



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE

Unit I.2 (Foresight, Behavioural Insights & Design for Policy)

# **INSIGHTS FROM BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES TO PREVENT AND COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WITH AWARENESS-RAISING AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES**

LITERATURE REVIEW

15 SEPTEMBER 2016

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## 1. Background and objectives

In July 2016 the Directorate-General Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) launched a Call for Proposals for the funding of national information, awareness-raising and education activities, to prevent and combat violence against women.

The call encourages Member States to embed a behavioural approach in the proposals they envisaged submitting, given that information, awareness-raising and education activities systematically attempt to change attitudes and behaviours. In the context of violence against women, such activities may aim at reducing violence against women in the first place, at encouraging victims to report cases of violence relevant authorities, or at incentivizing people in the social environment of the victim to take appropriate actions. In order to ensure that the funded activities effectively lead to behavioural changes, the call encourages applicants (1) to identify the potential behavioural element (i.e., the cause) of the target behaviour, (2) to propose behavioural levers that can be used to induce the behavioural change, and (3) to measure the expected and actual impact of the activities on behaviours.

In this context, the goal of this document is to assist applicants in appropriately adopting the recommended behavioural approach, through a literature review of relevant findings. The sources used for this review include publications in psychology, sociology, health, economics and social marketing scientific reviews, as well as non-academic articles from policy-makers, newspapers, and practitioners experts in designing effective information, awareness-raising and education activities. Whenever possible, success factors for these activities are highlighted throughout the document and concrete examples are provided for illustration purposes. The compiled list of these factors is presented in Box 1 below.

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### **Box 1: Success factors designing effective awareness-raising and education activities**

- #1: Identify clearly who the target group is and what the target behaviour is.
  - #2: Identify clearly what the behavioural elements (i.e., causes) of the target behaviour are, and select which one(s) the action will aim to tackle.
  - #3: Describe your target audience: Who are they? How old are they? Where do they live? Which newspapers do they read? ...
  - #4: Set a measurable, ambitious yet reachable objective: changing a given behaviour or tackling its behavioural causes.
  - #5: Use behavioural levers to design the message and make sure the content is credible.
  - #6: Use emotions with caution.
  - #7: Wisely use framing tools to attract attention and to increase remembrance.
  - #8: Identify the ideal messenger, or opt for none.
  - #9: Assess which message or which action is the most effective through pilot pretesting.
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Additionally, we have identified a number of awareness-raising and education activities on violence against women with a behavioural component and these are presented throughout the document in in Boxes 2-12. However, it is important to note that we were faced with some limitations when selecting these initiatives since, regrettably, little scientific evidence exists on the evaluation and impact of awareness campaigns and educational activities, let alone when applied to gender issues. As a result, this review also benefits from conclusions drawn from other pertinent and related initiatives.

The rest of the document is structured as follows. In Section 2 we highlight different possible behavioural causes (i.e., "behavioural elements") of violence against women and other related issues. In Section 3 we present the different behavioural levers that may be used to prevent and combat violence against women, along with general principles for effective information and awareness-raising campaigns. In Sections 4 and 5 we focus on the pretesting of the activities and the measurement of their actual impact. Section 6 presents the concluding remarks. Finally, Annex presents the results of a hands-on session that took place on 12 September 2016 as part of a workshop "Designing effective awareness-raising and education activities to combat violence against women" hosted by DG JUST. The workshop was open to representatives from all Member States and gathered a total of 15 participants from 14 Member States (Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden) together with four experts from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. Behavioural causes of violence against women and related issues

### 2.1. Target groups and target behaviours

One of the key learnings from behavioural sciences applied to policy-making is that one-size-fits-all solutions do not work. Therefore, policy initiatives – including the actions covered by the call – should be as targeted and as tailored as possible: they should be purposely designed to encourage or discourage a *specific* target group to perform a *specific* behaviour.

Five different groups can be targeted in order to prevent and combat violence against women: (1) past and prospective perpetrators of violence, (2) victims of violence, (3) victim's relatives and friends as well as bystanders, (4) practitioners and relevant professionals (i.e., police officers/relevant authorities, medical professionals, social workers, women's organisations, shelters) and (5) the general public. Table 1 breaks these groups down in twelve subgroups.

