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From Research to Action

Topics covered in this chapter:

Outreach to key constituencies
 Matching your message to your audience
 Sharing findings with the community
 Reaching beyond your borders

Research is a means to an end. A researcher's task is only complete once the findings from a research project are put into the hands of the individuals and organizations positioned to use them. For violence research, this generally includes policy makers, legislators, advocacy groups, the academic community, service providers, and the respondents themselves.

This chapter briefly highlights some creative ways that different research teams have approached these challenges.

OUTREACH TO KEY CONSTITUENCIES

Research can either be a positive force for change or it can sit on a shelf, advancing only the career paths of individual investigators. The field of international violence research is filled with examples of both.

In the past, it was not uncommon for women's groups and others working on violence to be totally unaware that research on violence had been conducted in their country, often by foreign investigators or

university-based researchers who presented their results only at international conferences or in academic journals.

Fortunately this approach is being supplanted by a new ethic of research in which researchers and advocates join forces to ensure that research findings are used for social change. This section includes several examples of how different research teams have used their findings strategically to change laws, influence policy, design service programs, and place the issue of violence against women on the public agenda.

The first step is to make a list of different constituent groups and individuals that should be made aware of the research findings. The study's advisory group will be particularly helpful in this regard. Next strategize about the different means and venues available for reaching these

Example of a Stakeholder List

- *Ministry of Health*
- *Office of Women's Affairs*
- *Members of Parliament, especially Women's Commissions*
- *Local women's groups/networks*
- *Local rape crisis center*
- *Local journalists*
- *School of Public Health*
- *Department of Justice*
- *Local radio—call-in show*
- *School of Social Work*
- *Catholic diocese*
- *Municipal authorities*

audiences. Also recognize that the type of message and style of presentation that will be persuasive to different audiences will likely vary. (See Matching Your Message to Your Audience, below.)

Let's Create Love and Peace in Intimate Relationships: National dissemination of research findings in Thailand

It may be possible to reach a number of target groups at once by holding a stakeholder meeting or a symposium at which the results are presented and discussed. Members of the Thai research team of the WHO multi-country study, for example, worked with the Task Force to End Violence Against Women and the Coalition for Women's Advancement to organize a month-long program of activities on violence against women in Thailand. The month was kicked off with a press conference to present the Thai findings from the WHO multi-country study and to highlight current activities of organizations working to eliminate violence and gender discrimination in Thailand.

FIGURE 14.1 LET'S CREATE LOVE AND PEACE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS WAS THE MESSAGE TIED TO THE DISSEMINATION OF STUDY RESULTS IN THAILAND



To unify the campaign and project a positive image, the researchers developed an eye-catching logo and printed 20,000 stickers with the slogan “Let’s create love and peace in intimate relationships.” In addition, the team distributed over 2,000 fact sheets and posters about violence against women (see Figure 14.1). The key activity of the month was a two-day national seminar, held at the National Women’s Council in Bangkok, and attended by more than 400 people. On the first day, the research team made an official presentation of the research and its findings. On the second day, six women with direct experiences of violence shared their own stories of pain and survival followed by presentations by other researchers and well-known experts in the field. Outside the seminar room, various concerned organizations set up exhibit booths to advertise their organizations and services.

The research team evaluated the impact of the activities throughout the ensuing months, including tracking coverage of the findings in the media. Overall, the research findings were presented at events in more than 20 provinces. Significantly, findings on the prevalence of forced sex in marriage also proved critical to a legislative campaign to amend Article 276 of Thailand’s criminal code that gave immunity to men who rape their wives.

