

Implementing your intervention

Now that you have designed a strategy and thought about how your intervention will work, it's time to consider how you put this into practice.

This section of our toolkit will set out five steps to implementation, reflecting on the success of prior interventions and why these have worked; and why you must consider the underlying context to your target audience that makes your work relatable, easy to understand, and able to make an impact.

Step 1: Consider your context

In order to work, your intervention must be appropriate to the *context* of your target group.

You should consider any varying cultural, socioeconomic, political and developmental perspectives surrounding the issues of child sexual abuse (CSA and child sexual exploitation (CSE)); and how your intervention will work to drive prevention efforts forward whilst avoiding any animosity or additional risk.

Specific areas to think about include:

- Which forms of abuse are most prevalent within the target community; and which forms do you wish to target for prevention?
- Do other forms of abuse (e.g. physical, emotional, neglect) co-exist alongside sexual abuse? What are the specific factors that drive this abuse in your selected population or area?
- Who are the main perpetrators of these forms of abuse? Is it typically family members or authority figures; or one partner in an intimate relationship? Could the exploitation of children be driven by corruption in governmental bodies, or by organised gangs?
- Who is your target audience? If children, could some be survivors of abuse? If perpetrators, could your intervention cause backlash or further harm? What steps can you take to approach your audience sensitively?
- Where does abuse occur? At school or in the workplace; or does abuse appear institutionalised within a sporting, justice or care system?
- Are certain children more at risk, such as those within migrant or refugee communities; or those likely to be trafficked?
- What is the rule of law in your chosen area? Is this consistent with the content of your intervention? For example, the age of consent may vary between different nations.
- Are there underlying social norms that complicate abuse prevention? For example, is child marriage commonplace; or is there a respected power dynamic to consider between victims and perpetrators?
- What political tensions might drive acts of violence against children? Are there any wars or crises that amplify abuse? Is there a demonstrable political will to prevent abuse?

- Will your target population be accessible and receptive to your intervention? For example, does it exclude hard to reach individuals? Who will deliver the intervention? For example, a local outreach worker might engage your audience more than a visiting academic.
- Is it safe and age-appropriate to deliver your intervention? Consider the risk to practitioners, target groups and victims. For example, an empowerment campaign for survivors of abuse may not be appropriate in cultures that criminalise those viewed as victims elsewhere.
- Are the aims of your intervention in line with existing prevention strategies (e.g. via regional or national action plans)?
- Is the outcome of your intervention sustainable? Could it create a long-lasting impact that is economically viable? What local, national and international funding streams could you take advantage of?
- What other barriers might impact the delivery of your programme? Examples might include surrounding social stigma, illiteracy and/or technology illiteracy, poor understanding, and poor information sharing between different protective organisations.

Within the field of preventing child abuse, a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach is not appropriate. By considering the various contextual factors above, you can modify the content and structure of your intervention to ensure the impact it achieves is as strong as possible.

Notably, recognising and respecting cultural differences between the developers/practitioners of an intervention and their target groups is paramount. What is defined as ‘sexual abuse’ within a developed country will vary from that in more developing countries. For example, some forms of violence against children, such as female genital mutilation (FGM), castration or child marriage, may be considered as the ‘norm’ or as being ‘in the child’s best interests’ in some communities.

Targeting these harmful practices will not only require significant effort to transform individual beliefs, often intertwined with firmly-held cultural, traditional and religious values; but will likely require broader societal, political and legal change. This is likely beyond the scope of one intervention alone.

Whilst implementing your programme, you must be aware that what works in high-income countries may not work in lower income countries. Prevent any negative repercussions or backlash effects by carefully considering your particular target groups.

Step 2: Consider how you will make an impact

To ensure your intervention is effective, it is crucial to consider *how* it will contribute to preventing abuse.

Consider the approach your intervention will take. Will it aim to change social norms, attitudes and behaviours; or is it applicable only to individuals in a certain situation? Does it aim to inform and educate a certain group; or does it aim to empower those who have experienced abuse?

It is important to recognise that there is no single factor that drives child sexual abuse. However, as a gendered crime primarily affecting females, the most successful approaches have typically focused on the wider social constructs that drive abuse, mainly gender-based violence and gender inequality.