**Table 1: Potential groups and subgroups to be targeted in awareness campaigns**

Target groups	Subgroup	Examples of target behavioural change
Potential perpetrators	Potential perpetrators	To change gendered behaviours, including aggression, emotional abuse, and misogynistic behaviours.
Victims	Victims	To report violence to the police. To seek help in dedicated shelters.
Social environment	Victim's relatives or	To support victim in reporting and taking action (to help

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank our colleague Tine Van Crielinge for her insightful comments on earlier versions of this document.

	friends	break cycles of violence; to help understand the origins of violence).
	Bystanders	To intervene (or to know what services are available to intervene and support; to help break cycles of violence; to report; to support).
	Students	Schools are the social environment where individual and group values shape up. It is the ideal place to run preventive interventions.
Professionals	Police officers	To appropriately support victims in declaration (and refer victims to proper support services).
	Medical professionals	To encourage victims to report (and to support perpetrators in rationalising their behaviour).
	Social workers	To detect signs of violence against women and ultimately to provide safe environments where women can get out of the cycle of violence (i.e., a one-off is not enough!).
	Clergy	To tackle the fact that religion, or misinterpretation of religious precepts, often breed contempt towards women.
	Journalists and bloggers	To tackle the enormous power that media have on people's attitudes and behaviour, and the tendency to portray gender violence as a "crime of passion."
	The judiciary	To find out their level of awareness of the often repetitive nature gender or domestic violence, and that bans or injunctions often do not suffice.
General public	General public	To dare to talk about violence against women (Or to talk about learned behaviour in children, and damaging portrayals of men and women in the media, to confront and talk about patriarchy and the perpetration of misogynistic and macho cultures).

The behaviours that awareness-raising and education activities may promote in these groups are varied: they may include, for instance, deterring potential perpetrators of violence from acting, encouraging victims to report the violent acts to the relevant authorities or to seek help in dedicated shelters, incentivizing relatives or friends of victims to take action or relevant authorities to appropriately support victims in their reporting, running awareness-raising campaigns in schools, working with media professionals to rethink the way in which gender violence is often portrayed.

Success factor #1:  
Identify clearly who the target group is and what the target behaviour is

As an illustration, a recent campaign was carried out in England, with the objective to decrease unnecessary antibiotic prescription among general practitioners (Hallsworth et al., 2016). Regardless the apparently limited relevance of the objective of this initiative for the issue of violence against women, there are few very pertinent points that indeed apply to any awareness campaign action, including on gender violence.

In the campaign (carried out by the UK Behavioural Insights Team, together with the UK Department of Health), the *target group* consisted of general practitioners in England and the *target behaviour* was the prescription of unnecessary antibiotics. It is important to highlight that failing to identify the

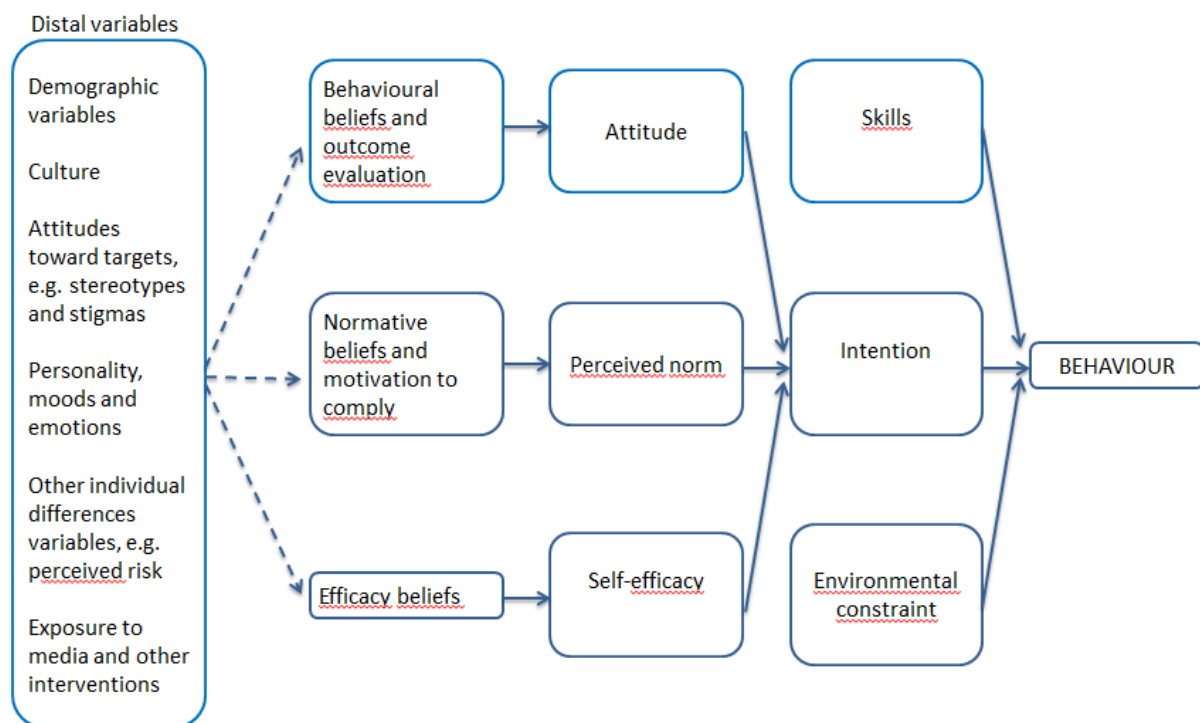
target group and the target behavioural change can result in ineffective or less efficient actions to combat and prevent violence against women.

