

# Executive Summary

## FUNDING ETHICALLY

BETTER FUNDING FOR  
VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN AND VIOLENCE  
AGAINST CHILDREN  
RESEARCH IN LOWER  
AND MIDDLE-INCOME  
COUNTRIES

JANUARY 2022



# Executive Summary

## I Background

The Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) has, over the last 12 months, been involved in several processes that address the issue of more and better funding for research on violence against women in all their diversity and violence against all children in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). For SVRI, 'better' funding for research is grounded in feminist principles, acknowledges, and addresses power dynamics, involves honest, transformative relationships between donors and grantees and creates accessible and equitable processes that support priority driven research in LMICs conducted by LMIC researchers.

Throughout 2020 we co-facilitated in a participatory process that culminated in the launch of the [global shared research agenda \(GSRA\)](#), which will be used to advocate for more resources to be put towards building the knowledge base and addressing key research gaps in the field of violence against women (VAW). Simultaneous work is being carried out to identify streams of funding that can be utilised to resource this research agenda and analyse key issues with existing funding mechanisms. These two pieces of work deal with what needs to be funded and where the money is for this.<sup>1</sup> We hope the guidance note for funders on ethical and coordinated funding for research on VAW and violence against children (VAC) in LMICs - will be a contribution to advocacy on how resources need to be allocated.

---

<sup>1</sup> The tracking funding report will be launched early in 2022.

## II How was this guidance developed

Multiple, complementary methods were used to create this guidance note which was developed over several months using a multi-step process which included:

### a) Scoping review of the available literature

### b) Consultative processes with key stakeholders:

Seven focus group discussions (including two in Spanish) were conducted with stakeholders including funders, researchers, and practitioners working in the field of VAW and VAC research

### c) Online Survey:

Based on findings from the FGDs and identification of key themes, an online survey tool was created. This remained on Survey Monkey for the month of September 2021.

### d) Data analysis:

Analysis of key themes from the scoping review, the FGDs as well as responses from the online surveys, enabled us to get a clear idea of fundamental principles that should guide ethical funding processes.

### e) Oversight and strategic guidance:

The project was overseen by an expert advisory group who met regularly throughout the process and provided strategic guidance and peer review to ensure the relevance and utility of the guidance.

## III Key approach and principles highlighted by the guidance

Based on learnings from the SVRI's own [research grant making](#) program that is imbued with feminist principles, a core value for the current guidance is that **tenets of a feminist approach** must be grounded into the establishment of a grant-making programme, the selection processes, partnership between the grant maker and grantee partner and the research itself. It is important that VAW/VAC research be informed by feminist praxis so that the research process:

- **Centralises the experiences and voices of research participants**, thereby ensuring that programming on violence is based on lived experiences, desires and priorities of women and children
- **Forefronts discussions around complex and unequal power relations** (funders, researchers, practitioners, and activists) and the complexities therein and this empowers research participants as co-producers of knowledge.<sup>2</sup>
- **Highlights the need to use creative ways and alternative methodologies** and approaches that are designed to include the most vulnerable and least visible communities.

<sup>2</sup> Loksee Leung, Stephanie Miedema, Xian Warner, Sarah Homan & Emma Fulu (2019) Making feminism count: integrating feminist research principles in large-scale quantitative research on violence against women and girls, *Gender & Development*, 27:3, 427-447, DOI: [10.1080/13552074.2019.1668142](https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2019.1668142)

In addition, **four key principles** were highlighted through the consultative processes as being central to ethical funding for VAW and VAC research in LMICs. These were:

1. **Decolonising knowledge and methods of learning:** Decolonising knowledge as a principle applies to rethinking the questions of what constitutes evidence and expertise, how knowledge is created, whose voices are heard, and whose data counts. Investment into practice-based knowledge is important in VAW/VAC research because this type of knowledge can help to understand the nuances of why certain programmes work or do not by accessing and paying attention to how strategies are playing out on the ground and accounting for shifting power relations, behaviours, and norms.
2. **Creating equity in research partnerships:** Equity can be talked about from multiple perspectives including localisation; diversity and inclusion; and research translation, authorship, and dissemination. Key issues include ensuring understanding of local country contexts, taking an intersectional approach, supporting work incubated and led by LMIC researchers and involvement of local researchers and implementing partners from the beginning of the research process including in setting the research agenda, questions and methodology.
3. **Ensuring funding is flexible, adaptive and long term:** For researchers and implementing partners in LMICs flexibility within existing funding and programmatic arrangements is critical to allow partners, to adapt their project, services, and activities to changing contexts and to extenuating circumstances that might arise. This approach allows for innovation to truly take place and ensures space and freedom to experiment, document, innovate and learn from failures.
4. **Transforming the funder grantee relationship:** Funders and grantees are both very aware of the importance of addressing power and building equity in philanthropic relationships. There is increasing knowledge about and advocacy for ‘trust-based philanthropy’, described as “an approach to giving that addresses the inherent power imbalances between funders, non-profits, and the communities they serve. At its core, trust-based philanthropy is about redistributing power—systemically, organizationally, and interpersonally—in service of a healthier and more equitable non-profit ecosystem.”<sup>3</sup>

---

3 Trust Based Philanthropy Project. Trust Based Philanthropy- An Overview. 2021.

## IV Putting principles into practice

The guidance provides practical suggestions to bring the above principles to life. **This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of funder considerations for all funding proposals and in all contexts.** For instance, short notice calls which yield rapidly available, shorter-term funding might be important in acute humanitarian settings, but this is not advocated for in this guidance. The considerations /points of action for each stage of the research process are intended to be read alongside the useful references which are distributed through the text as well as the consolidated list of useful resources in section VII. The key stages that are considered are:



[Click here to see Putting Principles into Practice- Seven Stages!](#)

[Click here for the full report](#)