Silence for the Sake of Harmony: Engaging local leaders in the dissemination of results in Indonesia

The SEHATI Research Project, a partnership between Gadjah Mada University and Rifka Annisa Women’s Crisis Center (both in Indonesia), Umeå University in Sweden, and PATH, carried out a prevalence study in Central Java that showed that one in ten women had been physically abused by an intimate partner. To reach a wider audience, researchers asked the Queen of the Province of Yogyakarta in Central Java to host the launch of their report. The launch was attended by local authorities, media,



FIGURE 14.2 STUDY REPORT FROM CENTRAL JAVA, WHICH INCLUDED PREFACES FROM THE QUEEN OF THE PROVINCE OF YOGYAKARTA, THE INDONESIAN MINISTER OF HEALTH, AND THE MINISTER OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT



(From Hakimi et al, 2002.)

and religious and community leaders. The Queen also wrote a preface to the violence report, lending legitimacy to this once taboo area of research. A similar session was held in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, hosted by the Minister of Health and the Minister of Women's Empowerment, both of whom also wrote prefaces for the report (Figure 14.2).

MATCHING YOUR MESSAGE TO YOUR AUDIENCE

A key to achieving impact is to tailor your message to the various audiences that you seek to influence. The language, style, and message that may be persuasive to one group may be wholly unconvincing—or unintelligible—to another. The way the data are presented also should vary. For

technical, academic, or policy audiences, it is important to follow scientific convention and to include all required background information so that others can evaluate the findings, such as sample size, measures of significance, and margins of error. For other audiences, this information is merely confusing and detracts from the message.

Candies in Hell: Using research for social change in Nicaragua

A good example of how the same information can be adapted to different audiences comes from the Nicaraguan Network of Women Against Violence. The Network collaborated with researchers from the University of Nicaragua in León and Sweden's Umeå University to conduct in-depth interviews of battered women and a household survey on the rate of domestic violence among women in León. The basic

FIGURE 14.3 PRESENTING RESEARCH RESULTS IN DIFFERENT WAYS FOR DIVERSE AUDIENCES IN NICARAGUA



(From Ellsberg et al, 1997² and Ellsberg et al, 1999.³)

finding of the study—that 52 percent of ever-married women ages 15–49 have been hit, slapped, or beaten by a partner—was presented in a variety of ways to make different points to different audiences.

The results were presented in a publication using graphs and charts to appeal to the professional and scientific communities.

To influence health policy and the behavior of health workers, researchers and the Network cosponsored a symposium at the medical school in León, where the results were presented to local providers, health-related NGOs, and ministry staff. The same presentations were later repeated for a national audience at the public health



school in Managua. Here, the emphasis was on the health consequences of abuse and the potential role of health workers in responding to the problem.

These meetings helped launch several initiatives, including the production of a specialized manual for health workers on responding to abuse and the development of educational material on violence for incorporation into medical school and nursing curricula.

To reach community members, especially women, the Network published the findings in the form of a popular booklet entitled *Ya No Quiero Confites en el Infierno* (I No Longer Want Candies in Hell). The booklet told the story of Ana Cristina, one of the informants in the study, and the booklet's margins included easy-to-understand statistics drawn from the survey. The booklet included basic information about where women could get help as well as questions to guide group discussions (see Figure 14.3).

The prevalence data were also mentioned in a pocket-sized card urging battered women to get help, under the title "You are not alone: recent studies have shown that one out of every two women has been beaten by her husband, and one out of every four is beaten each year."