## 2.2. Different layers of behavioural causes

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and the more elaborate Integrative Model of Behavioural Prediction (Fishbein & Yzer, 2003a) offer interesting frameworks to understand the impact of beliefs on behaviour, and the possible causes of violence against women and other related behaviours.

To start with, the Theory of Planned Behaviour states that for a given behaviour to be performed, one has to hold positive *attitudes* towards that behaviour, to consider that this behaviour is socially acceptable (i.e., *subjective norm*) and finally to believe that one is actually able to perform that behaviour (i.e., *perceived behavioural control* or *self-efficacy*). Very often, these three factors reinforce each other: for instance, positive subjective norms toward a given behaviour strengthen positive attitudes toward the behaviour.

The Integrative Model of Behavioural Prediction adds more variables, such as demographics, culture, personality and exposure to media (see Figure 1). Although the model may appear complex and off-putting at first sight, it brings together a variety of factors into a single and very helpful framework of analysis that allows a thorough understanding of the very roots of gender violence. It suggests that *distal variables* (e.g., culture, attitudes, media exposure) may indirectly influence behaviour via attitudes, norms and self-efficacy. The model also adds unintentional factors which may explain why intentions may not always translate into behaviour. Indeed, one may have an aggressive attitude towards his partner, though may not have the skills to perform offensive behaviour or environmental constraints may impede such action.



**Figure 1: An integrative model of behavioural prediction (Adapted from Fishbein & Yzer, 2003b)**

In the following paragraphs, we show how these theoretical models can be useful to identify the causes of violence against women, low reporting and other relevant behaviours. Effective actions to prevent and combat violence against women should clearly identify the cause(s) of the target behaviour that the action aims to tackle.

Success factor #2:  
Identify clearly what the behavioural elements (i.e., causes) of the target behaviour are, and select which one(s) the action will aim to tackle

It should be noted, however, that there is no single isolated cause for a given behaviour. In the mid-1990s, the complex nature of violence against women was recognized and its causes began to be conceptualized as probabilistic rather than deterministic. No single factor is sufficient or even necessary to establish the likelihood of violence against women to occur. Instead, different constellations of factors and pathways could converge to cause abuse under different circumstances (Heise, 2011).

### 2.3. Causes of low reporting amongst victims

In line with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, it takes several steps for a victim/bystander to report violence to the police or to seek out support, even beyond authorities as one:

- (1) must hold positive attitudes toward reporting violence,
- (2) must believe that others will approve her behaviour,
- (3) must think that she is actually able to do this.

However, victims may avoid reporting violence for the following reasons.

- (1) Victims may hold *negative attitudes* toward reporting their partner - or the perpetrator, who is not always her partner - because of (often perceived) lack of support from the criminal justice and health care system (Flood & Pease, 2009). Some victims may also hold negative attitudes toward reporting violence against women because they believe that the inflicted violence is not serious enough to report it. Others may fear, in the case of domestic violence, that reporting it will lead to ending the relationship with their partner (Fugate, Landis, Riordan, Naureckas, & Engel, 2005), or will lead to retaliation or repeated violence from the perpetrator, should they not receive proper support.

Knowledge of the existence of a given behaviour is a prerequisite to hold a positive attitude toward this behaviour and, in turn, to take action. Besides fear of retaliation, victims of violence against women may not take action simply because they are unaware of the available help such as hotlines and shelters, or unable to access them. An informational

campaign typically uses a knowledge lever, for instance by giving the telephone number of a support line or by informing the general public about statistics.

- (2) Victims may believe that others, such as family and friends, will *disapprove* reporting, blame and stigmatize her (Flood & Pease, 2009), leading to expected feelings of shame. As a result, victims of violence may perceive the risk of a possible social rejection and isolation. Also, linked to idea of "amoral familism" (Baldini, 1954) – the existence of strong family ties, impeding extra-familiar bonds to develop – victims may follow the archaic principle "not to wash their dirty linen in public." An effective action could aim to change the subjective norm, held by some women, that violence against them should remain secret.
- (3) Victims might think that they are *not strong enough* to be able to report violence. An effective action could highlight that professionals are ready to help victims in this process, in order to empower women<sup>2</sup>. Alternatively, victims may think they are not able to go through the hassle of reporting and trial.

