

TACKLING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE WITH TECHNOLOGY

Case Studies of Mobile and Internet Technology
Interventions in Developing Contexts

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REPORT WRITTEN AND EDITED BY: Ceri Hayes

STATT CONTRIBUTORS: Tara Ali, Robia Charles, Zdena Middernacht, Wahid Rahimdil, Jacob Townsend

CASE STUDY CONTRIBUTORS: Jennifer Radloff (*Association for Progressive Communications*), Nancy Schwartzman (*Circle of 6*), Rebecca Chiao (*HarassMap*), Sharon Bylenga (*Media Matters for Women*), Elizabeth Vandrei (*SAWA*), Maria del Camino Hurtado (*World Bank*), Erisha Suwal (*Independent Consultant*)

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS: Sara Baker, Katerina Fialova, Jac Sm Kee and Erika Smith (*Association for Progressive Communications*), Nancy Glass (*John Hopkins Centre for Global Health*), Arpita Naghat (*IHollaback India*), Nazhat Shameem (*mWomen*), Laura Capobianco (*UN Women*), Christopher Burns (*USAID*), Rachael Maddock-Hughes (*World Pulse*)

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INTRODUCTION

STATT, a Hong-Kong-based network of practitioners working on global development and security issues, has been running Afghanistan's first toll-free family support hotline since January 2013, with support from the Government of Canada. One of the main objectives of this project is to provide support for victims and survivors of gender-based violence.

Gender-based and violence against women are often used interchangeably, because most violence is perpetrated by men against women. For the purposes of this paper, we use gender-based violence (GBV). While the majority of organisations featured in this report are primarily focused on tackling violence against women, although some have also provided support and advice to a minority of male survivors of violence.

A growing body of literature supports STATT's experience that technology-based solutions can have a positive impact in addressing GBV, but also points to a number of challenges associated with the use of such interventions. The organisation commissioned this report to contribute to the available literature and deepen understanding of how organisations working in conflict-affected and fragile contexts are using mobile and internet technology to prevent or respond to gender-based violence.

Specifically, STATT wished to explore, through the collection and analysis of a series of case studies, key lessons learned around the:

- Effectiveness and impact of these new technologies in the prevention and response to gender-based violence;
- Costs, financial backing for, sustainability and scalability of such projects;
- Relationship between the technology and 'traditional' work to tackle gender-based violence;
- Challenges and advantages associated with using these technologies in interventions to address gender-based violence.

The resulting report is organised in five sections: introduction, methodology, overview, case studies, and main findings and recommendations. The overview sets out the main findings from an initial literature review; the section on case studies outlines the approaches and learning from seven technology-based solutions developed and implemented in very different contexts in Africa, Asia and Latin America; and the final section analyses and reflects on the implications of the learning from the literature review and case studies for further work in this area. It is hoped that policymakers, practitioners and advocates of high quality and responsive GBV initiatives will find the results presented in this report relevant to their work.

METHODOLOGY

This desk-based research took place between mid-January and early-March 2014. It involved a review of the available literature and semi-structured interviews with 12 representatives of organisations who have used mobile and internet technologies in their interventions to tackle gender-based violence; several representatives of donor institutions (USAID, World Bank and UN Women); and Coordinators of global organisations working to promote the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) for sustainable development and social justice purposes (World Pulse and Association for Progressive Communications).

LIMITATIONS

The report does not purport to provide a comprehensive overview of all aspects of the use of mobile and internet technology in GBV interventions. Rather it is an attempt to better understand how a handful of organisations have applied internet and mobile technology as part of gender-based violence interventions in specific contexts and the challenges and opportunities they have encountered. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the learning from these projects will have further relevance for other organisations keen to harness the power of these technological advances in their work.

OVERVIEW

There is growing interest in the myriad of ways in which new technologies are being leveraged to support the work of individuals and organisations in tackling GBV. Increasingly, as these technologies become more available around the world, including to diverse users in the global south, they are being deployed in a range of innovative ways to prevent and respond to violence.

The mobile and internet-technology based interventions featured in this report make use of applications that combine a number of different objectives, from mapping violence to gathering data, using data gathered to advocate for change and providing survivors with access to essential information and support. More broadly, ICTs are also being used to access support from a community of peers, raise awareness of the violence faced by women and girls amongst their families and communities, use entertainment and social media forums, and monitor and evaluate interventions and measure their impact.¹

Mobile technologies have further been used to improve standard study methodologies that evaluate interventions and measure impact. For instance, a number of randomised control trials (although not of gender-based violence programmes) have been conducted remotely, reducing the cost of the trials and enabling people to participate that would not have previously been able.

Experts say it is possible to group technology-based interventions into four broad categories - tools for victims and survivors, tools for advocates, tools to provide voice and empowerment, and tools to crowdsource, map, and share information - although in practice many of them cut across these categories.²

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The advent of technology-based solutions in this field brings with it both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, technology has the potential to play a key role in transforming gender inequality and unequal social relations. A 2010 survey by the GSMA Development Fund and the Cherie Blair Foundation found that extending the benefits of mobile phone ownership to women can transform the lives of women in the global south.³ Of the more than 2,000 women surveyed from four low- to middle-income countries (Bolivia, Egypt, India, and Kenya,) 41% of women reported increased income or professional opportunities as a result of owning a mobile, 85% reported higher independence, and 93% reported feeling safer because of mobile phone ownership.⁴

UNEQUAL ACCESS

However, marginalised groups, and poor women in particular, still face significant barriers in access to ICTs. Challenges include cost, literacy, cultural norms, safety, and a lack of understanding of potential applications.

A feasibility study on ICT for Peace and Women's Rights conducted by Kvinna till Kvinna highlighted a number of challenges around ICT access and use experienced by its partner organisations in conflict or fragile states, including problems with telephone lines, poor internet connection and irregular electricity supplies. The costs of purchasing and maintaining hardware, connecting to the internet, software licensing and phone bills were also prohibitive for many organisations.⁵

¹ Communications and Technology for Violence Prevention: Workshop Summary. Blakeslee, K., Patel, D. and Simon, M. (2012), Washington D.C.: The National Academies Press.

² Burns, Christopher. Senior Adviser and Team Lead for Mobile Access, USAID Office of Innovation and Development/Alliances/Mobile Solutions <http://reinventingtherules.com/2013/12/16/event-recap-gender-based-violence-and-innovative-technologies/>

³ Women & Mobile: A Global Opportunity www.cherieblairfoundation.org/women-and-mobile-a-global-opportunity/, The Cherie Blair Foundation and GSMA Development Fund

⁴ Women and Mobile: A Global Opportunity, A Study on the Mobile Phone Gender Gap in Low and Middle-Income Countries: www.cherieblairfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/women_and_mobile_a_global_opportunity.pdf

⁵ Feasibility Study on ICT for Peace and Women's Rights, edited by Julia Lapitski, Kvinna till Kvinna, March 2013, www.kvinnatillkvinna.se

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A 2012 report by Intel Corporation and Dahlberg Global Development Advisers found that women in low and middle-income countries are up to 37% less likely to own a mobile phone than men. Furthermore, compared with men in these countries, 25% fewer women use the internet.⁶

Projects such as GSMA Foundation's mWomen are working to bridge this gap by encouraging the mobile technology industry to serve resource-poor women and to promote solutions to women's barriers to usage,⁷ but there is still a long way to go with a reported 300 million women missing out on the benefits of mobile phone access.

UNEVEN GEOGRAPHICAL UPTAKE

Adoption of these new technologies in addressing gender-based violence specifically is uneven. Despite having the highest rates of violence against women in the world, and faster mobile growth than any other region, the deployment of these technologies in Africa is underdeveloped. Exceptions include South Africa and Egypt, where mobile and internet-based apps, such as HarassMap in Egypt, have surged in the wake of rampant sexual harassment and assaults.⁸

Additionally, many of the interventions rely on access to the internet or are designed for smartphones, which are not necessarily widespread. For example, there are now a whole raft of safety applications, such as FightBack, bSafe and StreetSafe, that incorporate functions such as panic buttons and alerts to notify friends and emergency services when someone is being attacked or abused, but most of these are currently only available on smartphones. The low smartphone penetration in low and middle-income countries, at 22% globally, 19% in India (2013), and only 4% (2012) in sub-Saharan Africa, limits their availability and use considerably. Similarly, it seems that many mobile apps are not being developed with the end user in mind; the technology may not be user-friendly (for instance, using SMS messaging for a primarily illiterate audience) or the content and mode of delivery do not address users' experience or realities.

RESPONSE VERSUS PREVENTION

While a comprehensive mapping of the myriad of projects was beyond the scope of this research, it appears that many of the existing interventions are currently focused on responses to violence against women, rather than prevention efforts.

Effective responses to existing violence against women and girls are critical as a fundamental 'building block' for prevention, but have only a limited impact on reducing the number of new incidences of violence. Ideally, prevention and response strategies would be developed and implemented in a holistic and integrated way. Awareness raising and community mobilisation are important components of prevention efforts, but governments also play a key role in creating 'enabling environments' through undertaking policy, legislative and budgetary reform to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and address intersecting forms of discrimination that place women and girls at risk of violence.⁹

DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

ICTs can be a double-edged sword for women; they are changing the ways in which women respond to violence, but they are also changing the ways in which they experience violence.¹⁰ Violence against women, which takes place in the home or on the street, is now taking new forms and occurring in online spaces whereby women become targets of cyber-stalking or digital voyeurism.

