

SVRI sexual
violence
research
initiative

Regather Rebuild Rejuvenate

**SVRI Annual Report
2021/2022**

Championing research for
a safer, kinder, more
egalitarian world

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Foreword

*Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.
“For a New Beginning” @JohnODonohue*

We began 2021 on a tentative note, gingerly looking around every corner to decide when and if we could finally exhale. But repeated lockdowns, discriminatory travel bans targeting low and middle-income countries (LMICs), the emergence of new COVID-19 variants and a polarising vaccine rollout took their toll. Through it all we dug our heels even more firmly into our commitments to support our members and remain unwaveringly accountable to our donors. We did this even as we maintained a certain agility to respond to changes and delays in project implementation brought about by the continued restrictions.

By February 2022 there was some semblance of an exhale. We had survived another year with outstanding successes, and, to borrow a well-worn phrase that speaks to our very nature - we have the evidence to prove it - arising out of an external mid-term evaluation of the implementation of our strategic plan 2020-2024. The evaluation revealed we have achieved excellent outcomes under all our four strategic goals and are on track for realising all planned outcomes by 2024. I am deeply appreciative and in awe of the SVRI team, members, and donors for the many outstanding achievements made during the year.

Our 2021 tracking funding study for violence against women (VAW) research highlighted that while, unsurprisingly, the VAW space is under-funded, VAW research is particularly underfunded. These findings resonate with those from the Global Shared Research Agenda (GSRA) - another highlight of 2021. The GSRA was developed in a highly participatory, inclusive and iterative process - with over 500 people from all around the world involved in the identification of VAW research priorities for the field. We will actively be using the GSRA to advocate for increased investment in high-quality and ethical research in these settings, guided by our newly published guidelines for ethical funding of VAW research.

The immense loss, grief, illness and uncertainty suffered as a result of the pandemic is a stark reminder that we must not only become more aware of the mental and emotional impact of stress but actively programme in response to this. In 2021 we initiated a project to advance staff-care, wellness, and resilience within our organisation and across our network. We are excited to support the growth of a kinder, more compassionate VAW and VAC research and practice community, equipped with greater access to tools, information and evidence.

Our plans for SVRI Forum 2022 in Mexico are taking shape and the excitement is palpable. We hope to see you all there!

2021 hopefully taught us ‘to find ease in risk’ and that the lessons learned during this year help us see a new world awaiting us.

It’s time to regather, rebuild and rejuvenate.

Elizabeth Dartnall
SVRI Executive Director



Key Highlights: 2021 In Focus

It all **ADDS UP** to greater focus and increased resources for research on VAW & VAC in LMICs

\$980,000

amount allocated to research grants for 2022



The Sexual Violence Research Podcast was

LAUNCHED

and 6 podcasts published in 2021

450

no. of times the new SVRI podcast was downloaded



8,000+

currently SVRI membership

800+

the number of delegates we expect to welcome at the 2022 SVRI Forum in Mexico



a record breaking number

1,190

of abstracts submitted for presentation at SVRI Forum 2022.