## 2.4. Possible causes of violence against women

Using the same analytical framework, a non-exhaustive list of causes of violence against women can be identified:

- (1) Perpetrators may fail to consider their act as morally bad. This non-negative *attitude* toward violence against women may, in turn, be due to more distal variables such as negative stereotypes toward women. The immediate social environment may also result in non-negative attitudes toward violence against women (Bandura, 1973), causing an intergenerational vicious circle. The sons of women who were the victims of violence are more likely to emotionally abuse, exert psychological violence, beat or rape their intimate partners, and the daughters of beaten wives are more likely to be abused by intimate partners as adults (for a review, see Jewkes, 2002).
- (2) Perpetrators may feel *overconfident* that they would go unpunished. Indeed, perpetrators may believe that even though what they do is wrong, they can get away with it because most perpetrators are not charged, and conviction rates are low. The other side of the coin of the wrong perception of impunity is that perpetrators of violence may express a *myopic* attitude. Indeed, by acting violently against their loved ones, they may believe to satisfy a pressing immediate need, while underestimating the long-term consequences of their act, on the victims and on them. For instance, in the case of domestic violence against women there could be long-term consequences for the woman (e.g., suffering from long-term physical conditions like chronic pain), the child (e.g., performing poorly in school or being at higher risk of becoming a perpetrator), and the husband (e.g., incarceration, financial losses due to lost workdays as the wife may be (temporary) incapacitated).
- (3) Linked to attitudes, perpetrators may internalize *social norms* whereby some cultures may hold tolerant views toward violence against women (Jewkes, 2002) (for a related example, see Box 2). It has also been suggested that the portrayal of (gender) violence *in the media*

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<sup>2</sup> Note, however, that messages that encourage women to feel empowered to "end the violence" by getting help could implicitly reinforce messages that they should take some responsibility for the violence that they have been suffering through not having left the relationship (Donovan & Vlasis, 2005a).



may contribute to the acceptance of this behaviour (Happer & Philo, 2013). More generally, gender roles may strengthen tolerance toward violence against women.

- (4) Another indirect but definitely relevant factor is also the lack of a common understanding or definition of gender violence. For example, pervasive beliefs about rape (or rape myths) affecting subjective definitions of what constitutes a 'typical rape,' contain problematic assumptions about the likely behaviour of perpetrators and victims, and provide a distorted picture of the antecedents and consequences of rape (Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler, & Viki, 2009). Although most people would agree that rape is morally wrong, not all would agree on what exactly constitutes rape. For a related example, see Box 7.
- (5) Some men may hold negative attitudes toward violence against women, think it is socially unacceptable, have the intention not to perform these acts, and still fail to refrain from perpetrating these acts. This is where perceived behavioural control (also known as self-efficacy) and environmental constraints play a role. These quasi-non-intentional factors are important to understand violence against women. Actions to prevent and combat violence against women should address these risk factors as much as possible.

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## Box 2: Using collective norms and social referents to prevent harassment in schools

- **Target group(s):** students
  - **Initiative:** Building on the notion that individual behaviours are influenced by what is considered typical and acceptable by peers (i.e., the **social norm**) (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004), a **year-long field experiment** was carried out in a high-school. The experiment (N=291) tested whether male and female students could affect their peers' perceptions of school norms about peer harassment (also known as relational conflict) and their actual harassment behaviour to the same extent. The study randomized which students would participate in the experiment and used **social referents** – i.e., highly connected individuals whose behaviour can serve as a reference point for group members to infer the norms of the groups as a whole (Sherif & Sherif, 1964)– to influence the perceptions and behaviours of other group members. In response to high levels of peer harassment among girls, the school ran a programme called "Names Can Really Hurt Us" (NAMES). The intervention prepared a selected group of students (acting as social referents) to present their experiences and their reasons to oppose harassment in a school. A sample of 83 social referent students were identified using surveys (please see study for details about the survey and experimental design), from which 24 (16 girls and 8 boys) participated in the intervention (the remaining 53 remained in the control group). Social referents performed anti-harassment activities throughout the whole school-year. The activities consisted of reading announcements over the loud-speaker during morning announcements, created a special "NAMES" table at lunch period twice times during the year where they spoke with other students about ways to report harassment, and creating a series of posters with pro-inclusion slogans and photos of social referents performing their activity. Social norms were measured using 5 questions regarding the students' approval of peer harassment, and of the behaviour that could reduce it. To do this, school staff and other students were consulted in order to capture **school-specific issues** and **appropriate language**. Disciplinary records from the whole year were obtained and peer harassment cases were factored in the analysis.
  - **Impact:** Results showed that male referents exerted influence on their peers' perceptions of harassment and actual harassment behaviour (i.e., lower perceived acceptability and participation in harassment behaviours), as well as perceptions of collective norms about "drama" (i.e., gossip, rumours, exclusion, etc.). By contrast, compared to males, female referents exerted influence over fewer of their peer's behaviours. One possible explanation for these results is that, because levels of peer harassment were higher among girls, female referents became less credible and less respected over the course of the
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## 2.5. Causes of *omertà* in the victim's social environment