⁶ Women and the Web: Bridging the Internet Gap and Creating New Global Opportunities in Low and Middle Income Countries: www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/technology-in-education/women-in-the-web.html

⁷ <http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/overview>

⁸ Burns, Christopher: Critical Mass? How the Mobile Revolution Could Help End Gender-Based Violence, Dec 11, 2013, www.newsecuritybeat.org/2013/12/critical-mass-mobile-revolution-gender-based-violence/#.UxcGBCim3lo

⁹ UN Women, Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls. www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2012/11/Report-of-the-EGM-on-Prevention-of-Violence-against-Women-and-Girls.pdf

¹⁰ Jan Moolman, the Association of Progressive Communications, www.ips.org/mdg3/using-media-and-technology-to-end-gender-based-violence/#sthash.s0g96i1p.dpuf

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Images of women are being posted on the internet without their knowledge or consent and, in the hands of tech-savvy domestic violence abusers. Spyware and GPS are also being used to track and control women's mobility.¹¹ Very often offline violence escalates into online violence and abuse and may continue even after the victim has separated from the perpetrator. Sometimes the violence starts online and transfers to offline spaces.¹²

Initiatives such as Take Back the Tech! are seeking to reclaim these technologies for the fight in violence against women by strengthening the ICT capacity of women's rights advocates and building a community of organisations challenging violence against women through digital platforms.¹³ Work is further underway to explore to what extent existing domestic and global remedies are able to provide access to justice for survivors of online violence and to look at the responsibilities of internet intermediaries, whose sites are often implicated in cases of tech-related violence.

LACK OF EVIDENCE

Given the speed with which these technologies are developing, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is little evidence regarding their effectiveness. Research led by Nancy Glass, Associate Director of the John Hopkins Centre for Global Health in the U.S, found that no one has ever formally evaluated the effectiveness of internet-based support tools for gender-based violence victims.¹⁴ She is now in the fourth year of a five-year randomised trial to evaluate the effectiveness of an internet-based safety decision aid. The aid, which is designed to assist victims of intimate partner violence in making an informed decision with regards to their relationship, is being evaluated against four outcomes including improving survivor mental health.¹⁵

Qualitative assessments conducted to date show that women feel 'more support' using the aid and are 'less conflicted about decision making.'¹⁶ Glass believes there is much potential to adapt the safety decision aid for low and middle-income countries, but says it is essential to have a better understanding of what safety looks like in these contexts before conducting similar studies. For instance, women may be less likely to be able to leave a relationship for economic reasons so more emphasis would need to be placed on engaging religious leaders to challenge inappropriate and violent behaviour.

¹¹ Association for Progressive Communications <https://www.apc.org/en/node/2949/>

¹² Interview with Jac Sm Kee, Sara Baker, Erika Smith and Katerina Fialova of the Association for Progressive Communications

¹³ A Global Conversation Toward a feminist Internet, Take Back the Tech! www.takebackthetech.net/

¹⁴ Interview with Nancy Glass, February 2014

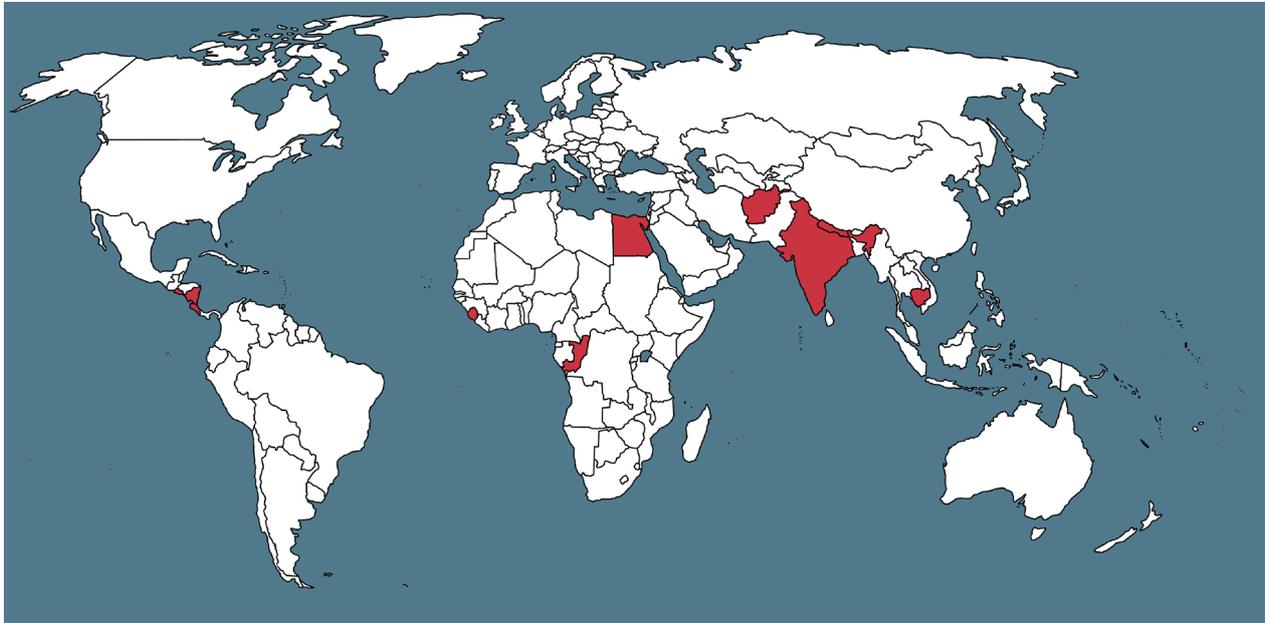
¹⁵ Safety Decision Aid, <http://safetydecisionaid.com/>.

¹⁶ Gender-Based Violence and Innovative Technologies: Opportunities, Challenges, and Ethical Considerations, Wilson Center, Washington DC. www.wilsoncenter.org/event/gender-based-violence-and-innovative-technologies-opportunities-challenges-and-ethical

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CASE STUDIES

The following section outlines the approaches and learning from seven technology-based solutions developed and implemented in very different contexts in Africa, Asia and Latin America.



1 CENTRAL AMERICA :
COSTA RICA
EL SALVADOR
NICARAGUA

2 SIERRA LEONE
3 REPUBLIC OF CONGO
4 EGYPT
5 PALESTINE

6 AFGHANISTAN
7 INDIA
8 NEPAL
10 CAMBODIA

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Providing advice and support to women and children survivors of violence in occupied Palestine.¹⁷

INTRODUCTION

SAWA is a Palestinian non-governmental organisation that was established in 1998 by a group of female volunteers active on women's issues. The organisation has run a Women's Protection Helpline since it was first established, as well as a Child Protection Helpline since 2004.

These free national helplines provide support and information to women, men and children who have experienced or are experiencing any form of violence or abuse. The programme provides accompaniment services to hospitals or to the police, as well as referrals to specialist organisations for further help. The organisation also offers counselling and support through email for those who cannot contact the organisation by phone.

CONTEXT

Levels of violence against women and children are high in occupied Palestine. A recent survey on violence conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics states that around 37% of women who are married or have been married were exposed to some form of violence by their husbands; 29.9% in the West Bank, compared to 51.1% in the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian society at large has traditionally avoided such taboo subjects as sex, sexual violence, domestic violence and child abuse. Acceptance of violence within the family as a way of keeping order is widespread. Women who have experienced sexual violence are reluctant to report, fearing blame and disbelief from society and further violence from perpetrators.

The overarching context of conflict with Israel, the weak and donor-dependent economy, increasing poverty, and widespread unemployment are all contributing factors to the violence. These problems also lead to 'private issues' being considered of low importance.

PROJECT APPROACH

The project focuses on addressing three main types of violence – sexual, physical and psychological – and operates on a national level. Around 2008, SAWA started to develop their ICTs in order to improve the services offered by the Call Centre. This has resulted in a sophisticated computer system that allows its operators to respond to an increasing number of calls and to receive calls remotely out of the Call Centre. The main features of this system include automatic call distribution, call monitoring, call queuing, black lists, and call recording.

The Call Centre has also introduced an integrated database to collect demographic data that is linked with a referral system list and reporting system, as well as a Primary Rate Interface system, which enables more counsellors to answer calls at the same time.

While the Call Centre is the organisation's main activity, it also conducts awareness-raising work with the general public, education and outreach that targets vulnerable communities – particularly women and young people, and a mobile clinic that offers counselling and psycho-social support to women and children in remote or marginalised areas. SAWA further makes a concerted effort to include boys and men among their professionals who deal with gender-based violence. They work as health service providers, security forces and the judiciary. It has also used the data gathered by its Call Centre to influence national public policy on gender-based violence.

¹⁷ The main sources for this case study included a phone interview with Elizabeth Vandrei, Development Officer at SAWA and an August 2012 Project Evaluation: Documenting Best Practices and Lessons Learned: Operation and Development of a Call Centre Supporting Victims of Violence in the OPT. Available on: www.sawa.ps/en/

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PROGRESS AND RESULTS

- SAWA's 2012 evaluation estimates that in 2011 around 40% of all women suffering domestic violence in occupied Palestine who sought help would make use of SAWA's Call Centre.
- Having a free mobile phone line has enabled people to call from outside their homes, from where it may not be safe to call. Typically, the number is staffed 16 hours a day, but during periods of emergency, such as the 2008 attacks on Gaza, the helpline operated 24 hours a day.
- Qualitative data collection is a challenge because of the need to protect the anonymity of callers, but 96.9% of callers report they are satisfied or very satisfied with the service and 70% of them report choosing to call the helpline based on positive word-of-mouth reports.
- ICT improvements have enhanced the functioning of the Call Centre, enabling SAWA to go from receiving around 2,500 calls per year in 2000 to 27,428 in 2011. A large volume of the callers are young women and men (aged between 14 and 26).
- The ICT enhancements have also strengthened the organisations internal learning and management through, for instance, the ability to produce detailed reports detailing the number of hours counsellors spend in the Call Centre, time spent answering each call, and the quality of documentation of cases.

LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

- The recruitment of suitable volunteers has been a major challenge for the organisation. Palestinian society is deeply conservative and characterised by very traditional views. Many of the volunteers struggle to accept the values taught in Call Centre counselling training, such as respecting homosexuality, accepting that rape exists within marriage and accepting there can be no excuse for rape, even if the woman is perceived to have dressed or behaved immodestly.
- The lack of a unified and reliable referral system has been another major challenge. SAWA has built its own referral database, but has found it difficult to constantly measure and ensure the quality and relevance of the services provided by its partners, especially in Gaza. There have been a number of national initiatives aimed at building a comprehensive referral system to which SAWA has contributed, but it finds that none of these comprehensively meet all the needs of its callers.
- There is some evidence that the comprehensive training programme that all volunteers undergo (currently around 110 hours over several months) and the experience of volunteering at the Call Centre has a very positive effect on the self-confidence and interpersonal skills of the volunteers and increases their employability.
- The technology can break down and is often difficult to repair or maintain. There are also security risks with storing so much sensitive data, although the organisation takes several precautions to mitigate these risks, such as a finger-printing system to identify volunteers when they arrive at the Call Centre and banning the use of USBs. However, as the organisation moves towards offering online chat counselling as an additional service, measures will need to be introduced to ensure that clients are not exposed to risk by, for instance, leaving chat windows open.
- Periods of emergency within occupied Palestine have led to dramatic increases in call volume to the Call Centre. Until it updated the technology system, the organisation was unable to cope with the surges – in the summer of 2009, SAWA was only able to respond to 24,403 of 58,658 attempts. Many employees and volunteers also worked extra hours to meet the demand.

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FUNDING, SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE-UP

- The project has attracted funding from a wide range of donors, including UN Women, Save the Children, Bread for the World, NGO Development Centre and Kvinna till Kvinna, as well as innovative partnerships with the private sector in the form of in-kind donations of software and free helpline calls.
- The organisation believes the sustainability of the Call Centre is guaranteed because the approach is integrated within the strategies of some of the major donors and it is also in line with the priorities of the National Government in occupied Palestine, in particular with the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women drawn up by the Ministry of Women's Affairs. That said, it plans to continue operating independently of government and is continually seeking ways to become less donor-dependent, including exploring options such as crowd-funding and establishing a for-profit business. It is considering plans to scale up by expanding outreach to other towns and villages, with particular emphasis on rural and marginalised areas, and leading a coalition of helplines in occupied Palestine.
- There is evidence to suggest the model could be replicated in other contexts and SAWA has begun to offer training and support to organisations and institutions in other countries wishing to adopt similar technologies and services, including the Kurdish Regional Government and NGOs in Afghanistan. This has included translating the database programme into other languages for use by help lines in other countries. It has recently been translated into English and there are plans to translate it into French and Spanish. SAWA has the capacity and expertise to support other organisations developing helplines in other contexts. Its work has particular relevance for organisations operating in conflict or post-conflict environments and/or those operating within very conservative societies.

Connecting women in rural Sierra Leone with information about gender-based violence¹⁸

INTRODUCTION

Media Matters for Women (MMW) is a US-based nonprofit which links traditional systems of radio broadcasting with mobile phones to create innovative digital communication networks targeting rural women and girls in West Africa.

The organisation has been operating a one-year pilot project in Sierra Leone since March 2013, with support from the Oak Foundation of Switzerland. The project aims to distribute critical news and information to rural women and girls, many of whom are illiterate and live without access to electricity, which limits their connectivity to information technology.

CONTEXT

Gender-based violence is a persistent problem in Sierra Leone that disproportionately impacts women. According to the UN, nearly all Sierra Leonean women suffer some form of violence in their lifetime.¹⁹ Some of this violence is linked to the legacy of the eleven years civil war that ended in 2002. One of the challenges in addressing violence against women and girls is their lack of access to information about their rights and support services available to them.

There is also a 'rampant digital divide' that disproportionately affects women and those in rural provinces: these groups are less likely to have access to information because they are more likely to be illiterate and less likely to speak Krio and English, which are the main languages of radio and other information services. Additionally, women have less time and space to sit and listen to the radio because of their domestic workload and the media fails to adequately cover issues faced by women.

Radio is followed by 78% of the population and remains the most significant source of information, but scarcity of electricity means that most people have to rely on batteries to power their radios.

PROJECT APPROACH

The MMW project aims to create an innovative, low cost communication network and to empower women by connecting them to high-quality news and information about issues including, but not limited to, gender-based violence.

At the outset of the programme, three local professional female journalists were trained in the use of and equipped with a Mobile Production Unit (MPU), including equipment such as an iPad, microphone, headphones, a digital camera and a mobile phone with blue-tooth. They were then tasked with producing a weekly ten-minute radio programme in local languages on a topic that affects women.

The journalists were provided with a possible list of topics and allowed to choose the focus of their broadcasts based on their professional judgment, but also, as the project became more established, on the feedback of women participants. They were paid a competitive fee for this work.

They were also responsible for establishing five Listening Centres in their geographic area, with the support of a Project Coordinator. The Listening Centres were situated in places where women usually gather and would have the time to listen to the programme together. These included hospitals and rural health clinics, schools, family support units and community centres.

¹⁸ The main sources for this case study are a phone interview with Sharon Bylenga, Director of Media Matters for Women, a February 2014 Project Evaluation and the organisational website: <http://mediamattersforwomen.org>

¹⁹ 'Sierra Leone: Sexual violence Remains Unpunished', UN Development Programme, 2010. <http://content.undp.org/go/newsroom/2010/february/sierra-leonesexual-violence-carrying-on-with-impunity.en>

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The Project Coordinator secured permission from the village leaders or principal administrator of each centre at the start of the project. They then appointed a Focal Point who was paid a small stipend to play the programmes regularly at the centres and to record attendance. The Project Coordinator also provided administrative support and editorial oversight of the programmes.

The method of transmitting the programmes from the journalists phone to the Listening Centres went through several iterations. Eventually, they discovered they could easily transmit them via Bluetooth technology, a free and rapid (30 seconds) transfer that can be carried out on even the most basic of cell phones in Sierra Leone.

In this way, the journalists were able to convert their programmes to MP3 files and transfer them from their laptops to their cell phones and onward to the cell phone of the Focal Point through 'pairing', the process by which two Bluetooth-enabled devices connect to each other. The Project Coordinators also uploaded the programmes to Sound Cloud, an online audio storage and distribution platform that enables users to upload, record, promote and share original sounds and information.²⁰

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

- The three Sierra Leonean journalists have created a series of weekly audio programmes in local languages focused on a range of issues including the Sexual Offences Act, rape, domestic violence, the Traditional Marriage Act and HIV/AIDS and distributed these to the 5 Listening Centres in their regions.
- It is estimated that the 11 month pilot reached around 1,246 women per month based on figures recorded by the Listening Centres and the journalists. However, this number is likely to be much higher given that Focal Points and women listeners often played and transmitted the programme beyond the Listening Centres. Many women heard the programme at least once and in most cases, multiple times.
- Most listeners interviewed were able to recount information they had learned from the programmes and offer specific examples of how this knowledge had affected their behaviour positively. One of the male Focal Points said he had beaten his wife in the past, but now realised it was not acceptable behaviour.

LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

While the project has yet to be empirically tested, MMW conducted a qualitative evaluation involving individual interviews, focus groups and desk-based research in January 2014, which points to some interesting learning:

- An unexpected result of the programme was that listeners began to transfer the audio files onto their own cell phones so they could listen to them at home. They subsequently reported transferring the files via Bluetooth to their friends and family. This indicates the broad potential for reaching far greater numbers than originally anticipated. Focal points have also reported sharing the files in their home villages and when they travel.
- Greater connectivity was made possible by providing the journalists and Listening Centres with solar rechargers so that the programmes were accessible even when there were power shortages. It is not currently possible to purchase the rechargers in Sierra Leone, but it was very inexpensive to purchase and ship them from the US.
- Use of these technologies allows information-providers to sidestep the Ministry of Information and therefore reduce bureaucracy and other obstacles, because a license is not required and all content is based on public service media editorial rules.

²⁰ Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/>

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- The use of Bluetooth technology requires the journalist to visit the Listening Centres in person, which can involve a significant amount of time and money (travel times ranged from ten minutes to 3 hours depending on location). However, this was deemed to be more effective than the initial 'call-in' approach proposed by the project, which involved journalists calling Listening Centre phones and transferring programmes via an audio recorder held up to the cell phone.
- Some mobile phones have limited memory space and storing a MMW programme requires users to purchase a memory card, which is too costly for some listeners. MMW are currently researching alternatives and solutions in file size and/or provision of memory cards.

FUNDING, SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE-UP

- The technology involved is relatively inexpensive. There are one-time capital costs including an average of \$350 to equip a Listening Centre with equipment and around \$1000 to equip a journalist, but most other project costs are low and significantly cheaper than traditional radio programming.
- MMW explored ways of making the project more sustainable by encouraging the journalists to generate outside income. One journalist was able to sell a radio jingle to a private enterprise, but other ideas for income-generation have either not been explored as yet or have been unsuccessful, mostly because the community radio stations do not have the funds to buy outside programming or journalists do not have the time or skills to pursue advertising revenue.
- MMW is currently searching for funding for another year with ongoing operational costs of \$50,000 and is currently exploring possibilities for scale-up. At the same time, they are marketing the project as a sustainable, locally-owned mobile technology that can reach remote, rural communities. MMW is also working on a number of new technology-related project ideas, including 'the Siren Project' which aims to develop the concept of a mobile phone fitted with a distinctive alarm that can alert people to incidences of gender-based violence.
- MMW has not seen an increase in funding streams opening up as a result of using these new technologies, which the Director believes is consistent with current trends more generally around funding for women's rights programming.

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Providing counselling and support to families in Afghanistan²¹

INTRODUCTION

STATT is a network of practitioners working on global development and security issues and building community resilience and well-being. The organisation conducts research and works to design and implement responses to challenges that link communities and cross borders.

Since January 2013, STATT designed, established and began managing Afghanistan's first toll-free family support hotline, locally known as 6464. The hotline, which is part of STATT's Project Gateway, works in partnership with the Afghanistan Capacity Development and Educational Organisation and with support from the Government of Canada. Project Gateway seeks to connect vulnerable individuals living in a conflict or post-conflict environments with information and social support services via telephone technology. The hotline delivers information on social support services, provides legal advice, general counseling and refers callers to ground-based service providers.