over

1,115

no. of requests the SVRI Help Desk received between Mar 2021-Feb 2022

7

no. of new grants for 2022



First-ever Global Shared Research Agenda on VAW was launched



1

1

Shared Research Agenda on VAW & VAC for Latin-America and the Caribbean launched



43

no. of webinars we held or participated in

35

no. of blogs published between April - Dec 2021



282,121

no. of visits to the SVRI website between Mar 2021-Feb 2022



the % increase in the number of

610%

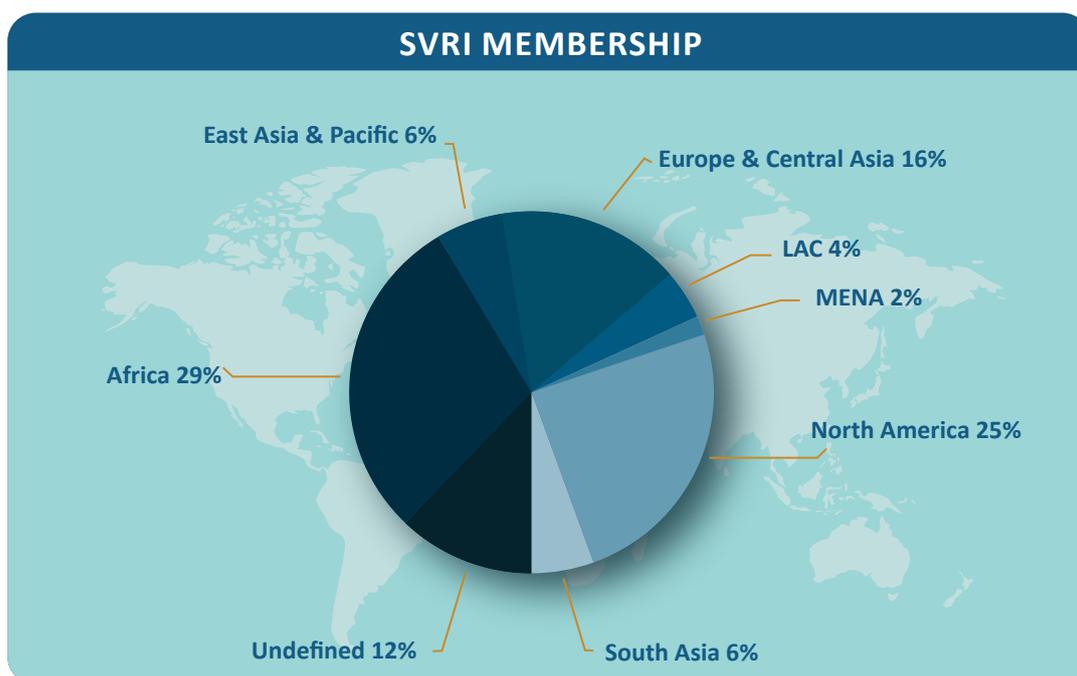
followers on our LinkedIn page in one year



Our Story

Building a more robust, kinder field

With over 8000 members across 148 countries, we're the world's largest network on research on violence against women and violence against children.



We feel strongly that VAW and VAC prevention and response efforts must be rooted in research that has been ethically and robustly conceptualised and conducted. The evidence must then become firmly entrenched in policy, practice, and programmes. We adopt a deliberate and particular focus on low and middle-income countries (LMICs) to address the power imbalance and resource inequalities that researchers in these regions face.

We employ innovative strategies and harness global energies around four key strategic areas:



Our Lean, Yet Flourishing Team

We strongly believe that for our team to flourish we must actively embed empathy and collective care into our daily work – it is part of our secret sauce - and by doing so, our small, compassionate team catalyses great change among the people with whom we work, and beyond. 2021 saw us beginning to integrate collective care and compassion more purposefully into our work.

Our lean yet flourishing team is made up of:

- **Our Core Team:** Which includes an Executive Director, a Director of Operations, a Grants and Capacity Strengthening Manager, an Administration and Knowledge Manager, and a Partnerships and Forums Specialist. A group of wonderful consultants provide us with additional technical guidance and support.
- **SVRI Board of Directors and Leadership Council:** To ensure our work continues to build the field, we depend on the sterling strategic guidance of our Board of Directors and Leadership Council – all of whom are highly accomplished and passionate individuals from around the world.
- **Strategic Partners:** Over 200 key strategic partners including funders, global, regional, and local feminist/GBV networks and organisations, universities, research institutions and development partners provide us with additional support and guidance.

Our [Code of Conduct](#) was launched this year.



Building Evidence

The SVRI Research Grant continues to serve as an important resource for researchers in LMICs to generate evidence on the effective prevention and response strategies for VAW and VAC.

The SVRI Research Grant 2022: Knowledge for Action to End VAW and VAC request for proposals - received 345 proposals from all global regions. A rigorous review process resulted in a shortlist of 23 applications of which **7 were awarded a grant, with \$980,000 allocated.**

The successful proposals are for research in China, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Palestine and South Africa/Zimbabwe. The research we are supporting is innovative and imaginative, ranging from building local strategies to reduce trafficking of migrant girls to using artificial intelligence in the prevention of child sexual abuse. We're incredibly excited to witness and support the process and outcomes of these projects and look forward to the relationships these new collaborations will bring. A video of the 2022 grantees cohort is available [here](#).

On a sobering note the large number of proposals received in response to request for proposals illuminates the significant collective need for resources dedicated to the research.

COVID-19: the spanner in research works

The commencement of the [2021 grantees research projects](#) coincided with a new COVID-19 outbreak and mandatory lockdowns worldwide. In addition to project staff being affected by the pandemic **changes to study methods were also needed** as in-person data collection became impossible, Focus group discussions and individual interviews were therefore conducted on platforms such as WhatsApp and Zoom. In many cases these approaches proved possible and successful. In some projects, **the virtual data collected resulted in a lower level of response than expected.** Reasons given for this include the psychological impact of COVID-19 that led to a reduced willingness to engage included online surveys to open or engage with online surveys.