Bystanders of violence against women and the victim's relatives and friends may not intervene or warn public authorities for the following three main reasons:

- (1) They may hold negative attitudes toward intervening, for instance because of cultural tolerance of violence against women;
- (2) They may think that intervening in others' private lives is not socially accepted;
- (3) It is unlikely that they may feel incompetent to call the police, though they may not know how to intervene in a way that is helpful to the victim and not dangerous for themselves. They may feel too weak to physically intervene, feel threatened, or may want to avoid the hassle. This seems to suggest that awareness campaigns offering scenarios and pathways to intervention and reporting could reveal to be useful and effective. Moreover, a well-known phenomenon of diffusion of responsibility (Darley & Latane, 1968) may play a role: everyone may think it is someone else's job to inform the relevant authorities, and the magnitude of this effect is correlated with the number of bystanders. The famous case of New Yorker Kitty Genovese, who was stabbed to death outside her apartment building and where none of the thirty-eight witnesses called the police, sadly illustrates this phenomenon. Effective awareness-raising actions may stress the importance of everyone in the social environment to take personal responsibility of everyone to intervene and/or report violence when they witness it (even in cases where others have already done so). For an initiative using a qualitative approach to examine relevant factors for involving men in the prevention of violence against women see Box 3.

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### Box 3: Engaging men in the prevention of violence against women

- **Target group(s):** men
- **Initiative:** The study examined **qualitative data from interviews with 27 men** (aged 27 to 72) who had recently become involved in anti-violence activities. Their involvement was across different ways: direct advocacy with survivors of violence, volunteering in prevention education programs for youth, educational presentations for university students, organisation of campus-wide and male focused anti-violence awareness events. In addition, one participant joined a men's discussion group doing fundraising activities in partnership with a local agency of domestic violence. Interview data included topics about the nature/factors of men's involvement; perceptions of in/effectiveness of strategies of male participation; impact of their anti-violence involvement on their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours towards women; and their perceptions of why some men carry out anti-violence activities.
- **Impact:** All men (except one) had one priming experience that raised their level of consciousness regarding issues of violence or gender inequity. Previous understanding of the issue and/or opportunities to become involved with the issue (e.g., past personal invitations, personal community connections) were a crucial motivating factor that led them to perform anti-violence activities.

Giving information about the prevalence and impact of violence against women in general terms, will, most probably, be insufficient to lead to male activism. Below, are some **factors to take into account when involving men in the prevention of violence against women:**

- Importance of personal connections and community in making linkages with concrete anti-violence opportunities;

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- Primacy of social networks as recruiting and engagement vehicles;
  - Encouragement and engagement of trusted peers or mentors;
  - Capitalize on the power of leaders in existing social networks to challenge social norms.
- (Casey & Smith, 2010)
- 

### 3. Behavioural insights for designing activities to prevent and combat violence against women

Once the target group, the target behaviour and the behavioural elements (or causes) have been clearly identified, one has to design the information, awareness-raising or education activity by selectively using appropriate behavioural levers. Four steps should be followed (Lee & Kotler, 2011):

- (1) Determine your objectives
- (2) Identify who the target audience is
- (3) Design the message: content, framing and source
- (4) Choose the communication channel(s)

#### 3.1. Determine the objectives

The end-goal of all funded activities is to reduce the number and the severity of cases of violence against women and, as a first step, to increase reporting of violence. These objectives are *behavioural* in nature and quantifiable, (for example, increasing the proportion of victims who call hotlines or the number of cases reported to the police).

However, as we have seen in the previous section, there are a number of intermediate behavioural causes to these different behaviours, which mainly relate to attitudes, norms, etc. Therefore, in drafting their proposals, candidates can set objectives that tackle a circumscribed number of the identified behavioural causes. For instance, the objectives could be to reduce non-negative attitudes towards violence against women, to reduce the social norm that people should not intervene when they witness this type of violence or reduce negative stereotypes against women (for an initiative illustrating how stereotypes can play a role, see Box 5 below). In some cases, comparative evidence is informative and relatively easy to collect. For example, in assessing the extent to which people do not intervene when witnessing gender violence, an option would be compare people's reaction (or attitudes) to violence against women with respect to violence against children. To this regard, a preliminary quantitative estimate could be provided by the number of "calls for help" that various hotlines (e.g., in Italy, "telefono rosa" vs. "telefono azzurro") periodically receive.

