

METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

Manuel Contreras-Urbina, Jeannie Annan, and Maureen Murphy

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WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss key issues related to generating evidence on violence against women and girls (VAWG) in conflict and humanitarian settings.
2. To discuss challenges of researching VAWG in conflict and humanitarian settings and potential strategies to overcome these challenges.

WORKSHOP AGENDA

- 9:00-9:15** **Welcome remarks, workshop objectives and participant introduction**
- 9:15-9:45** **Introduction to conducting GBV research in conflict and humanitarian settings**
- 9:45-11:00** **Group Work Session 1: Main methodological and conceptual challenges and potential solutions**
1. Understanding GBV and using a gendered approach to research in conflict settings
 2. Defining and addressing conflict in research approaches
 3. Methodological considerations for research designs in conflict settings
- 11:00-11:15** **Coffee Break**
- 11:15-12:15** **Group Work Session 2: Main ethical and safety challenges and potential solutions**
1. Reducing re-traumatization and establishing referral services
 2. Study considerations: Security and logistics
 3. Privacy and confidentiality
- 12:15-12:30** **Wrap up**

GBV IN CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

Women and girls may be at increased risk of violence in conflict and humanitarian crises due to displacement, the breakdown of social structures, a lack of law enforcement, the potential further entrenchment of harmful gender norms, and the loss of livelihood opportunities for both men and women in the community, among other reasons.

While research has found that sexual violence often does increase during times of armed conflict, women and girls are most at risk of violence at the hands of an intimate partner.

Ecological Framework for Exposures to VAWG in conflict and post conflict situations

Societal

During Conflict

- Social and cultural norms that discriminate against women
- Culture of impunity
- Emphasis on hyper-masculinities as facets of warfare

Post Conflict

- Social and cultural norms that discriminate against women
- VAWG not addressed in peace agreements, truth and reconciliation commissions
- Lack of rule of law
- Culture of impunity

Community

During Conflict

- Ongoing community and inter-communal violence
- Targeting of women and girls for rape and killing
- Abducting women and girls into armed groups
- Acceptance of traditional gender roles
- Lack of economic opportunities due to instability

Post Conflict

- Stigma against re-integration of former combatants and abductees
- Normalization of violence and continued acts of rape, etc.
- Acceptance of traditional gender roles
- Ongoing lack of economic opportunities for women



Institutional

During Conflict

- Armed actors using rape as a weapon of war
- Lack of participation of women in peace negotiations
- VAWG not addressed in peace agreements

Post Conflict

- Lack of women accessing justices through transitional justice mechanisms
- Lack of gender sensitivity in the security sector
- Lack of appropriate legal frameworks of justice system to address post-conflict VAWG
- Lack of transitional justice mechanisms to address conflict related VAWG
- Insufficient DDR practices
- Suppressed independent civil society

Women and Girls

During Conflict

- Age and education
- Employment or engagement in livelihoods
- Displaced from home community
- Experiences within armed groups as combatants or abductees
- Acceptance of VAWG as normal
- Experiences of VAWG in childhood

Post Conflict

- Age and education
- Employment or engagement in livelihoods
- Displaced from home community
- Reintegration experience of former combatants or abductees
- Acceptance of VAWG as normal
- Experiences of VAWG in childhood

Relationship

During Conflict

- Increased stresses on the household including increased poverty, displacement, etc.
- Increased controlling behaviors
- Lack of ability for men to fulfill traditional masculine roles
- Lack of shared decision making and equitable division of labour

Post Conflict

- Re-integration of combatants into the household
- Lack of shared decision making and equitable division of labour within the household

GAPS IN RESEARCH

Overall, GBV research, monitoring and evaluation efforts are increasing among refugee and conflict-affected populations. However, these efforts are often mixed in quality and raise ethical questions, reducing the utility of their findings.