While the hotline is not exclusively focused on tackling gender-based violence, much of the support it has provided to date includes advising women in violent situations and helping men better manage family relations and disputes.

CONTEXT

Finding social support and gaining access to justice is difficult for many Afghans. In many communities, the formal justice system has proven weak, corrupt and ineffective. Thus, the majority of disputes are resolved through informal justice mechanisms that do not always function well.²² In addition, Afghans lack information and access to social support services, and experience high levels of poverty, particularly in rural areas, leaving many isolated and vulnerable in times of need.

Domestic violence is a pervasive problem in Afghanistan. According to a 2008 report by Global Rights, 87.2% of women said they had experienced at least one form of domestic violence, including physical, sexual, or psychological violence, or forced marriage.²³ Furthermore, 62% of women said they had faced multiple forms of violence. Domestic violence is highly normalised throughout Afghan society. Many women experience violence in the home, yet simultaneously rate their marital relationships as satisfactory. Moreover, women are generally isolated in dealing with violence in the home; only 18% of women surveyed said they knew other women who had faced domestic violence.

Mobile phone technology has proliferated rapidly in Afghanistan. A 2012 USAID report stated that 88% of the population lives within the combined network coverage of the four largest mobile network providers and that as of September 2012 there were nearly 20 million mobile subscriptions among the population of some 30 million people.²⁴ The internet is also becoming increasingly accessible through mobile broadband services, with 80% of Afghan women now having some access to mobile technology, either through their own phone or through a phone belonging to a family member.

²¹ The main sources for this case study included phone interviews with Jacob Townsend, Director of Capability Development (STATT), Dr. Robia Charles, Coordinator of Statistics and Trend Analysis (STATT), Wahid Rahimdil, Director of Programmes Afghanistan (STATT), and STATT's website: www.statt.net/gateway-remote-service-delivery/

²² Lessons Learned on Traditional Dispute Resolution in Afghanistan. United States Institute of Peace, June 2013. www.usip.org/publications/lessons-learned-traditional-dispute-resolution-in-afghanistan

²³ Living with Violence, A National Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan. Global Rights, 2008. www.globalrights.org/sites/default/files/docs/final_DVR_JUNE_16.pdf

²⁴ Afghan Women's Mobile Phone Ownership and Use, USAID May 2013. www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1871/survey_afghan_women_mobile.pdf

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PROJECT APPROACH

The Family Support Hotline is serviced by a call centre in Kabul staffed by 11 qualified phone operators, two supervisors/mentors and a part-time religious scholar. The staff has received comprehensive training on a range of issues, such as legal issues related to violence against women. Operating with a capacity of 2,500 callers per month, the hotline team also maintains a database of ground-based service providers to which people can be referred for further help and support.

Typically, a caller may ask for advice about multiple issues, from requesting information about government services to asking for legal advice. The most popular request to date has been for counselling, particularly in relation to domestic violence and family disputes.

The services provided have increased in line with callers' needs. The organisation has scaled up legal aid provision, introduced a field lawyer for face-to-face consultations, and employed several researchers to improve the understanding of callers' needs. In November 2013, STATT conducted a baseline survey about access to social services and information in Nangarhar province. The results from this survey have helped STATT understand more about broader community experiences, preferences and needs.

STATT also has research analysts who conduct outreach to promote awareness of the hotline and the types of support available. They organise community events and media campaigns (TV, radio and billboards), as well as meetings with local service providers, women's groups, tribal leaders and community elders.

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

- In its first seven weeks of operation, the hotline responded to more than 2,300 callers. The hotline served just over 19,000 people in its first year.
- The hotline was piloted and began outreach for its services in the Eastern region and has since received calls from 34 provinces.
- A slight majority of callers are men and the reasons cited for calls are very similar, irrespective of whether the caller is male or female.
- At least 25% of callers have called back to say thank you for the service provided and many are repeat callers. Some of the cases have resulted in legal action.

LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

- Telephone technology is empowering for callers because they are provided options in the comfort of their own home. The service offers them convenience, discretion and anonymity, which are very important in a conservative and tribal society where family honour and ties are significant. Also, as most women are dependent on their husbands, they prefer to use alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, with legal action as a last resort. Telephone technology has allowed STATT and its partners to reach isolated and vulnerable people, such as women in areas controlled or formerly controlled by the Taliban.
- While one of the key objectives of the project is to provide support to women suffering domestic violence, the hotline is promoted as a family support hotline. This is because garnering the trust of men is central to success since they are typically the gatekeepers of the family in Afghanistan and usually control access to technology. In many cases, men call the hotline first and then allow women in their family to call directly.
- Baseline survey results show a high level of trust (93%) in religious leaders. Staff members say that employing a religious scholar has encouraged more people to call.
- The project works in partnership with local organisations to help foster trust in the support the hotline can provide. It has also secured approval from the Government of Afghanistan, but believes it is necessary to operate the hotline independently of government to maintain trust in the confidentiality of the service.

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- Very few people have taken up the offer to visit ground-based service providers. STATT believes this is in part because some service providers are not always responsive or effective. Furthermore, continued insecurity and the inability to travel freely are also deterrents. In addition, as outlined above, Afghan women generally prefer to resolve family disputes without having to seek legal action against their husbands. They seek services that the hotline provides—information on empowerment to improve their situation in a discrete and culturally acceptable manner. The organisation is not currently in a position to assess the capacity of these service providers as is explained to callers.
- Measuring impact is a challenge. Providing a discrete, anonymous and remote service makes it hard to follow up on outcomes for individual service users, which would further involve additional resources. STATT is currently monitoring and evaluating its work in a number of ways. It conducted a baseline survey in November 2013 in six districts of Nangarhar province on access to information and social support services. With 1,000 completed interviews, the survey examines awareness, perceptions and use of the hotline. An endline survey will be conducted in March 2014. STATT has also implemented a monitoring and evaluation system that tracks the volume and type of calls, services provided, district of calls, sex of callers, as well as the quality of telephone operators' services (tested through the use of mystery callers).

FUNDING, SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE-UP

- The project is sustainable at a local level because it is not dependent on foreign staff and can, in theory, continue to operate after the withdrawal of NATO troops in 2014. However, securing long-term funding is a challenge. Traditional donors of projects that tackle gender-based violence are more likely to fund the hotline than technology companies for whom a hotline does not constitute an innovation. More understanding is needed among donors about the positive impact that these types of technological interventions can have on women's lives in particular, especially in conflict and post-conflict zones.
- A long-term aim is to secure funding from within Afghanistan, but this is unlikely to be realised in the near future. There are some charitable foundations in the country, but they do not have the resources to sustain the hotline. Another option would be to approach mobile technology companies, but they are largely profit-driven.

Holding governments accountable for gender-based violence in Cambodia and the Republic of Congo²⁵

INTRODUCTION

The Women's Rights Programme of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) seeks to promote gender equality in the design, implementation, access and use of information and communication technologies and in the policy decisions and networks that regulate them. One aspect of its work involves enabling organisations to explore the convergence between ICT issues and women's rights agendas, including gender-based violence.

Since 2011, the organisation has supported two projects led by APC member organisations, which aim to strengthen the documentation, reporting and monitoring of gender-based violence and use this evidence to put pressure on governments to deliver on and increase their commitments to combat and eliminate gender-based violence. In Cambodia, APC partnered with the local organisation, the Open Institute²⁶ to run a project from 2011 to early 2013 with funding from Spider, the Swedish Programme for ICT in Developing Regions.²⁷ In the Republic of Congo, the organisation implemented a project through local partner Azur Developpement²⁸ from early 2012 to April 2014 and with funding from Africa Technology and Transparency Initiative.²⁹

CONTEXT

In Cambodia, violence against women and girls is widespread. According to a UN multi-country study involving 2,000 Cambodian men and 500 women aged 18-49, one in five men said that they had committed rape in their lifetime.³⁰ The government has introduced laws on trafficking and domestic violence and has also set up a national Gender Observatory and National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women as part of its efforts to tackle the issue, but local partners wanted to find a way to track government responses to violence against women and hold them accountable for these commitments.

The Republic of Congo (Congo), and its neighbour the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), have two of the most serious rates of gender-based violence in the world. Rape and sexual violence have been used systematically as a weapon of war. Over 15,000 cases of sexual violence were reported in 2009 alone. In the first six months of 2010, 7,685 cases were reported. More than half of the victims were under 18 years of age. There are laws in place that provide for survivors of violence, but access to justice is challenging as laws are often not implemented.³¹

In conjunction with United Nations and international organisations, there is a growing mobilisation of local women and human rights organisations against gender-based violence in Congo. However, reporting and monitoring of violations and tracking and co-ordination of responses are woefully inadequate in relation the numbers and seriousness of cases of sexual and domestic violence.

PROJECT APPROACH

The projects sought to build the capacity of local women's rights and human rights organisations to use information and communication technologies that would allow them to generate evidence to be used in turn to pressure governments to deliver on their commitments to tackle violence against women.

²⁵ The main sources for this case study included an interview with Jennifer Radloff, Women's Rights Programme Coordinator, Association for Progressive Communications, a final evaluation of the Open Institute's Gender-based Violence project completed in May 2013 and the APC website: www.apc.org/en/about

²⁶ Open Society: www.open.org.kh/en

²⁷ Swedish Spider: <http://spidercenter.org/>

²⁸ Azur Developpement: www.azurdev.org/

²⁹ Africa Technology and Transparency Initiative: www.africatti.org/

³⁰ The Right of Every Woman, United Nations in Cambodia, March 2013, Phnom Penh www.un.org.kh/index.php/newsroom/speech-and-statement/612-2013-iwd-oped

³¹ Gender-based violence in Congo-Brazzaville: APC News interviews Sylvie Niombo, Johannesburg, July 2013. www.apc.org/en/news/gender-based-violence-congo-brazzaville-apc-news-i-0

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Both projects made use of 'Ushahidi' software, a free and open source software that allows users to post information on an online interactive map via cell phones or computers.³² The Ushahidi software has become an important tool for tracking gender-based violence (see also Harassmap case study). In both cases, APC installed the software and migrated it to their respective partners' service providers (Open Institute in Cambodia and Azur Développement in Congo).

