



Department
for International
Development



DFID Management Response

08 June 2016

DFID Management Response to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact's Learning Review on: "DFID's efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls, May 2016"

One in three women worldwide will experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most systemic, widespread human rights violations worldwide, and a key priority for the UK. Evidence shows that this violence is preventable. However, the high prevalence of VAWG, with its roots in gender inequality, makes it a pervasive and complex challenge to overcome. DFID is proud to be a world leader in tackling violence against women and girls, ending FGM and combating early and forced marriage. DFID will continue to put the rights and well-being of girls and women at the heart of its development programme, helping millions around the world to build a future free from violence and the fear of violence.

DFID welcomes this first learning review, and is grateful to ICAI for their constructive and insightful approach. In giving a green rating to DFID's efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls, ICAI has recognised the UK's global leadership on this agenda as well as the scale of the challenge that remains. DFID notes the report's recommendations, which will help shape future practice and policy on VAWG.

International Leadership

DFID welcomes ICAI's recognition of its strong commitment to raising the global profile of the VAWG agenda and to using the aid programme to tackle VAWG in developing countries. The Secretary of State for International Development has made clear her determination to place ending VAWG at the heart of UK development, meeting the government's manifesto commitment to "continue to lead efforts to tackle violence against women and girls, end FGM and combat early and forced marriage, both at home and abroad." Baroness Verma, in her role as Ministerial Champion for Tackling VAWG Overseas, has further raised UK ambition on this agenda.

DFID's work is set within and helps to deliver the UK's Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (2016 to 2020). This includes driving and supporting implementation of the UN Goal to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and eliminating all forms of VAWG and harmful practices such as FGM and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

DFID welcomes ICAI's assessment that the UK has provided strong leadership at key global events and in shaping global policy frameworks on VAWG, including at Girl Summit in 2014 and the agreement of the Global Goals in 2015. Changing deeply held

norms will take time, but momentum generated in the last two years is delivering significant progress and the UK will stay the course. DFID currently supports programmes to end child marriage and FGM in more than 24 countries. Since Girl Summit 2014, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has been banned in the Gambia and Nigeria. Just in the last few months since ICAI's review, Nepal has hosted its own Girl Summit, launching a programme to end child marriage by 2030. His Royal Highness Prince Henry of Wales opened Nepal's Girl Summit and called on both men and women to speak out about the barriers to opportunity facing girls and young women around the world, including child marriage. Girl Summits were also held in Uganda, Bangladesh and Ethiopia, as well as an African Union regional event in Zambia.

DFID agrees with ICAI that continued leadership, with the Secretary of State and the UK Ministerial Champion for Tackling VAWG Overseas at the helm, is critical to drive global progress to end VAWG. Following consultation on the role and using learning from this ICAI Review, the Ministerial Champion has committed to build political will at home and overseas to utilise the emerging global evidence base on VAWG and to create strategic partnerships with global leaders on VAWG, including through a set of VAWG-focused country visits, as set out in a recent Written Ministerial Statement.

The UK is building on its reputation as a world leader on gender equality and VAWG in emergencies following on from the success of the Call to Action on protecting girls and women in emergencies in 2013. At the World Humanitarian Summit the UK announced an expansion of the VAWG programme in Syria with UNFPA. Women are also often excluded from conflict resolution and prevention and DFID is continuing its efforts to ensure they are fully included as set out in the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (2014-17).

Scaling Up Programmes to Eliminate VAWG

ICAI has recognised the breadth and quality of DFID's VAWG programmes, including in India and Ethiopia where the Commissioners conducted case studies.

ICAI identified scaling up as the key future challenge for DFID's VAWG work and called on DFID to build further its understanding of how to mainstream VAWG interventions without compromising quality and value for money. The Commissioners recognised that scaling up VAWG interventions presents a particular challenge as the global evidence base on VAWG is just emerging and systematic international attention has only recently been brought to the problem. They also recognised that DFID is playing a leading role in this.

Scaling up VAWG interventions to a level commensurate with global need will take time, as ICAI have noted. Research, learning, good data, mainstreaming across sectoral programmes and effective partnerships with multilateral, bilateral and CSO partners, all underpinned by strong political leadership, are the building blocks to achieve scale. DFID is confident that it has those blocks in place and can deploy them with increasing impact in the future.