In order to consider how these issues contribute to abuse, it is helpful to consider the tiers of risk that drive violence against females and how your intervention could develop an understanding of these. Examples include:

- **Individual risks**, such as younger age; disability; mental health issues; substance misuse; and limited experience, knowledge or physical strength compared to the perpetrators of abuse
- **Family and relationship risks**, such as a lack of family support; homelessness and variations of the traditional 'family unit'
- **Community risks**, such as poverty and high levels of violence.
- **Societal risks**, such as poor economic development; social norms condoning violence; social inequality and patriarchy; child labour; war; and weak child protective responses.

By working with and signposting to other services that have experience in dealing with these issues in your area of choice, your intervention is more likely to benefit those most in need. Working co-operatively with other partner agencies also helps prevent your work being duplicated elsewhere, causing resources to be wasted. Good management is key to a good intervention.

Step 3: Consider your methodology

Good interventions are based on the theory of change model, with time taken whilst planning your intervention to document clear and realistic goals over the short, medium and long-term.

Consider the areas in which you hope to drive change. For most interventions, this will revolve around reducing the risks outlined above, with reference to the specific gender and power imbalances that drive abuse forward.

However, it is important to think about *how* such change will arise. Will it be at the level of the individual, with recognisable changes in someone's living situation, wellbeing, attitudes or behaviours? Or are you aiming for societal level changes in policy, social norms or service provision?

You should also take time to think about any barriers you might encounter along the way, and how these can be overcome. These might relate to the practitioners delivering your intervention, or equally to those in your audience. Try to document your thinking within a diagram or flowchart. This approach is not only helpful whilst implementing your intervention, but in evaluating your work later on.

Additionally, think about how you will achieve these aims on a day-to-day basis. What techniques will you use to bring about change? Does your methodology recognise and uphold the basic rights of children, such as those in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)?

Most effective interventions will use methods that challenge the norms and attitudes that justify violence towards women and girls, and encourage behavioural change to reduce the risk of such violence. Examples include:

- **Social norms marketing** – e.g. media campaigns to increase understanding of gender-based violence and its manifestations within different population cohorts
- **Critical reflection**
- **Skill building**
- **Experiential learning**
- **Empathy building**

You may also wish to consider which theories of behavioural change apply best to your intervention, and how you can use these to support and guide change. For example, Prochaska and DiClemente's 'Stages of Change' model outlines five distinct stages that an individual must pass through to contemplate, prepare for, and maintain change. Some focused interventions might benefit from utilising models like these to tailor ongoing work to the individuals concerned.

Step 4: Consider the resources you need

In order to implement your intervention successfully, you must consider what resources you will need. Although the content and structure of your programme might require specific tools such as written materials and multimedia equipment, you will likely also require human resources, such as trained facilitators and/or interpreters.

Ideally, you would have a team of well-trained, experienced and motivated child protection practitioners to carry out your intervention. However, in low-resource settings, this might not always be possible. In such a case, as the developers of an intervention, you might wish to develop comprehensive training sessions to recruit and train suitable individuals to carry out interventions.

Depending on the environment your intervention will be delivered in, this might include professionals such as teachers or social workers; or less experienced local workers, such as

members of a religious or youthwork organisation. Importantly, as highly emotive field, it is also necessary to consider what additional support must be made available to participants and facilitators alike. For example, this could take the form of a whole-group debrief session, or alternatively, individual counselling being made available.

Additionally, networking and teamworking will also aid the delivery of your intervention. For example, co-operating with other child protection bodies in the area you are working in will allow individuals who would benefit from your intervention to be identified and enrolled. This often forms the most difficult challenge in programme delivery.

Finally, the most important resource you will need is time. Delivering a successful intervention is no easy task and is likely not to be achieved within a few hours or days. The most effective of interventions are typically implemented over a number of sessions, collectively lasting between 20 and 50 hours. Whilst this may not be achievable in your particular instance, it is important to recognise the need for ongoing work to achieve adequate awareness and prevention.

Step 5: Evaluate your achievements

Evaluating your intervention against its original aims is a key step in understanding how effective and useful it has been in preventing abuse. This is covered in the next chapter.