Many delays centred around ethical approval, with the process taking longer than planned and impacting the overall project plan and implementation rate.

Throughout this period, **we consistently created supportive spaces for grantees to discuss the emotional, programmatic, and financial challenges relating to COVID-19.** At the same time there were deliberate efforts to include grantees in SVRI podcasts and events.



A glance back at our grant-making impact across the globe

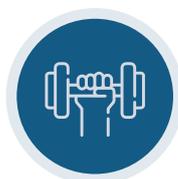
Sharing the evidence produced by grantees from previous cohorts, we published three regional reports on grantees in Africa, Asia and LAC. These reports were insightful as they enabled a reflection on the impact of a selection of grants made in these regions in the past few years.

- An SVRI grant made in Uganda between 2016 and 2018 provided evidence on how parenting programmes that engage mothers and fathers, can address both intimate partner violence and violence against children. Children reported a 30 percent drop in spousal violence, while parents reported a 22 percent improvement. Children also reported a drop of 27 percent in harsh parenting, while parents reported this as a 26 percent drop. The study also provided important data on what makes an intervention acceptable and relevant to local communities. The intervention - [Parenting for Respectability](#) - is now referenced in the National Family Policy, a national document that will run for ten years.
- A grant provided from 2016 to 2018 trained sex workers in Thailand who agreed to act as outreach volunteers to run an intervention, which reached an estimated 655 female sex workers over four months. Police volunteers were trained alongside the outreach volunteers. Evaluation results suggest that sex workers who participated in the 'low-dose, high-frequency' intervention had better knowledge of their human rights (in relation to both police and clients) as well as a better understanding of violence resources, alcohol-related safety behaviour and harmful alcohol use. The intervention is promising and it responds to international recommendations on the need to protect female sex workers from violence and the risk of HIV infection.
- A Mexican based study funded in 2019 examined the potential of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) for intimate partner violence prevention among young people in Mexico City. The study findings were extremely promising and have been used to develop and scale up CSE in schools in Mexico. The study findings have also informed regional initiatives aimed at strengthening training on gender sensitive competencies for educators. These initiatives are led by the Mexican research team's partners in Peru, Ecuador, Guyana and Bolivia, who work on advocacy for comprehensive sexuality education in their countries.

We also published a thematic brief titled [Engaging Men and Boys to prevent VAW](#); having supported such work in Africa and Latin America as well as the Middle East and North African region in the past. And we will continue to support research that builds evidence for accountable, effective and sustainable programmes that engage men in preventing and responding to violence against women in LMICs.

To break the cycle of violence, we believe it necessary to target critical development phases such as pre-conception and conception through early childhood to adolescence. As such, we also published a report on [Starting Young to Prevent VAW](#).

In 2021, these reports were launched in a four-webinar series held in partnership with the World Bank in a series called [Voices from the South: Contributing to the production of evidence on VAW and VAC](#). Experts in the field, including our grantees, attended these webinars.



Strengthening Capacity

A range of new and exciting online courses

To expand our global capacity strengthening efforts, we partnered with three different consortiums to build online courses **on research for impact; VAC measurement and self and collective care for NGOs working on VAW**. This last course is helping us to accelerate our commitment to integrate care, compassion, and kindness into work and the field more broadly. These courses have elicited a significant amount of interest: For example, the research uptake course - 'Pathways to Research for Impact' - alone received over 400 applications for the piloting phase of the course.

Courses will be finalised and run from mid-2022.

Capacity-strengthening is also an important component of our grant making efforts. **Twenty six representatives from eight grantee teams**, along with some of their consortium partners attended the virtual workshop hosted between June and July 2021. This provided a solid grounding on methods and ethics of doing VAW and VAC research whilst also offering a great opportunity for networking and sharing ideas.

Learning and sharing good practice

We truly believe that the best lessons are learned from communicating with each other. As a global network we're accustomed to speaking across oceans and time zones; but the pandemic took this to new levels, a trend we continued in 2021, participating in, partnering on, or hosting 43 webinars. The topics discussed include research for influencing policy and programming, innovative approaches for positive mental health, engaging religious leaders for gender equality, engagement of the private sector to prevent and address gender-based violence, and priorities in child sexual abuse research in LMICS amongst many others. We're grateful to our partners in the VAW and VAC space with whom we collaborated and for amplifying and increasing the global reach of these important discussions.