In Cambodia, Open Institute worked in partnership with the National League of Commune/Sangkat, a network of local authorities throughout the country that promotes effective and accountable local governance. They trained Commune/Sangkat Councillors and members of Commune Committees in Charge of Women and Children (CCWC) to use survey questionnaires for data collection on cases of gender-based violence. They then taught them to upload the data online through the Ushahidi platform. This data was complimented by data provided by other NGOs. Open Institute also encouraged members of the public to publish information available on the platform and share it via social media.

In Congo, Azur Développement worked in two areas of the country, Pointe-Noire, the economic capital of the country, and Nkayi, a semi-urban and rural environment. They partnered with three NGOs and the departmental directorate responsible for the promotion of women's rights in both districts.

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

Cambodia:

- Approximately 211 people took part in the project, including Commune/Sangkat Councillors, NGO staff and government officials in the areas of Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Kompong Thom and Battambang.
- One of the unexpected outcomes of the trainings was that many participants reported a better understanding of what GBV entails.

Congo:

- Full statistics are not yet available, but in one period alone from February to May 2013 in three districts of Pointe-Noire, Azur Développement and its two local partners recorded 34 cases of gender-based violence, including 13 cases of marital violence, 12 cases of rape of minors and one case of a girl being impregnated by her father.
- Azur Développement has set up a case monitoring system in three Pointe-Noire districts, with each association taking responsibility for following up on reported cases with the district chiefs, police stations and healthcare centres and discussing what actions should be taken.
- The Ushahidi internet platform has enabled Azur Développement and its partners to map and track cases of domestic and sexual violence, which are then discussed in stakeholder meetings with local authorities, civil society organisations and Town Hall representatives in an effort to find solutions. It is now possible to check whether cases have been followed up and calculate the number of cases closed. There are plans to use the data in lobbying the national government around GBV issues and to educate the media about access to justice and rehabilitation of survivors of violence.
- Survivors of violence have received psychological support from Azur Développement in therapy/support groups organised within the context of its regular activities.

³² Ushahidi: www.usshahidi.com/about-us

LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

A final qualitative evaluation of the Cambodia project conducted in May 2013 highlights a number of strengths and weaknesses of the project:

- Connectivity is very poor in Cambodia and participants also lacked the confidence to use technology, with the exception of young women working in women's rights organisations. Despite training and available technology, many cases were collected by the Sangkat Councillors using paper questionnaires and then uploaded to the Ushahidi platform by Open Institute, which was an extremely labour-intensive process.
- Despite the challenges of using and accessing the online platform, the technology did help to open up a dialogue between the government, Sangkats and civil society partners about how to address gender-based violence in Cambodia, which would have otherwise been difficult. It demonstrated the potential reach and applicability that technology could have if the project were given more time to run and greater human resources to build local capacity.
- The questionnaire was too long and complicated, requiring information from various sources. Some of the stakeholders (police stations, health service providers) did not provide the relevant data to the Sangkat Councillors resulting in gaps in the information uploaded to Ushahidi. However, while only certain categories of information are visualised on the Ushahidi Platform, the detailed information, where available, is of great use to the project in providing a baseline on gender-based violence in the four geographic areas involved.

A FINAL EVALUATION OF THE CONGO PROJECT IS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY, BUT KEY LEARNING TO DATE INCLUDES:

- Greater use of mobile phones, rather than computers, is needed to upload information to Ushahidi since these are far more readily available. It can be very intimidating, and even dangerous, for women to go into an internet café in a context like Congo. APC would like to explore how reporting forms could be set up via SMS instead, which would be more convenient and safer for women reporting incidences of violence.
- The computer resources belonging to the project's local partner organisations are inadequate. Meager ICT resources are available at the Azur Développement site offices. Accordingly, data sheets were filled out on site and sent by email to the central office in Brazzaville, where connectivity was much stronger, for entry into the online platform database. Partners also had to access the web platform via internet cafés or through the use of internet modems offered by mobile telephone companies.

OVERALL, APC FINDINGS HAVE INCLUDED:

- Women's organisations need adequate support to adapt these new technologies safely and securely. APC's Take Back the Tech! campaign aims to strengthen the ICT capacity of women's rights advocates and create awareness on how ICTs are connected to violence against women.
- Monitoring and evaluation of qualitative change is a lot more challenging than capturing quantitative data. The organisation makes use of Most Significant Change techniques,³³ a participatory form of monitoring and evaluation, to capture stories of change. It has further developed its own Gender Evaluation Methodology in response to a lack of tools for evaluating interventions that specifically use ICTs for social change. The methodology supports organisations using ICTs to integrate a gender analysis in their project evaluations.

³³ Davies, Rick and Dart, Jessica. The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique, 2005. www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf

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FUNDING, SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE-UP

- The Congo project cost approximately \$200,000 to run and the Cambodia project approximately \$125,000, although APC and Open Institute also contributed additional 'in kind' costs to the projects.
- APC would like to develop the projects further, with a greater emphasis on how to track and trace reported cases of gender-based violence across time, thereby making it easier to identify where justice is breaking down.
- The organisation has considerable experience in securing funding for ICT-related interventions, but trying to secure donor funds for GBV interventions that make use of ICTs is still relatively new. They sense there is still suspicion amongst some donors about technology, so insist that it is important to conduct thorough evaluations to be able to demonstrate the impact of technology on their work.

Challenging the social acceptability of sexual harassment in Egypt³⁴

INTRODUCTION

Launched in 2010, HarassMap is a volunteer-based initiative, which uses a combination of online and mobile technology, mass media and communications campaigns to support offline, on the ground, outreach work in 17 governorates across Egypt with the aim of ending the social acceptability of sexual harassment and assault in Egypt.

CONTEXT

Sexual harassment is a widespread and serious social problem in Egypt. It affects all parts and all members of the Egyptian society, often on a daily basis. In a 2013 UN Women study, 99.3% of Egyptian women surveyed said that they had been sexually harassed in their everyday lives. According to a 2008 study by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) of 2000 Egyptian women and men, 62.4% of the men surveyed admitted to having harassed someone.³⁵ Men also experience harassment – 2.5% of the reports HarassMap received in 2010 and 2011 were from men who had been harassed by women or men.

Egypt has laws addressing sexual harassment and assault that have been used successfully in courts. However, enforcement of the laws remains rare, and advocacy efforts to improve them have so far not met with success.

The country's mobile phone penetration rate stood at nearly 102% in 2011 and internet use has also been growing rapidly, with internet penetration reaching 35.7% in 2011. However, a high computer illiteracy rate, flagging economic conditions and nearly a fifth of the population living below the national poverty line contribute to unequal access to technology, particularly amongst women and those living in rural areas.³⁶ Furthermore, ICTs are often viewed suspiciously. A 2010 Women and the Web report found that one in five Egyptian women believes the internet is not 'appropriate' for them, further contributing to inequitable use.³⁷

PROJECT APPROACH

Members of the public can report an incident of sexual harassment by sending an SMS, e-mail, facebook or twitter post, or by filling out an online report form. These reports are then mapped on the 'HarassMap' using Ushahidi crowdsourcing technology.³⁸ Each report appears on the map as a red dot. When viewers click on the dot, the full text of the report is displayed. Each person reporting an incident of harassment also receives an auto-response detailing services they may wish to access, such as free psychological counselling, legal assistance and how to make a police report.

Once a month, teams of trained volunteers known as Community Action Teams go into their local neighbourhoods to talk to community members and leaders about what they can do to prevent harassment. Around 50% of the volunteers are men. The volunteers often use the data gathered from the map as evidence of how widespread the problem is in specific communities.

HarassMap also uses evidence gathered from the map to support media and public awareness campaigns that aim to encourage people to stand up to sexual harassment, tackle the notion that it is acceptable behaviour and challenge the stereotypes and myths that surround it. The initiative uses a range of social media, mass media and marketing to promote its messages.

Currently the initiative is working in partnership with the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) to examine the challenges facing crowdsourcing as a method for data

³⁴ The main sources for this case study include a phone interview with Rebecca Chiao, Co-Founder and Director of HarassMap, a presentation by Rebecca Chiao at a February 2013 lecture hosted by the International Development Research Centre in Canada and the HarassMap website: <http://harassmap.org/en/who-we-are/>

³⁵ Clouds in Egypt's Sky. UNFPA, Egypt, March 2010. <http://egypt.unfpa.org/english/publication/6eeeb05a-3040-42d2-9e1c-2bd2e1ac8cac>

³⁶ Freedom on the Net, Egypt 2012 Report. Freedom House. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2012/egypt#.UxMwKiim3lo>

³⁷ Women and the Web. Intel, 2010. <http://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/technology-in-education/women-in-the-web.html>

³⁸ Ushahidi: www.ushahidi.com/

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collection in social science, especially with regard to sensitive issues such as sexual harassment. In addition, HarrassMap works to monitor and analyse media coverage of sexual harassment in Egypt and produces an annual report containing an analysis of all the data it has collected in the last year.

In 2014, the initiative plans to launch 'zero-tolerance zones for harassment': public transport providers, shop owners, restaurants, schools, universities and other public spaces will be encouraged to display 'zero tolerance' stickers and to challenge harassment as it happens, with clear procedures outlined in a policy addressing both public and workplace harassment. It will also extend its community mobilisation work into educational institutions.

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

- In 2011, the organisation received on average 40 reports per month, amounting to around 700 valid reports a year, although traffic flow to the website was much higher at around 88,000 in the same year. Categories of harassers and victims were and continue to be extremely varied and cut across age, class and social background.
- 37% of the reported cases of harassment were committed in public and 63% in private.
- 8.5% of harassers are pre-pubescent children.
- Activists from 26 different countries have asked the organisation for help to set up similar initiatives in their home countries.
- In 2010 and 2011, HarassMap's Community Action teams reported that around 8 out of every 10 people they talked to during neighbourhood outreach days committed to stand up against sexual harassment.

LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

- The technology has enabled the initiative to reach out to women and men in various parts of Egypt, including slums, agricultural areas inside the city and very remote, rural parts of the country, that were previously beyond the reach of such a small initiative with limited funds. It has also helped reach women who don't leave their homes, particularly in more traditional, conservative areas. It has further helped to circumvent the wider challenges of mobility in such a large country.
- The project launched just before the Arab Spring. It has helped women (and sometimes men) who have experienced harassment or assault to bypass obstacles, such as social taboos, which discourage people from speaking out about their experiences. However, the revolution also saw cases of 'collective sexual harassment', highly publicised cases of female political activists subjected to sexual harassment and assault in front of or sometimes at the hands of police and security forces.
- One of the challenges of using Open Source technology is that there is no formal customer support to fall back on, so the organisation has had to spend a lot of time resolving technical issues.
- The technology is open to abuse – for instance, people do send fake reports, which are completely irrelevant, pornographic or inappropriate - but it is easy to identify these. All information is anonymous and the sender cannot be traced, as none of the data is stored once the report has been uploaded to the map.
- While Crowdsourcing has been widely used in business as well as as an effective tool for detecting and responding to natural disasters, it has not been used and accepted as a valid data collection methodology in social science arenas by academics, NGOs, companies and others. HarassMap is now partnering with IDRC to explore how Crowdsourcing compares to traditional methods of data collection. HarassMap believes it can be a powerful complimentary tool when used alongside other methodologies, especially in a context like Egypt, where organisations don't necessarily have the means (financial or infrastructure) to conduct traditional research. One of the anecdotal things they have noticed from the crowd-sourced data they collect and test is that people talk about harassment differently: crowd-sourced reports tend to be very explicit, whereas in face-to-face interviews victims

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tend to downplay the incident or the information they provide may be vague.

- The initiative does not see itself as challenging traditional Egyptian culture, so much as drawing on it to overcome a more recent phenomenon of tolerance towards sexual harassment. In the past sexual harassment was always punished and seen as a taboo practice, even up until the 1990s.
- Very few people reporting incidents of sexual harassment have taken up the offer of counselling and support services. HarassMap believes this is because there is a lack of trust in service-providers and little conviction that accessing these services will actually yield results.

FUNDING, SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE-UP

- The legal framework governing NGOs in Egypt is restrictive and includes a number of barriers to operational activities, advocacy activities, international contact, foreign, and in some instances, domestic funding.³⁹ For this reason, HarassMap launched itself as an independent group of volunteers operating without funding rather than as a registered NGO, and then as an incubated project of another NGO. This incubation structure allowed them to process a grant provided by the IDRC. Meanwhile, they have also thought more creatively about how to diversify funding sources. The organisation has received interest from more traditional women's rights donors who see the technology dimension as innovative. They have also received a lot of pro-bono support. For instance their set-up was done on a pro-bono basis by a company called NiJeL, and their SMS short code is provided pro-bono from a foundation called Megakheir. While working through an incubator organisation suited HarassMap during start-up, the initiative is now in the process of formal registration, which it felt was needed in order to scale-up and launch zero-tolerance zones, although it still recognises the potential pitfalls associated with formalising its operations.
- Organisations from around the world have asked HarassMap for support in setting up their own HarassMap-inspired initiatives. HarassMap provides coaching and support to help plan the programmes, share experiences and technical skills and contacts. They hope to continue creating a global movement of HarassMap-inspired initiatives against sexual harassment. Some have already started, such as Women Under Siege that documents sexualised violence in Syria and Name and Shame that challenges sexual harassment in Pakistan.

³⁹ NGO Law Monitor, Egypt. The International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, January 2014. www.icnl.org/research/monitor/egypt.html

Harnessing Mobile Technology to Prevent Sexual Assault in India⁴⁰

INTRODUCTION

The Circle of 6 application for iPhones and Android phones was created by Tech4Good in 2011 in response to a technology challenge, 'Apps Against Abuse', launched by the United States White House. The nationwide competition called on software innovators to harness the power of mobile technology to help prevent dating violence and abuse by keeping young adults connected to trusted friends and providing easy access to important resources for help including local police and abuse hotlines.⁴¹

The Circle of 6 app, which uses SMS and GPS technology, was designed to help prevent and respond to sexual assault and violence on university and college campuses across the U.S by making it easier for students to reach their circle of supporters and let them know their location and what they need at the touch of a button.

Tech 4 Good also wanted the app to serve a global population. After the widely publicised rape and murder of a young woman in New Delhi, and in discussion with colleagues at UN Women which runs the Safe Cities Initiative in New Delhi,⁴² they were motivated to localise the app to support people affected by high levels of sexual violence and assault there.

CONTEXT

In New Delhi, a 2010 study found that 66% of women reported experiencing sexual harassment between two and five times during the past year.⁴³

Mobile phone penetration in India is much higher than for land-lines, with around 700 million subscribers according to the most conservative estimates. In contrast, India had about 97 million regular Internet users at the end of 2011. However, India also has a gender gap in mobile phone access: according to research conducted by the GSMA Development Fund and the Cherie Blair Foundation, only 28 percent of Indian women own a mobile phone, compared with 40 percent of men. An additional 20 percent of women have access to mobile phones through family members or friends.⁴⁴

The Circle of 6 app is one of several technology-inspired solutions that were created to make Indian cities safer in the weeks after the gang-rape and murder of a 23-year-old woman in Delhi. Tech-savvy India responded with innovative mobile apps and websites, such as Sentinel and FightBack that seek to leverage the power of crowdsourcing to alert people to unsafe locations and use global positioning systems in mobile phones to track the location of people in distress.⁴⁵

PROJECT APPROACH

In order to localise the app to the New Delhi context, Tech 4 Good programmed it for use in both English and Hindi, including a specific translation note for the Hindi that makes the app gender-neutral and ensures it speaks to people of all genders and orientations.

⁴⁰ The sources for this case study include an interview with Nancy Schwartzman, Filmmaker and CEO of the company Tech 4 Good, which created the Circle of 6 application (www.circleof6app.com/who-we-are/), and a podcast with Schwartzman on New Security Beat: www.newsecuritybeat.org/2014/02/nancy-schwartzman-fighting-rape-culture-worldwide-emerging-social-technology/#.UxCj9Y5hza0

⁴¹ Apps Against Abuse, 1 is 2 many. The White House, President Barack Obama, 2011. www.whitehouse.gov/1is2many/apps-against-abuse

⁴² Safe Cities Global Initiative, Brief. UN Women, 2013. www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/~/_media/44F28561B84548FE82E24E38E825ABEA.ashx

⁴³ Safe Cities Free of Violence Against Women and Girls Initiative, Baseline Survey Results. Jagori and UN Women, 2011. http://jagori.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Baseline-Survey_layout_for-Print_12_03_2011.pdf

⁴⁴ Roy, Nilanjana S. Mobile Phones Offer Indian Women a Better Life. May 22, 2012. New York Times. www.nytimes.com/2012/05/23/world/asia/23iht-letter23.html

⁴⁵ Shivapriya, N. After Delhi gang-rape, a host of mobile applications offer access to help in times of need. http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2013-01-09/news/36237884_1_mobile-apps-jagdish-mitra-mumbai-police

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Hotlines are now pre-programmed for the recently formed 24-hour women's hotline of New Delhi - women needing help in the nation's capital can now dial 181, and a counselor will offer relevant phone numbers of government agencies and contact the police if necessary or the Jagori advocacy helpline. As a suggested third number, the user is directed to the Lawyer's Collective if calling the police feels unsafe, which for many women it does.

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

- Circle of 6 has had over 100,000 downloads in 32 different countries to date.
- Within a month of the high profile New Delhi rape and murder case, the number of downloads of the app had increased from 400 per month to 3000.

LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

- Testing the app with various different audiences and communities in the U.S has highlighted the role it can play in strengthening peer-to-peer relationships. It can also be a useful form of support for marginalised groups, such as sex workers, undocumented women and Native American women, who feel they can't rely on or trust authorities and legal professionals when they need help and support.
- In reality, most people and particularly poor, rural women and men in India have extremely limited access to smartphones. Circle of 6's efforts are now focused on making resources available for non-smartphone users and tailoring the app to be more useful for women living in rural areas.
- Before localising an app, it is important to understand what infrastructure exists to support vulnerable victims of gender-based violence, such as what legal systems are in place and are safe for victims to use or access. This informs what Tech 4 Good embed into the app, because their aim is always to provide support and empower the victim.
- The organisation is looking at ways to capture quantitative and qualitative data on impact more effectively. Anecdotal evidence gathered to date suggests that users feel safer having the app in their pocket. One user said: 'I don't feel alone, I have an invisible army with me.' Another said they no longer walked home alone having been made more aware of the risks through using the app. Another who was in an abusive relationship said the healthy relationship advice on the app gave her the confidence to have a conversation she had not felt ready for previously.

COSTS, SCALING UP AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Tech 4 Good is a registered company and not an NGO, but it never charges the end user for the app, which can be downloaded for free. Nor does it seek to generate profits, but it does charge institutions, such as US colleges, for the costs of customising and localising apps. At an international level, the company is seeking funding from private individuals, foundations and development institutions to fund work to localise the app in other countries in the global south to avoid putting the financial burden on the governments and organisations of those countries. Associated costs can include costs of translation and maintenance.

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Building technology solutions to address the challenge of domestic violence in Central America and Nepal⁴⁶

INTRODUCTION

The World Bank supports a number of projects that seek to address the issue of gender-based violence in various countries. In January 2013, the Bank, in conjunction with partner organisation Second Muse and a number of local in-country organisations, sponsored and organised a weekend-long 'hackathon' event spanning Central America and Washington DC. It brought together gender equality experts and hundreds of volunteer technology developers who donated their time and talent to create technology-based solutions to tackle domestic violence.

