access medical workers, aid, and health forensic experts which are crucial to SGBV support and justice processes. WEL have continued to implement their community-based approaches to raise awareness and have incorporated information and communication technologies into their methods, such as using social media and radio, to disseminate information throughout the pandemic. WEL have continued to work with the police and other relevant institutions to strengthen stakeholders' responses to SGBV and IPV. WEL has widely publicized the National Police toll-free, 24-hour 7-day hotline which allows survivors to find support and report their case directly to the police. WEL has partnered with the national security committees to embed SGBV prevention into the current national counter COVID-19 campaign.

Key takeaways from the session

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had an undeniable effect on SGBV and IPV, with incident rates increasingly sharply.
- As the pandemic and movement restrictions continue, the effects on people's mental health, as well as social & economic security, suggests that the incidences of SGBV and IPV will continue to increase exponentially.
- Both WEL and AA advocate for a survivors-led approach to SGBV and IPV responses.
- Working with health staff is vital to make them aware of the increased risk of SGBV and IPV and how to identify and support such cases appropriately.
- Bulk SMS and radio messaging have been effective for both WEL and AA as a way to raise awareness, stay in contact with women and girls, and to spread information on relevant services.
- Community engagement for both awareness-raising as well as SGBV and IPV identification has proven to be an effective approach, for example, with radio shows.

Resources

- The free National Police hotline to report SGBV cases in Kenya, publicised by WEL, is **0800730999**
- [ActionAid's 'Safety with Dignity: A women-led community-based protection approach in humanitarian and protracted crises'](#)
- [COVID-19 ActionAid's response to the surge in violence report](#)
- [COVID-19 A women's led response](#)
- [Gender-based violence area of responsibility](#)
- [FCDO VAWG Helpdesk | Run by Social Development Direct](#)
- [The impact of COVID-19 on women - UN Women](#)

More learning resources from the Discussion Series and from UK Aid Direct can be found on our learning pages