Making the most of collaborative web-based tools

Between April and December 2021, we published 35 blogs which offered partners an important avenue to present research findings, information, ideas and knowledge in a more accessible way.

We are particularly proud of our newest communication offering: [The Sexual Violence Research Podcast](#). Between November 2021 and February 2022, **we produced and disseminated 6 podcasts which have, at the time of writing, been downloaded 1,606 times.**

Through our Knowledge Exchange Series (a number of COVID-related and non-COVID related think pieces) we published [The power of language and its use in the GBV field](#) in 2021.



Promoting Partnerships and Collaboration

Cancun, here we come!

Excitement is building towards the [SVRI Forum 2022 being held 19-23 September in Cancun Mexico](#). We expect to welcome over 800 delegates. The 5-day Forum is the world's biggest and most popular research and practice event focusing on VAW and VAC and other forms of gender based violence driven by inequality. Over the years it has progressively built a reputation as a space for shared dialogue across disciplines and a diversity of voices.

A helping hand

It remains important that SVRI acts and is seen as an organisation ready and able to assist our members. The SVRI Help Desk is a vehicle through which our members can access information, including materials/resources, sign up to the SVRI Update, share partnership or information requests, seek contacts for colleagues in the field, hear about funding opportunities, job vacancies and many other events and happenings in the field. Between January and December 2021 our help desk received 1,098 requests, with 295 requests in July 2021 alone.

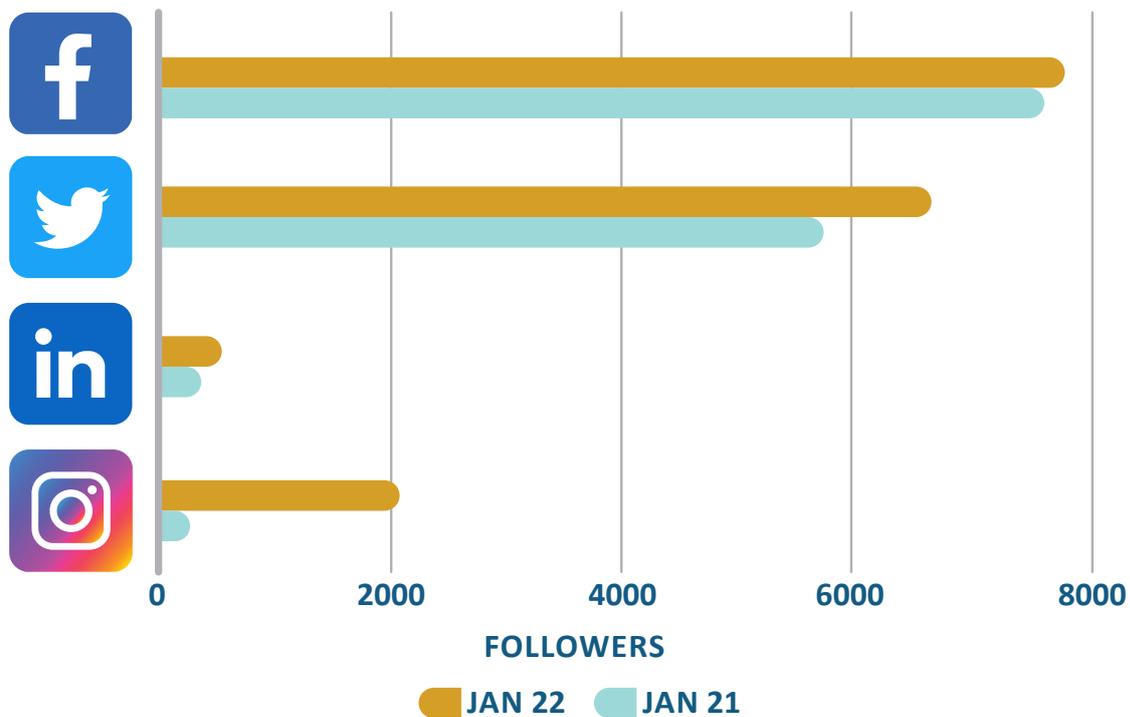
Between March 2021 and February 2022 we prepared and delivered the SVRI Update - a weekly roundup of resources about the latest research, publications, resources, vacancies and grant opportunities relating to VAW and VAC to our 8000 plus global members.