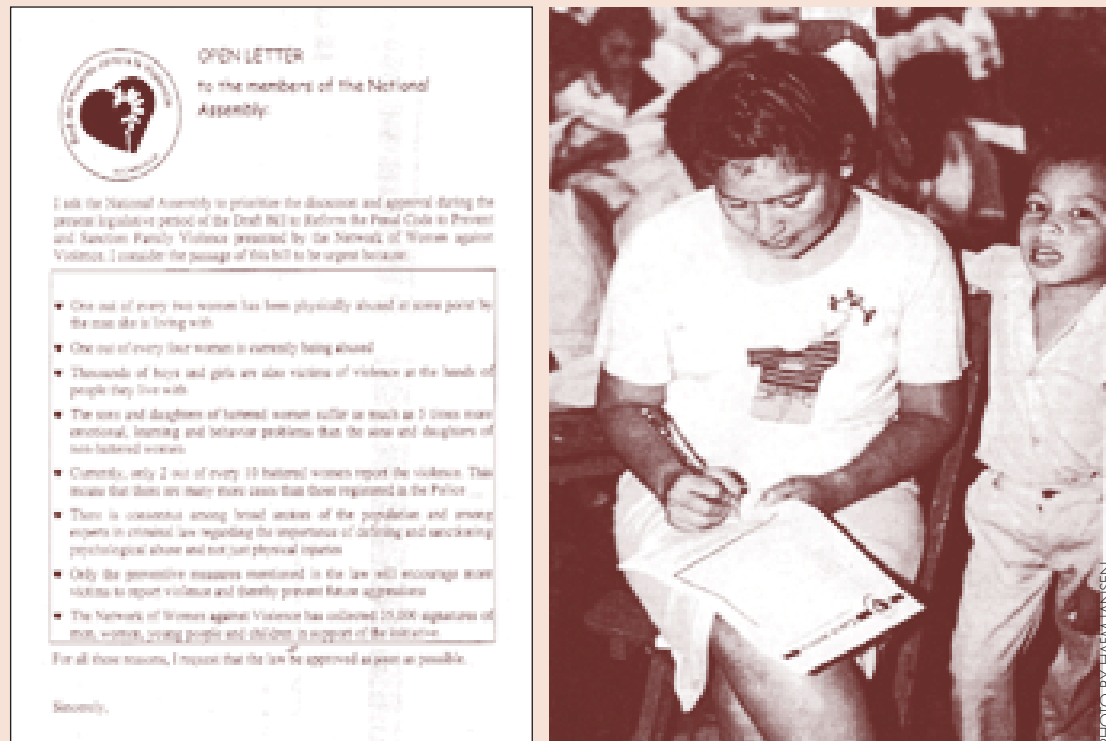
Several activities were also undertaken to reach legislators and to use the results of the study to push for new domestic violence legislation. The results were included in the Preamble of the Draft Penal Code Reforms for the Prevention and Sanction of Family Violence, which was drafted and presented to the National Assembly by the National Network of Women Against Violence. But more significantly, the findings were translated into simple language and incorporated into a national petition campaign asking legislators to approve the domestic violence bill pending before the National Assembly. Network members held "petition-signing parties" and reproduced the petition as a full-page, tear-out ad in the national newspaper. In a few months, more than 16,000 signatures were obtained and presented in great packages to parliamentarians. They were so overwhelmed by the public pressure, especially since it was an election year, that they voted unanimously to pass the law (Figure 14.4).

SHARING FINDINGS WITH THE COMMUNITY

One step often overlooked in research is the process of communicating findings back to the community. Traditionally research has been an "extractive" process whereby results and insights derived from the research seldom make their way back to the original respondents. In recent years, there has been a move toward "giving something back" to the community in addition to sharing the results of research with policy makers, opinion leaders, and front-line providers. As the quote from the respondent in Papua New Guinea makes clear, community members appreciate the opportunity to see what comes of the time they invest with researchers.

"I would like to ask if you find something to help us or to help us know more, can you please come again? Do not take our stories without coming back and telling us what you have learned."
Woman from Papua New Guinea

FIGURE 14.4 PETITION TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, CITING THE LEÓN RESEARCH AND ASKING FOR A NEW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAW TO BE PASSED



These letters were distributed in community meetings, parties, and through the newspapers. The National Network of Women Against Violence collected more than 16,000 signatures in the space of a few weeks.

(From Ellsberg et al, 1997.²)

Sometimes this process of sharing can take the form of directly communicating the findings back to the community via workshops or focus groups. Sharing preliminary results with community members can be an excellent way to test the validity of findings—do they ring true to those who participated in the research? Respondents may also be able to offer insights that are helpful in interpreting surprising or unexpected findings.

**Community Theater:
Disseminating research findings
in Liberia, Uganda, and Kenya**

Investigators have also used a variety of innovative techniques to communicate the essence of research findings back to low-literacy populations. In Liberia, for example,

researchers studying sexual coercion during war translated their findings into drama vignettes to communicate their results back to rural women. Based on survey findings, the researchers derived a profile that represented the average experiences of the women surveyed. Local health promoters then worked with researchers to develop a storyline that reflected the experiences of the majority of women in the survey. The health promoters acted out the experiences that women discussed in the survey and then the community discussed the “results.”²⁴ Similar techniques were used in Uganda by the organizations CEDOVIP and Raising Voices (See Figure 14.5).