Success factor #4:

Set a measurable, ambitious yet  
reachable objective:  
changing a behaviour  
or tackling its behavioural causes

If possible, actions should determine a quantified objective (e.g., reduce the number of harassment cases by x %; reduce the proportion of under-reporting by y%). The objective should be ambitious yet reachable.

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#### Box 4: Examining judgements of blame attributed to perpetrators and victims

- Target groups: police officers
  - Initiative: A study among police officers in Queensland investigated their judgements of blame to both victims and perpetrators of family violence. The sample included 51 male officers and 46 female officers. The subjects were presented with one of eight cases of assault. In these cases two factors were varied, the victim's gender (male/female), and alcohol consumption of the victim and assailant (both the assailant and the victim were drunk, neither were drunk, the assailant was sober and the victim drunk, and the assailant was drunk and the victim sober). A third independent variable was included, gender of the police officer.
  - Impact: Although male and female police officers showed no differences in judgement of blame and reported likelihood of charging, results showed **gender stereotypes** in the level of blame attributed to both the assailant and the victim varied with the victim gender and the alcohol consumption of the disputants. Male victims were more likely to be blamed than female victims and drunk victims were blamed more than sober victims. Furthermore, a relationship was found between the level of blame allocated to the victim and the reported likelihood of charging the perpetrator, such that the higher the blame the lower the likelihood of charging the assailant. Results showed that police officers hold gender stereotypes which influence the way they respond to violence (Stewart and Maddren, 1997). These responses have effects on the victims themselves and might contribute to underreporting of violence. (Stewart & Maddren, 1997)
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### 3.2. Identify who the target audience is

In principle, the target audience of the activity will be the same as the target group identified earlier in the process. However, at this stage, it is important to describe the target audience in terms of socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., age, place of living, marital status, level of education), psychological traits, and habits. This will enable to better choose the message and select the appropriate media to communicate with the target audience. For instance, suppose that it turns out that most perpetrators of violence against women are men from a particular group, then one should select the media read and watched by this segment of the population.

Success factor #3:

Describe your target audience:  
Who are they? How old are they? Where do they live? Which newspapers do they read? ...

The target audience may be narrower than the target group. For instance, if the target group is the general public (e.g., for an awareness-raising action to change social norms regarding intervening when witnessing violence against women), the target audience could focus on specific segments of

the general public. For a relevant example in the field of gender violence, focusing on a number of identified target groups, see Box 5 below.

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### Box 5: Shifting the public perception of domestic violence

- **Target groups:** women experiencing violence, offenders and potential offenders, witnesses to domestic violence and members of the police force.
  - **Initiative:** In 1993, the New Zealand police ran an awareness raising campaign “Family violence is a crime – call for help” aimed at **shifting the public perception of domestic violence** from 'domestic' to something that represents a crime and requires a response. The campaign used a series of television commercials with messages specifically designed to each of the four main target groups. Interestingly, based on the observation that calls out to domestic violence situations were generally minimized as 'just domestic' by police, messages targeted at the police forces aimed to promote a change in their internal culture by **framing** domestic violence as a crime that requires as much attention as any other. For instance, one of the messages was "Family violence situations happening at home can result in serious outcomes that would be treated very seriously in any other context, such as murder". In addition to commercials, the campaign included three high-rating documentaries (each averaged half a million viewers) and two series of music videos (one of which charted quite highly).
  - **Impact:** Evaluation of the campaign revealed a series of positive outcomes, such as high (prompted) awareness of the campaign (92% by September 1995), a few thousand calls to the helplines that had been established after the documentaries (mostly from 'victims', but also from witnesses and men), significant increase in the seeking of help at from women’s services, and a 44% increase in police records of assaults by men on women from 1993 to 1994, among others. For further information, please see the review on campaigns on violence against women by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. (Donovan & Vlasis, 2005a)
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The selection of the target audience can be based on the severity of the behaviour or behavioural causes (e.g., focussing on social groups who hold especially negative attitudes toward intervening when witnessing violence against women). Alternatively, opinion leaders can be selected as the sub-segment of the target audience. Opinion leaders are influential social referents of a group to whom others turn for forming attitudes and social norms. For instance, an awareness-raising campaign could, as a first step, target opinion leaders such as popular sport athletes or music celebrities or journalists. The rationale is that these influential persons will then disseminate the message to the general public, which could be perceived as more convincing than anonymous messengers (see Section 3.3.3).