DFID is building understanding of what works at scale and seeking to maximise learning on VAWG from existing programmes. DFID supports ICAI's assessment that DFID's theory of change on VAWG is an effective tool for partners and country offices, and will revisit it as further evidence emerges from the What Works research programme.

DFID will invest in additional capacity for its VAWG Helpdesk central programme to better understand and identify demand factors for support on VAWG and to support DFID programmes to mainstream VAWG. In doing this, DFID will build on the excellent practice highlighted by ICAI in DFID Malawi, involving a country-level analysis of local context and opportunities to tackle VAWG throughout the portfolio, in parallel with focussed VAWG prevention programmes.

Scaling up efforts to eliminate VAWG requires global action and leadership. DFID is continuing to demonstrate leadership internationally, for example, UK support has helped to shape the future direction of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, including on monitoring and evaluation and data. DFID will maintain this engagement and continue to seek the most effective global response to prevent VAWG.

Learning

ICAI has asked DFID to explain how it will step up learning from its VAWG portfolio and improve uptake of learning and evidence into the design and implementation of sectoral programmes. Through the 'How DFID Learns' project, following an ICAI review in 2014, DFID is improving the way it learns and shares best practice. This includes embedding guidance on lesson learning into DFID's operating procedures (Smart Rules), staff training, and improved guidance on applying learning practices before, during and after programme implementation. This project will offer important insights for building learning and capability on VAWG.

DFID's VAWG Helpdesk central programme has developed a series of guidance notes on how to mainstream VAWG into sectoral programmes, including health, education and economic development. A series of advisory meetings, following on from the recent Social Norms and VAWG guidance note, are planned and demonstrate DFID's commitment to scaling up learning on VAWG. Building on these sector focussed guidance notes, the VAWG team is developing and offering resources to strengthen the capability of disciplinary specialists in addressing VAWG, including promoting enhanced attention to the issue of prevention. As ICAI has identified, DFID is using its VAWG community of practice to develop and share learning, including through the quarterly evidence digests produced by the VAWG Helpdesk. DFID will increase capacity in the VAWG Helpdesk to support gathering and sharing lessons across the Department, including on scaling up and value for money.

DFID welcomes the learning frontiers set out in ICAI's report, as they offer useful insight on the gaps in global evidence on VAWG prevention and future direction for global learning and practice.

Research

ICAI has recognised the Department's ambition in building a global knowledge base in this complex field. Through the What Works to Prevent Violence research and innovation programme, DFID is pioneering a combination of high policy ambition with world class research on VAWG prevention in order to learn lessons for scaling up UK and international support to the implementation of Global Goal 5.2. Evidence reviews from What Works are shaping new DFID programming, including DFID Ghana's new £15 million adolescent girls Gender Based Violence prevention programme.

ICAI has identified that, "Having positioned itself as a global leader on funding VAWG research, DFID will need to focus on disseminating its research results to help guide the actions of its own and others' programme managers." DFID appreciates and understands that challenge and has been developing a specific research uptake and stakeholder engagement strategy for the What Works programme to ensure wide engagement that can contribute to the best possible uptake of research findings at country, regional and global levels. One important mechanism for this is the Independent Advisory Board of What Works, chaired by the World Health Organisation, and with representatives from UN Women, UNICEF, the World Bank and partner policy-makers and advocates. Another is the national advisory groups at country level engaging national policy-makers, researchers and civil society. DFID will continue to seek to consolidate existing opportunities and identify new channels in which to maximise the dissemination and uptake of learning from its investments.

Data

ICAI has asked DFID to set a path to including VAWG more fully in its data collection and measurement systems. DFID recognises that as its VAWG portfolio matures, capturing data will be crucial to understanding what works and provides value for money at scale. That is why DFID championed the introduction of a VAWG 'marker' by the OECD-DAC to better track donor funding on VAWG. DFID has already made changes to its own systems so that it can report annually to the OECD-DAC about VAWG spending. The DAC marker is a critical accountability tool for all donors, including in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5.2.

DFID agrees with ICAI's assessment that "the potential economic and social returns to reducing VAWG are significant." The Department is linking What Works' costings guidelines to research on economic evaluations of VAWG prevention interventions.