A review of evidence on VAWG in humanitarian settings revealed several key gaps in knowledge:

- Accurate prevalence data
- The linkages between different types of VAWG and the different stages of crises
- Impact evaluations, specifically rigorous evaluations of service delivery programs
- Standardized methodology for collecting data on VAWG in humanitarian settings

METHODOLOGIES EMPLOYED IN THE FIELD

Table 1: Methodologies Employed by Studies on VAWG in Conflict and Humanitarian Crises

	Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods	Mixed Methods	Total
Cross Sectional Surveys	Service Based Data	Focus Groups and Interviews	Quantitative and Qualitative Methods	
57	9	42	22	130

Figure 1: Primary Outcomes Under Investigation

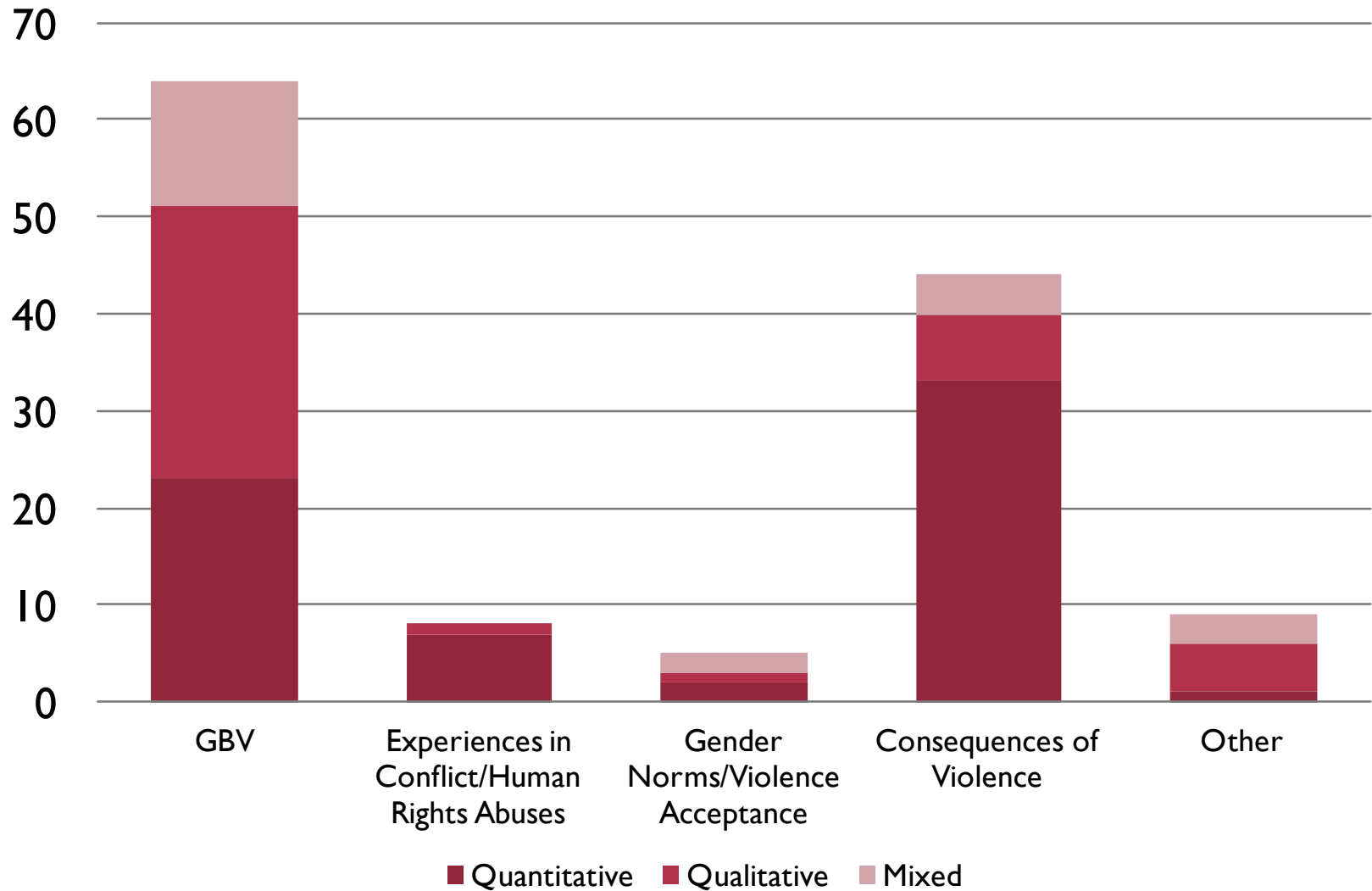
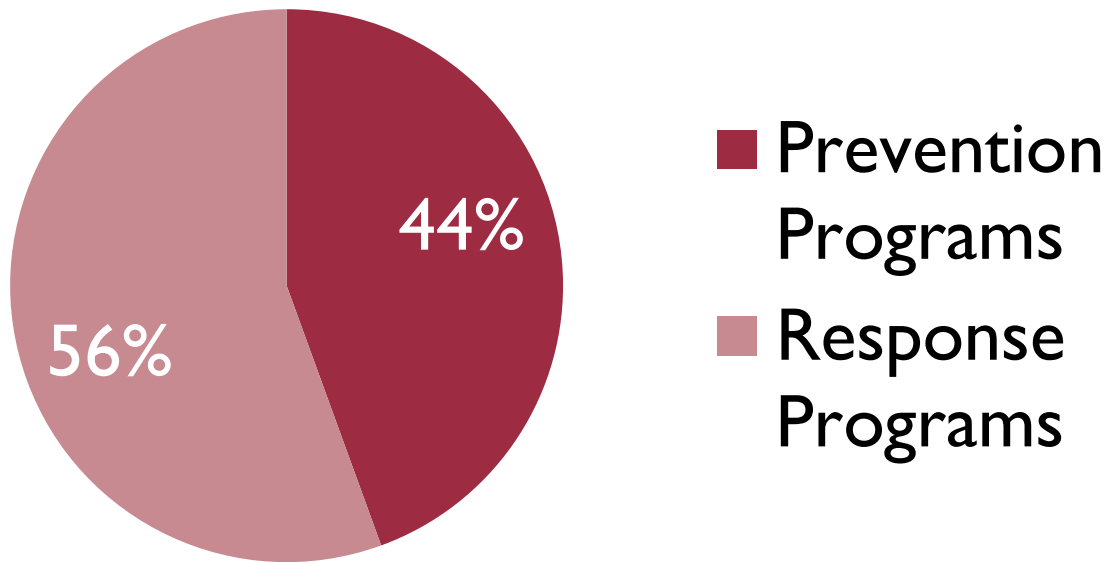