### 3.3. Design the message: content, framing and source

When designing the message of information, awareness-raising, or education initiatives, three questions must be addressed:

- (1) What is the content of the message?
- (2) How should the message be framed?
- (3) Who should convey the message?

### 3.3.1. Content of the message: behavioural levers

Based on the identified behavioural cause to be tackled, the message content should be designed by using the corresponding behavioural lever. For instance, if the selected behavioural cause of low reporting of partner violence is the negative attitude toward this behaviour due to the perception that the violent act is not serious enough, then an awareness-raising action could highlight that partner violence takes several forms and usually increases in severity over time.

Importantly, the content of the message should be credible. That is, it should communicate information that is accurate and is perceived as accurate. For instance, a message communicating that 9 out of 10 Europeans believe that sexual harassment is not OK should be based on actual data and should be accompanied by an acknowledgement of the source. Likewise, the message should be aligned with on-the-ground activities: for instance, when a campaign advertises a specific service, it is essential to ensure that there has been an appropriate expansion of the service capacity to meet the potential increase in demand (Donovan & Vlasis, 2005a).

Success factor #5:

Use behavioural levers to design the message  
and make sure the content is credible

In the following paragraph, we provide some examples of relevant behavioural levers. The examples of actual actions to combat and prevent violence against women presented throughout the text (see Boxes 2-12), further illustrates the use of behavioural levers.

#### **Social norms to stir social influence**

Social norms signal appropriate behaviour or actions taken by the majority of people and can be used to influence a particular type of behaviour through persuasion. For example, by comparing an individual's conduct with that of the majority of peers, neighbours or friends is an effective way to change behaviour (Allcott, 2011). In the field of gender violence, a campaign by the James Madison University provides a nice illustration. Namely, the campaign used social norms (e.g., "A Man Respects a Woman: Nine out of ten JMU men stop the first time their date says "no" to sexual activity.") to change misconceptions among male college student about their peers' sexist beliefs (for additional details see Box 6 below). Other initiatives tapping on social norms could, for example, focus on challenging social norms that may tolerate some forms of violence, as well as, for example, norms that perceive intimate partner violence as a private issue, rather than a public concern (Devries et al., 2013). Promising interventions include, for example, initiatives that use media to promote nonviolent gender equitable relationships and encourage bystanders to take action when it occurs (Heise, 2011).

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#### **Box 6: Changing misconceptions among male college student about their peers' sexist beliefs**

- Target groups: male university students.
  - Initiative: In 1999-2000, the James Madison University (JMU, United States of America) ran a campaign aimed to **change misconceptions among male college student about their peers' sexist beliefs**. Towards
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this end, the campaign not only used a series of posters and flyers with normative messages, but also contextualized these social norms (i.e., the norms referred to people similar to them/their peers). The latter is an interesting element as it has been shown that these more contextualized social norms tend to have a larger impact. Moreover, messages were pre-tested through interviews and focus groups. Messages included: "A Man Always Prevents Manipulation: Three out of four JMU men think it is NOT okay to pressure their date to drink alcohol in order to increase the chances of getting their date to have sex." or "A Man Respects a Woman: Nine out of ten JMU men stop the first time their date says "no" to sexual activity."

- **Impact:** Evaluation comprised over 400 male students and involved a control group. Results showed that there was a significant increase in the percentage of males claiming that they "stop their sexual activity as soon as their date says no," and a significant decrease of males who endorsed the statement "when I want to touch someone sexually, I try and see how they react." For further information, please consult the review on campaigns on violence against women by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (Donovan & Vlasis, 2005b).
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### **Reducing hassle efforts**

Eliminating hassle factors (such as, slow report handling procedures, delayed response of healthcare services, cumbersome administrative procedures) – which hinder women from using support services when they need them, and witnesses from reporting – can have positive results. An easily navigable system where citizens go through simple, progressive and outcome-based steps when, for example, they report a case of violence can encourage reporting and prevent violence. To illustrate, the example mentioned above on using social norms to reduce unnecessary prescriptions of antibiotics, used a message which presented three specific, feasible actions that the general practitioner could do to reduce unnecessary prescriptions of antibiotics: giving patients advice on self-care, offering a delayed prescription, and talking about the issue with other prescribers in his or her practice (Hallsworth et al., 2016).

### **Raising knowledge**

One of potential causes of low reporting of violence against women is their lack of knowledge of the appropriate structures put in place to appropriately accompany victims in filing a complaint at the police, such as the help of a social worker. An awareness-raising campaign should therefore make sure (potential) victims are well informed of these structures. For a related example, see Box 7.