Participants were presented with the challenge of developing an innovative technology-based solution or app using minimal resources that could then be used to assist organisations working to tackle domestic violence. At the end of the two days, prototype apps ranged from SMS-based alert services and web-based programmes to the use of Facebook to target at-risk teenagers.

The success of this event led to the World Bank partnering with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), Young Innovations and the Computer Association of Nepal to sponsor a similar 'hackathon' in Nepal in June 2013. This time more than 100 volunteer technologists along with gender equality experts and practitioners participated, resulting in several prototypes of applications to address specific challenges related to gender-based violence. Three teams won the opportunity to develop their apps with funding from the World Bank.

CONTEXT

The Central American Human Development Report 2009-2010 says violence against women, adolescents and children is the 'hidden' and the 'most invisible face' of public insecurity in the region. According to the study, two out of three women murdered in Central America are killed because of their sex, a phenomenon that is known as femicide.⁴⁷

Gender violence, however, remains largely concealed by prevailing social attitudes that condone it and by the victims' reluctance to report abuse.⁴⁸ Activists say the problem is that most cases of violence against women are not investigated, let alone effectively prosecuted.

In Nepal, according to the 2011 Demographic Health Survey, 22 per cent of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence at least once since age 15, and 9 per cent experienced it within the 12 months prior to the survey. One in ten women reported having experienced sexual violence.⁴⁹ Similarly, another report prepared by Women's Rehabilitation Centre Nepal found that domestic violence topped the list of the forms of violence among Nepali women and girls in 2012.

PROJECT APPROACH

Each hackathon was the result of months of planning. Over a period of three months leading up to the events, hackers and gender equality experts were engaged in a process of defining and refining the specific gender-based challenges that the technology solutions needed to address.

⁴⁶ The main sources for this case study include phone interviews with Maria del Camino Hurtado, Operations Analyst, Central America Country Management Unit, World Bank and Erisha Suwal, Independent Consultant for the World Bank in Nepal and the competition websites: www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/01/22/domestic-violence-hackathon-smartphone-lifesaver and www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/06/16/violence-against-women-hackathon-nepal

⁴⁷ Everyday Agression, Violence Against Women in Latin America. The Economist, Sept, 2013. www.economist.com/news/americas/21586575-laws-punish-domestic-violence-are-too-often-honoured-breach-everyday-aggression

⁴⁸ Adan Silva, J. Central America: Gender-based Violence, the Hidden Face of Insecurity. http://breakingthecircle.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Report_on_violence_in_CentralAmerica.pdf

⁴⁹ UN urges Nepal to have VAW in all gender inclusion plans. eKantipur, Nov 2013. www.ekantipur.com/2013/11/27/national/un-urges-nepal-to-have-vaw-in-all-gender-inclusion-plans/381446.html

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The challenges were different for each context. For instance, in Costa Rica there are a lot of reports of date violence, so hackers were asked to develop a tool that would enable vulnerable young women to recognise and identify harmful behavioural patterns displayed by their boyfriends. In Nicaragua, organisations wanted to find a way to provide information to young mothers and vulnerable communities on domestic violence and HIV/AIDS through basic mobile phones to overcome how uncomfortable many of them feel about requesting this information in person.

Hackers then came together for the two-day hackathons where they were given 48 hours to develop their concepts and then 10 minutes to present and demonstrate their prototypes. These were judged on their potential impact, sustainability and quality of the product by a panel of experts from a range of disciplines, including women's rights and technology-related fields. After the hackathon, the winning prototypes that showed the most potential received support from the World Bank (staff time, facilitating meetings with potential backers) to further develop their concepts.

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

- The Latin America hackathon resulted in 42 prototypes, eight of which received practical support from the World Bank, contributing to the development and piloting of the concepts by the winning teams. In Nepal, 18 prototypes were presented and there were three winning applications, which are currently being developed and tested. The World Bank has also supported participating organisations to secure meetings with possible funding partners, such as corporates interested in supporting such initiatives through their corporate social responsibility work.
- In El Salvador, the winning application has received interest from the Ministry of Health and the team is about to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Police Department of San Salvador to support implementation. The project has also won a Friday Award, which support technology-based solutions for development.
- Some winning examples that have since been operationalised include: a SMS and web-integrated hotline in El Salvador that provides information on gender-related violence and how to report an incident and protect victims through direct contact with human rights advocates and designated government institutions. This secure, low-cost, alternative communications platform, known as Matilti Feminista,⁵⁰ operates through a customised SMS system and is currently being piloted by a collective of feminist organisations and human rights defenders.⁵¹
- In Nepal an initiative called 'FightVAW'⁵² has been established to support the development and piloting of the winning applications. This includes the 'Your Voice Our Support' application. The 'Your Voice Our Support' application enables survivors or witnesses of gender-based violence to report cases either via calling a helpline or via SMS. A machine answers the helpline and allows users to record a message. The message is transcribed by one of a number of closely networked gender-based violence organisations and the case is then referred on to the appropriate organisation which will call the person back and offer support, as required. The project has been running for around three months and has resulted in 15 cases to date. The partners are currently conducting outreach to promote uptake of the service in five target areas of Kathmandu and are also encouraging community police to make the number available to victims. The main implementing partners include a private software company called Young Innovations, SAATHI, TPO-Nepal (an organisation offering psycho-social counselling) and AAWAAJ that provides assistance to survivors of violence in Western Nepal.

⁵⁰ Matilti Feminista: <http://matilti.colectivafeminista.org.sv/>

⁵¹ Paving the Road For Freedom and Equality. MesoAmerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative, January 2014. <http://protectionline.org/files/2014/02/WHRD-Paving-the-Road-for-Freedom-Equality.pdf>

⁵² Fight VAW: <http://www.fightvaw.org/about>

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LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

- There was a great deal of discussion during both hackathons about security risks for both the target users of the technology and the organisations promoting use of these tools. To counter some of these risks, developers explored options such as ways of erasing your web history and using phone numbers that are not traceable.
- While organisations fighting gender-based violence are mostly led by women, programmers were mostly men, and all of them confirmed that participating in the initiative had changed their view on the subject. In addition, some of the prototypes that came out of the hackathon were specifically aimed at boys, such as the Coaching Boys into Men app,⁵³ a digital toolkit to teach boys about healthy relationships, consent and respecting girls.
- The application of these technologies in development contexts requires building the capacity of project staff to understand how to use and apply the tools and to engage with tech companies so that the NGO is fully in control of the implementation and application of the technology. It also takes time to build trust and confidence in new technologies amongst other key partners, such as government ministries, particularly in a context like Nepal where filing of cases is still paper-based.

FUNDING, SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE-UP

- The Latin America Hackathon cost approximately \$200,000 and resulted in 8 new applications. A lot of these technologies are relatively simple and therefore not expensive to develop and many of the hackers are prepared to develop software on a pro-bono basis.
- The World Bank found that businesses with strong corporate social responsibility commitments were quite responsive to funding these projects, although undoubtedly leverage from the World Bank itself helped.
- The hackathons helped to create networks of hackers that had never worked together before to develop technology solutions to a major development challenge. They also helped to create awareness amongst grassroots human rights organisations that technology may be able to support their interventions in meaningful ways.
- Scaling up and sustaining these types of projects requires attention to issues like building capacity, adequate technical support and mobile accessibility and penetration, but with strong local ownership these interventions are possible.

⁵³ Coaching Boys into Men: www.coachescorner.org/

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is difficult to draw meaningful comparisons between the different projects, which vary considerably in terms of the context in which they are working, the nature of the technology-based solution they have developed and the resources they draw on. Nevertheless, the learning from these case studies does reveal some common themes and challenges, many of which resonate with the findings of the literature review.

(1) ADDRESSING ISSUES OF ACCESS

All of the case studies demonstrate the power that new technologies have to transcend obstacles such as distance, bureaucracy, strict governmental controls over freedom of speech, insecurity and, in some cases, illiteracy, enabling organisations to offer support to individuals and communities that may have been previously excluded from traditional gender-based violence interventions. For example, in Egypt the use of technology has allowed HarassMap, an organisation based in a capital city to connect with individuals living in distant, rural areas, and in Afghanistan, STATT has been able to counsel women living in Taliban-controlled areas.

The implications for organisations working to tackle gender-based violence, particularly in conflict-affected countries where the challenges created by insecurity and weak infrastructure can seem particularly intractable, are quite profound – increasing and diversifying the ways in which they can report violence, educate women about their rights, mobilise collectively to advocate for change and monitor and evaluate their work.

Nevertheless, in spite of their potential, many of these technology-based solutions are still very limited in their reach at present. Largely, it seems, because the communities with the greatest need still lack the means, due to cultural, social and financial barriers, to access mobile and internet technology.

This is particularly true of applications that rely on smart-phone technology. For example, while the Circle of 6 app offers US college students and urban, tech-savvy women and girls in New Delhi a simple, yet powerful tool to help prevent gender-based violence before it happens, it doesn't, in its current form, meet the needs of poor, rural women who still face considerable obstacles in accessing and using such technologies.

Even the initiative implemented by Media Matters for Women in Sierra Leone, which explicitly targets rural women and girls, found that the costs of purchasing basic memory cards for mobile phones are prohibitive for many of the women and girls in the communities they target.

Organisations planning to use technology-based solutions in their work need to consider the assumptions they may be making about the ability of vulnerable women and girls and communities to access mobile and internet technologies and explore how these will be addressed when planning, developing and adapting their interventions for local contexts.

(2) WORKING IN AN INTEGRATED, GENDER-SENSITIVE WAY

All of those interviewed emphasised the importance of locating and embedding technology-based solutions within a wider programme of 'offline' work to tackle gender-based violence and promote women's rights and gender equality. For women's rights organisations like SAWA, HarassMap and APC, the technology is central to their work, but is just one of a number of tools they are employing to address gender-based violence. Others, such as Circle of 6, have developed the technology independently of a wider programme of work, but have linked with organisations working in the field for advice on localising the technology to a new context and have, for instance, embedded in the technology links to organisations that can provide users with further support.