Figure 2: Types of Evaluations (n=18)



BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DOING RESEARCH ON GBV IN CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

- **The study benefits must outweigh the risks.** Ethical and safety considerations that are made when collecting data on sensitive subjects such as GBV take on a new importance in conflict- and emergency-affected populations.
- **Utilize a gender approach.** GBV is a complex public health problem rooted in unequal power dynamics and inequitable gender norms. For this reason, any research or monitoring and evaluation activity on GBV should be based on a gendered approach.
- **Utilize a participatory approach that engages the entire community.** Research activities should aim to involve and empower local communities and ensure that results can be used by and for the affected community, themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Address key gaps in evidence with targeted research
2. Incorporate program monitoring and evaluation into program budgets and implementation plans
3. Explore the linkages between VAWG and different phases of conflict
4. Design and evaluate programs targeting adolescent girls
5. Evaluate programs addressing IPV in conflict and humanitarian settings
6. Coordinate safe and ethical sharing of data
7. Conduct research in safe and ethical manner

GROUP WORK SESSION 1: MAIN METHODOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

1. Understanding VAWG and using a gendered approach to research in conflict settings
2. Defining and addressing conflict in research approaches
3. Methodological considerations for research designs in conflict settings

GROUP WORK SESSION 2: MAIN ETHICAL AND SAFETY CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

1. Reducing re-traumatization and establishing referral services
2. Study considerations: security and logistics
3. Privacy and confidentiality