Seeking social relationships not just followers

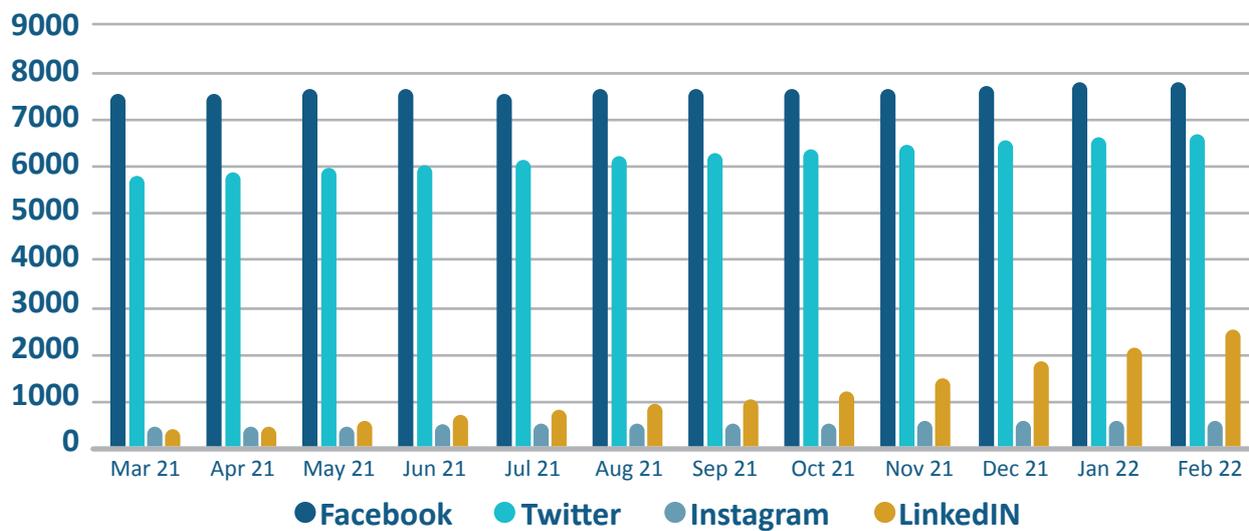
We are getting better at using our social media platforms to more clearly communicate our key messages in trauma informed ways. Our efforts to widen our community and reach more people with information on VAW and VAC prevention and response in LMICs is paying off. In one year, our followings on all our social media platforms increased significantly, with LinkedIn, in particular, experiencing a whopping 565% increase.



SOCIAL MEDIA 2021-2022



SOCIAL MEDIA 2021-2022





Influencing Change

“Donors need to fund research that meets real needs and does not arise from contexts that are far from reality. Decolonize the approaches of this type of generation of knowledge and practices. Stop seeing low- and middle-income countries as “laboratories” for the production of knowledge. Become true allies and impact people to counter the neoliberal colonial system”
(Respondent, Online survey (Spanish), Funding Ethically Project. September 2021)

Donor engagement on good funding practices

We continue to use our strategic position in the VAW and VAC research space to influence donor thinking and funding patterns towards research that is grounded in feminist principles, acknowledges and addresses power dynamics, is priority informed, and involves honest, transformative relationships between donors and grantees. To support this we are developing and disseminating resources for the field to help advocate for more and better resources for research on VAW and VAC in LMICS.

This includes the completion of the study [Tracking funding for research on VAW in LMICs](#). The study provides an insight into funding flows allocated towards research in the field of VAW in LMICs from key donors and via overseas development assistance. Funds going to VAW programming is extremely limited, with even less funding going to finding out what works and what doesn't to strengthen programmes and prevent VAW in LMICs.

We also initiated the Funding Ethically Project this year. This project aims to address the inequity in funding flows between HICs and LMICs, recognises the power imbalances between funders and grantees and the importance partnerships for locally led, priority informed research. The first phase of this project has been the co-production of so that is says the importance of partnerships [guidance for funders on ethical and coordinated funding for research on VAW and VAC in low- and middle-income countries](#).

This work provides irrefutable evidence to donors that the funding ecosystem needs an overhaul and clear guidance on how to shift funding more directly and equitably to researchers working on and in LMICs leading to less duplication, better value for money and contextually relevant research, policy, and practice that is evidence informed.

