



The UK's Flagship Global Initiative on Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls

The What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale programme is one of the most ambitious and impactful global investments the UK has ever made in gender equality.

As a flagship initiative funded by UK Aid, *What Works* has demonstrated profound leadership on the world stage—pioneering the science of violence prevention, shifting global policy conversations, and catalysing life-changing results for women and girls in over 15 countries. In a time when gender-based violence remains one of the most pervasive human rights abuses globally, this programme has shown the world that violence is preventable, and scalable solutions are possible.

Proven Impact: What Works I (2013–2019)



£25.4 million invested over 6 years in research and innovation to prevent VAWG.



15 countries across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.



15 interventions rigorously evaluated across diverse settings—rural, urban, conflict, and post-conflict.



Up to 50% reductions in violence were achieved within the project lifespan in some settings.



Key findings

- Community mobilisation efforts in Ghana and the DRC demonstrated significant reductions in intimate partner violence. In DRC, religious leaders played an important role in transforming norms and practices.
- Combined gender and economic empowerment approaches in Tajikistan, Nepal, and South Africa resulted in to reductions in violence, improved earnings, and strengthened family relationships.
- Interventions with couples in Zambia and Rwanda showed strong evidence of reduced violence through trauma-informed, skills-based programmes.

Reach and Influence

- Hundreds of thousands of people were directly reached through programmes.
- Policymakers, donors, and governments across the world have used *What Works* evidence to guide national prevention strategies.
- The programme contributed to global benchmarks of “what works” to prevent violence—including influencing WHO guidelines and UN agency programming.

Building on a Legacy: What Works II (2021–2028)

The second phase, *What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale*, is now delivering on the promise of WW1—moving from innovation to sustainable, scalable systems change, with an investment of £67.5 million.

- **Over 50 studies** are planned or underway across Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and beyond, further expanding the evidence base.
- **Scaling up proven interventions** by embedding them in government and NGO systems, including in sectors like health, education and climate change.
- **Testing innovative approaches** to prevent emerging forms of violence, such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- **Leadership of women’s rights organisations** is central, with emphasis on localisation, decolonisation of knowledge, and practice-based learning.
- **Strategic research uptake and communications** are built into the programme to ensure evidence reaches decision-makers.
- Early results show that **changing gender norms is critical to violence prevention**: Over 70% of women in Uganda believe that women deserve to be beaten in some cases, and two-thirds of women in Malawi say that if a woman doesn’t fight back it is not rape.

What Works II is not only continuing the UK’s global leadership on violence prevention—it’s setting the bar for how to drive results at scale with equity, rigour and value for money.