In Kenya, theater was used to communicate findings of a study carried out by the Kenya Adolescent Reproductive Health



FIGURE 14.5 UGANDAN COMMUNITY THEATER GROUP PERFORMS A PLAY ON THE LINK BETWEEN HIV AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN A KAMPALA MARKET



PHOTO BY M. ELSBERG

Project (KARHP). The project was launched to bring reproductive health education and support to communities in Vihiga and Busia districts. Dozens of parents, teachers, religious and political leaders, health clinic staff, and hundreds of young people, chosen for their capacity to speak candidly to their peers, were recruited by KARHP to reach out with information on sexual violence, sexually transmitted diseases, and other reproductive health issues.

Like most development programs, KARHP used baseline and diagnostic studies to evaluate its effect on the communities it serves. But the question was how to communicate those findings to the relative stakeholders—people and organizations in a position to interpret, even improve on how such information relates to our work. Using a new dissemination methodology, KARHP found two innovative ways:

1. The project implementation team drafted a summary report containing key findings

and presented them to stakeholders—many of whom did not speak English—in simple format and language.

2. The team then selected two local youth theatre groups—*Visions 3000* based in Kakamega and Mwangaza in Mambale

Dancers and drummers opening a street theater performance in Kampala, Uganda.



PHOTO BY M. ELSBERG

CEDOVIP activists carry out informal discussions with men under a mural painting on domestic violence in Kampala, Uganda.



PHOTO BY M. ELISBERG

District—and trained them to present key learnings in an entertaining and visually exciting manner. To prepare, the actors were provided with a presentation of the major findings, general information on adolescent reproductive health, and tips on communication skills. A theater consultant worked with both groups to develop “storylines” for skits that required audience participation.

Both the skits and the summary report were then presented in three locations in western Kenya to an audience that included government staff, religious leaders, village elders, local groups, and community members. Not only was the information shared with the community, but the researchers had an opportunity to vet their findings and ask the community if the skits represented their communities. These research dissemination sessions helped the community to articulate their situation and own the problems. Then,

with everyone sharing a joint understanding of the situation, the community was actively engaged in designing interventions to respond to the challenges that young people face today.⁵

Reaching communities through traditional art: The Jijenge! mural campaign against violence in Tanzania^{6,7}

In a similar effort, staff members at Jijenge!, a women’s health center in Mwanza, Tanzania, took great pains to convey back to the community the results of its needs assessment on domestic violence. (See Box 5.2 for a description of the participatory study.) This was done through a workshop with the community volunteers and a series of community street meetings. As part of its multifaceted media campaign against violence, Jijenge! also appropriated the folk-art tradition of mural painting as a means to communicate important messages about family violence and gender issues. A series of bright and colorful murals was designed and painted on small walls outside kiosks, shops, and buildings all over Mwanza municipality. The images and simple yet controversial messages were intended to stimulate dialogue. Two primary characters—a woman and man in their early to mid-30s—were created and used in most of the murals. These characters are shown in conversation with each other and the audience (Figure 14.6). One mural, for example, shows the woman with her arm around her husband and the husband confidently stating, “I don’t beat my wife, we talk about our problems instead.” A rights statement such as “Women have a right not to be beaten!” appears in each mural to relate practical life choices to the broader framework of women’s rights. The murals address many issues concerning violence against women, including emotional well-being, solidarity among women, and causal factors of



FIGURE 14.6. MURALS PAINTED ON COMMUNITY WALLS IN TANZANIA AND UGANDA TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY DISCUSSION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



violence such as inequality and economic dependence. Similar techniques are now used successfully by the Ugandan organizations CEDOVIP and Raising Voices, which grew out of the Jijenge! experience in Tanzania.