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However, as the advent of technology-based interventions brings new and different actors, such as technology developers, mobile phone companies and internet firms, to the field of gender-based violence interventions, many of whom are motivated to develop 'technical' solutions, but may pay little attention to the issues of power and inequality that underpin the use and uptake of technology-based solutions, it is critically important that a gender and power analysis forms part of the process of planning and developing these new approaches and that interventions are adapted accordingly.

Most of the organisations interviewed as part of this research are women's rights organisations for whom the promotion of gender equality and women's rights is at the core of their work. However, they too may make assumptions about the different needs or roles of women and men and how their respective behaviours may affect the aspect of gender-based violence they may be seeking to address.

For instance, prior to establishing HarassMap, some of the founding members conducted a traditional study of attitudes towards sexual harassment involving 1000 women (as victims) and 1000 men (as harassers). However, when HarassMap started using crowdsourcing technology to map cases of sexual harassment it became clear that some men were also experiencing harassment perpetrated by both women and men. This forced them to challenge their assumptions and eliminate some of the biases in their research and be more gender-aware in their responses.

Linking up with other service-providers to ensure technology-based solutions are part of a holistic response to the issue of gender-based violence can be challenging: organisations that provide referrals (STATT, HarassMap & SAWA) all reported finding it difficult to measure and ensure the quality and relevance of the services offered by other service-providers on the ground. Identifying these challenges as part of the process of developing technology-based solutions can help organisations understand the potential impact of the uptake and effectiveness of the intervention, even if they don't have the means to address them. It also highlights the importance of working in close partnership with other key stakeholders at local and national level to develop a better understanding of where the gaps in capacity may exist and need to be addressed.

Organisations using technology-based solutions to tackle gender-based violence need to ensure their interventions are conceived and delivered in an integrated and gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive way if they are to empower women, rather than compound the challenges they face. Technology developers need to work in close partnership with gender-based violence experts to ensure gender equality issues are integrated throughout the process of designing and implementing solutions.

(3) ETHICAL AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

The research points to a number of potential ethical and security risks posed by using mobile and internet technologies to address gender-based violence, including: threats to the privacy, confidentiality and security of online and mobile communications; the lack of clear standards surrounding the delivery of services using these technologies; risks and disruption to the organisation through attacks on the technology itself; and the harassment and abuse of users.

Several of the organisations interviewed highlighted the new ways in which online and mobile communications can potentially breach confidentiality, security and privacy through for instance, the interception of data, listening in to phone calls and accessing SMS messages. Some have introduced measures to mitigate some of these risks: SAWA, for instance, has introduced a fingerprinting system to identify volunteers when they arrive at the Call Centre and banned the use of USBs in its Call Centre; but the responses suggest more consideration needs to be given to how to manage potential threats. A full assessment of the security and risk-management procedures of each organisation was beyond the scope of this research, but the findings suggest these are not developing in line with the pace at which the technologies are evolving.

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None of the organisations interviewed had experienced direct threats to their own security and the security of their systems, with the exception of HarassMap which had received a number of fake reports of sexual harassment. But the nature and sensitivity of their work potentially makes them vulnerable to a variety of threats, including specific threats associated with working as women's human rights defenders.⁵⁴

There are ethical considerations at stake too: for instance, if violent partners find out that their partner is using the internet and/or mobile to report violence, seek help or even to reach out and join other social networks, this can often result in an escalation of violence. Also, if the technology-based solution is not delivered in an appropriate manner that takes account of these risks this can make women and girls even more vulnerable.

One of the ways in which STATT has sought to address the cultural obstacles women face in accessing and using mobile phones in Afghanistan is to frame the hotline as a 'family support helpline' and ensure that male household members are targeted in its marketing and outreach, to eliminate any potential suspicion and resistance to the project.

The Nepalese intervention, 'Your Voice, Our Support,' is piloting the use of a machine to answer and record calls from women reporting violence, which are then transcribed and passed to a specialist organisation that will call the woman back. However, as the organisation highlighted, there are risks associated with this: if a service provider calls the victim at home there is a possibility that an abusive partner may overhear or be on the phone. For this reason, it will monitor, and if necessary, review this function during the piloting phase, but there are concerns that other organisations are not giving due consideration to these risks.

Technology-based solutions to gender-based violence need to assess the ethical implications of their work and include security and risk-management procedures to protect both the organisation and the end user from harm and/or liability.

(4) DESIGNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALABILITY

Funding is central to the question of sustainability. This is a nascent area of work and there is no information in the available literature about the financing available for these types of initiatives. Only one of the organisations interviewed (SAWA) reported it was confident it would be able to secure long-term funding to sustain its hotline. Most felt that the interest of new actors, such as technology companies, in this area of work had yet to translate into additional funding. These findings are consistent with the broader picture of funding for women's rights work: recent research by the Association for Women's Rights in Development finds that the current spotlight on women and girls in international development has had relatively little impact on improving the funding situation for a large majority of women's organisations around the world. In 2010, the median annual income of over 740 women's organizations around the world was USD 20,000.⁵⁵

That said, however, several organisations (SAWA, Media Matters for Women, HarassMap) reported receiving pro-bono support from technology providers and/or funding via the corporate social responsibility funds of private companies.

A number of organisations also pointed to the costs of and technical challenges inherent in developing and using new technologies as a challenge to the sustainability of their work, although in most instances the biggest costs were associated with start-up and then decreased afterwards.

⁵⁴ The Global Report on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders. Women Human Rights Defenders Coalition, October 2012. <http://awid.org/Library/Global-Report-on-the-Situation-of-Women-Human-Rights-Defenders>

⁵⁵ Beyond Investing in Women and Girls: An In-depth look at the funding landscapes for Women's Rights and the powerful impacts of resources in the hands of women's organizations. Association for Women's Rights in Development, Jan 2014. www.awid.org/Library/Beyond-investing-in-women-and-girls-An-in-depth-look-at-the-funding-landscape-for-women-s-rights-and-the-powerful-impact-of-resources-in-the-hands-of-women-s-organizations

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Those interviewed believe there are potential applications of these interventions beyond the original context, but factors such as the need for translation, adaptation to the specific cultural and socio-economic context of the target community and/or country and the need to locate technology-based interventions within a broader programme of work to address gender-based violence are essential.

Greater consideration needs to be given to how to incorporate sustainability into the design of mobile and internet applications to address gender-based violence.

(5) LACK OF EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

None of the interventions outlined in these case studies have been empirically tested. Where evaluations are available, these are largely qualitative assessments with a focus on process and immediate results and outcomes. In a number of cases, the evidence of effectiveness comes from statements, reports and interviews conducted by the organisations themselves.

One of the organisations, HarassMap, is currently engaged in research with IDRC to assess how the technologies themselves can become the tools for measuring change and impact. Furthermore, as outlined in the 'overview' section of this report, mobile and internet technology is being used elsewhere to generate data that can supplement or even improve more traditional methods. However, for the most part, the organisations interviewed said they are struggling to put in place appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools.

One of the reasons for this, according to some of those interviewed (STATT, HarassMap, SAWA), is the challenge of balancing the confidentiality of clients and beneficiaries with the need for evidence of impact in the lives of individual women. This obstacle is not unique to these types of interventions and the need for data always needs to be balanced against the risk of harm that could occur in the collection and dissemination of the data. Another reason cited was the speed with which many of these technologies are being developed and the failure of impact measurements to keep pace.

The small scale of some of these initiatives and the challenges of understaffing and underfunding that many of the organisations running them face undoubtedly rules out comprehensive impact assessments involving qualitative and quantitative data collection and counterfactuals. Clearly, the kind of impact assessment required for a multi-year, multi-country initiative, will be very different from the type of evaluation needed for some of the smaller initiatives described here, where often a combination of an experienced evaluator's own judgment and in-depth conversations will be sufficient to assess any modifications that may need to be made to the project.

Again, this challenge is not unique to interventions that make use of technology. There is a lack of impact evaluations of gender-based violence prevention and response work more generally, largely due to challenges of how to attribute change, the fact that gender norms and trends take such a long time to change and a lack of consensus around how to define and operationalise indicators of progress, particularly qualitative indicators.

Nevertheless, it's clear the lack of monitoring and evaluations currently built into many of these interventions is leading to an absence of information about how the technologies are being used and what is and isn't working. This has implications for the replicability and scalability of the work.

Monitoring and evaluation of the role of technology in gender-based violence interventions needs to be costed and built into interventions from the outset if these approaches are to meet standards for evidence. Donors need to provide organisations, particularly small, women's rights organisations, with the technical and financial support required to conduct robust monitoring and evaluation.

(6) DESIGNING USER-CENTRIC APPLICATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

The scope of this study did not allow for interviews with beneficiaries and users of some of these interventions, but a review of the literature suggests there is very little information about how the voices of women and girls and boys and men from the communities of the interventions have been involved in informing the development of these new technologies.

One study that is seeking to address this knowledge gap is a mapping project by UN Women on women's and girls' access to and use of mobile phones to prevent, document and respond to the issue of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces in Rio de Janeiro, Marrakech and Delhi. The initiative is part of UN Women's Safe Cities Global Initiative which seeks to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive approaches to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in cities.

Gender-based violence is a sensitive and often taboo topic in many cultures and there is a real danger that solutions will fail or do more harm than good if they are developed and implemented without input from and consultation with the target groups they purport to help. Attention to gender differences, cultural appropriateness and the needs of victims and survivors in the design, implementation, testing and analysis of technology-based applications and solutions is essential.

Technology developers and gender equality advocates need to ensure the users (women and girls and boys and men) play a central role in informing the development of technology-based responses. There also needs to be more studies that analyse how the perspectives of the users are included.