Research that is conceptualised and led by researchers in LMICs contributes to building a more equitable and sustainable field to end VAW and VAC.



Diversity and inclusion: Modeling new ways to set research priorities

SVRI over the past few years has been collaboratively developing research agendas with multiple voices globally to help guide research expenditure on VAW and VAC.

Advancing knowledge on child sexual abuse

In 2021, we began exploring how to fortify and expand our work on violence against children. This took the form of a scoping review on CSA research in LMICs, a review of SVRI's current and past work on VAC and CSA, and a series of consultative processes with the field and the SVRI Leadership Council and Board using multiple different platforms and methods, asking how we should strengthen and frame our work on VAC and CSA. The consultations showed immense support from the field for SVRI's continued work on VAC, recommending we focus on research on CSA. The consultations revealed that we remain a trusted and respected voice in the field and suggested we leverage our convening power to bring the fields together to jointly co-create priorities, challenge hierarchies of knowledge, introduce feminist approaches and strengthen research on CSA in low- and middle-income countries.

Integrating care and compassion in our work

We believe in living our values and we're committed to applying the learnings from the field to institutionalise staff care policies and practices within our organisation. Well-being and self-care are integrated into our events, partnerships, and organisational culture. In 2021, we initiated a project to advance staff-care, wellbeing and wellness, and resilience within our organization and across our network; by developing an online course module, and hosting a knowledge exchange series focused on self- and collective-care, wellness, and resilience as well as a focus on institutionalising policies and practices that support staff wellbeing and resilience. As part of the knowledge exchange series we published an [evidence review on how wellness and care can be institutionalised in the VAW field in LMICs](#), held a trauma-informed online meditation session for SVRI members, and published a blog on power, privilege and self-care.



Key results of the mid-term evaluation of SVRI's strategic plan (2020-2024)

SVRI is playing a leading role in ensuring increased and strengthened research on different intersections relating to VAW and VAC around the world, particularly in LMICs. (SVRI Mid-Term Evaluation)

An external mid-term evaluation on the implementation of our Strategic Plan was conducted between September 2019 - February 2022. The Evaluation set out to assess our performance against programme outcomes and identify challenges encountered, opportunities discovered, and lessons learned.

The results of the evaluation were glowing and highly complimentary, with the consultants concluding that SVRI is achieving excellent outcomes under all four of our strategic goals and are fully on track to achieve our planned outcomes by the end of 2024.

Specifically, the evaluation noted that SVRI:

- Offers tangible support to the development of researchers' skills in relation to methodology, research methods and research ethics in the complex and highly sensitive context of VAW and VAC.
- Is extremely well-connected and dedicates highly impressive efforts towards ensuring strong and meaningful connections across the field of VAW and VAC.
- Has been leading the way on developing guidelines and best practices on ethical funding for the field - something which is much needed and certainly highly commendable.
- Has a small team that achieved above and beyond what it set out to accomplish during the period 2020-2022, with high levels of professionalism, ethics, and overall excellence.

“Overall, the evaluation found that the SVRI has achieved excellent outcomes under all of its four Goals. The small team has achieved above and beyond what it set out to accomplish during the period 2020-2022, and this with high levels of professionalism, ethics and overall excellence.” (SVRI Mid-Term Evaluation)





Our People

Elizabeth Dartnall

Executive Director

Nomsa Mokhele

Operations Director

Morma Moremi

Administration and Knowledge Manager

Angelica Pino

Grants Manager and Capacity
Strengthening Specialist

Lizle Loots

Partnerships Specialist

Julienne Corboz

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Anik Gevers

Technical Specialist

Ayesha Mago

Technical Specialist

Amy Riley-Powell

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Leila Billing

Technical Specialist

Tilman Loewald

Intern





Our Leadership Council

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(LC Co-chair; Board Chair)

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Alessandra C Guedes

(LC Co-chair)

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Emeritus Professor of Community Medicine, University Sri Jaywardanapura, Sri Lanka

Joanna Włodarczyk

Head of Research, Empowering

Donors and Contributors



Our Board

Dr Chi-Chi Undie

Dr Chi-Chi Undie is Chairperson of the SVRI Board.

Nomsa Mokhele

Nomsa Mokhele is SVRI's Operations Director.

Craig Harding

Craig Harding is a Chartered Accountant and co-director of Insurance Studio Consulting.

Elizabeth Dartnall

Liz is SVRI's Executive Director.