A disaster that men can prevent: A multimedia campaign targeting Nicaraguan men

In other cases, research is used explicitly as part of a communication for social change strategy. For example, findings from the study on men's violence in Nicaragua (see Box 5.6) were incorporated into a mass media campaign using television and radio commercials, bumper stickers, T-shirts, community workshops, and billboards. The messages targeted men, and referring to Hurricane Mitch that had recently devastated the region, suggested that "Violence against women is one disaster that we men can prevent" (Figure 14.7).

Matlakala's Story: Communication for social change in South Africa

Another example of how effective research

can be in social change efforts is provided by Soul City in South Africa. The Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication produces a prime time television drama, a radio drama in nine languages, and full-color information booklets to promote social change around a variety of health and social issues. Soul City's fourth series focused on gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual harassment. In order to develop the storyline about a woman named Matlakala, formative research was carried out with audience members and experts in the field of gender-based violence. The story also incorporated findings from a survey on violence recently carried out in three provinces by the South African Medical Research Council.⁸ Partnerships were established between Soul City and organizations active in the field, such as the National Network on Violence Against Women, a coalition of 1,500 activists and communication organizations from rural and urban areas. These partnerships aimed to ensure that the messages developed conveyed appropriate and accurate information on

FIGURE 14.7 MEDIA CAMPAIGN FOR MEN CARRIED OUT BY PUNTOS DE ENCUENTRO FOUNDATION IN NICARAGUA BASED ON FINDINGS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



women’s rights, raising awareness of the topic and promoting changes in attitudes, social norms, and practices around gender-based violence to help connect audiences to needed services, including through a toll-free helpline; to promote individual and community action; to create an environment conducive to legislative change; and to develop training materials on gender-based violence for various audiences.

The Soul City series on violence then enlisted independent researchers to evaluate the program through three studies:

- A national survey carried out before the show started, and nine months later, that included face-to-face interviews with 2,000 respondents.
- A sentinel site study conducted several times in a rural and an urban site, with

a cohort sample of 500 respondents at baseline, twice during the time that Soul City’s fourth series was on the air, and post intervention.

- A national qualitative impact assessment composed of 31 focus group interviews and 30 semistructured interviews with community leaders.

The evaluation found an association between exposure to Soul City media and increases in knowledge and awareness of the population regarding domestic violence and domestic violence legislation. The results of the evaluation were presented in numerous documents and peer-reviewed journals, as well as on an easy-to-read fact sheet (Figure 14.8).⁹⁻¹¹

Even more importantly, the show and the research findings helped create a positive



FIGURE 14.8 COMMUNICATION MATERIALS IN ENGLISH AND ZULU AND AN EVALUATION FACT SHEET PRODUCED BY SOUL CITY IN SOUTH AFRICA



social environment for reforming domestic violence legislation.

Elsewhere, researchers have turned to the Internet to publicize findings of domestic violence research and seek input and feedback from a broader constituency. The Thai team of the WHO multi-country

study posted the results of their survey on a local Thai-language web page that included a “bulletin board” where viewers could post their own comments and questions. The web page received thousands of hits and comments during its first month of operation.



The findings of the WHO study in Namibia were published in the popular women's magazine *Sister Namibia*.

TV and radio programs. Materials forwarded to the Center will be entered into the Center's online service, known as POPLINE, and will be featured on the Center's End Violence Against Women web site (<http://www.endvaw.org>). Individuals can search for materials using key words, and copies will be sent to developing country practitioners free of charge.

REACHING BEYOND YOUR BORDERS

In addition to local outreach, it is also important to consider reaching audiences beyond local borders. Given the general lack of data available on violence against women, every research study is a potentially important addition to the global knowledge base.

Consider publishing your results in the academic literature, especially in a peer-reviewed journal indexed in one of the computerized services such as Index Medicus, Psych-Lit, or POPLINE. Then, individuals who search for articles on violence will be able to access your findings.

Additionally, the Center for Communication Programs at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have joined forces to produce a central depository for information on violence against women, including documents, journal articles, training materials, posters, and



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