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### **Box 7: Preventing sexual and intimate partner violence**

- **Target groups:** bystanders, partners, potential perpetrators of violence
  - **Initiative:** The Bringing in the Bystander programme is an interpersonal violence prevention programme, which is focused on jointly **increasing bystander awareness of sexual and intimate partner violence and expanding individual sense of responsibility to help prevent and intervene in instances of sexual and intimate partner violence.** For instance, participants are given training focusing on a number of aspects: exposure to local and national sexual assault statistics and loopholes of consent laws; how non-reporting/non-challenging of relatively minor instances of sexual violence by communities can lead to escalation; or the critical role that bystanders can play in the prevention of sexual violence. This is aimed at changing community norms (e.g., increasing the community openness to prevention measures) and bystanders' attitudes (e.g., stimulating prosocial bystander behaviour) to ultimately prevent assaults or increase assistance to victims when these take place.
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- **Impact:** The programme has been rated as promising by the National Institute of Justice (United States of America) as it improved knowledge of rape myth acceptance, and bystander attitude, prosocial behaviour to end sexual violence, and efficacy among program participants, compared with non-participants. (Banyard, Eckstein, & Moynihan, 2009).
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### **Status quo bias and the use of defaults**

People have a preference towards the current state or, in other words, they have a bias towards the **status quo**. As such, people often stick with a previously taken decision and defer from taking action. At the same time, people are risk averse, which can pose barriers to changing the status quo. For example, a woman victim of violence might conform to the status quo, passively accepting that "things are the way they are" and failing to envisage how action could make a difference tomorrow. For an example on how status quo can act as a bottleneck, see Box 8 which presents an initiative aimed at increasing hotline callers' willingness to wait to reach an advocate.

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### **Box 8: Increasing hotline callers' willingness to wait to reach an advocate**

- **Target groups:** women (main), bystanders.
- **Initiative:** The Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) project, sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (NDVH), put forward an intervention aimed at increasing willingness to wait of people calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline. In short, when a call was received by NDVH and no advocate was available, the caller would hear a message stating that the hotline had been reached and that advocates were busy handling other calls; this message was repeated every 35 seconds and there was silence between these repetitions.

In order to reduce "abandonment" (i.e., callers who hang up after hearing the first message), the BIAS team worked with the NDVH to identify several bottlenecks that could be addressed using a behavioural approach. These were: a) Waiting likely triggers fearful thoughts and is stressful. Due to present bias (i.e., avoiding the immediate stress), the caller may give up on staying on the line regardless of the longer-term benefit (e.g., getting help from an advocate). Moreover, people victim of domestic violence are in a situation of scarcity (i.e., they operate under a severe time and emotional constraint, which affects the way they behave), which results in "tunnelling" (i.e., focusing on solving the next imminent crises); b) Uncertainty about the waiting time. This lack of a reference point may result in status quo bias (i.e., if they are waiting now, they may wait indefinitely); and c) Unexplained waits seem longer. Also, callers will most likely remember calls for which they had waited a long time since these will likely be associated with more emotional/stressful memories.

This analysis resulted in a few insights over ways in which the message could be changed, such as giving an indication of waiting time and express support "You may have to wait a few minutes for an advocate, but once we pick up we will work with you to find answers and resources to you" (unfortunately, giving real-time expected waiting times was not possible). Moreover, explanation of the waiting times – queue due to the handling of other requests for help – highlights that the caller is not alone, thus tapping on social norms to increase the caller's willingness to stay on the line.

- **Impact:** Testing of alternative messages using a RCT was planned, but no further data on the outcomes could be found. (Richburg-Hayes et al., 2014)
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Critically, people may stick with the status quo even when substantial (psychological or monetary) gains could come from taking action. For instance, status quo bias and procrastination/inertia can



lead to people not saving enough for retirement. To tackle this issue, in October 2012, the UK's Department for Work and Pensions introduced automatic enrolment in pensions. Harnessing the power of inertia, and through a change in the **default** so that people were automatically enrolled into savings plans, the measure effectively promoted the desired behaviour (i.e., increased pension savings) (Department for Work and Pensions, 2013). Defaults, where a predetermined option that requires little action from the individual, are a way to boost the likelihood that people make "better" choices.

Changes to default options require, however, careful consideration and should be pretested to prevent possible adverse effects. For instance, in the US some employers ask job-applicants by default to indicate whether they have a criminal record prior to interview (by ticking a box in the application form). To prevent discrimination, some States have adopted "ban the box" regulations, simply eliminating this requirement by removing the box. However, existing evidence suggests that this measure led companies to discriminate by race such that less low-income African-Americans were hired (i.e., race was used as a proxy for criminal history) (Mullainathan, 2016).

### **Choice architecture, or the way options are presented or a message is framed, can influence decisions**

Changing the default (or framing, as detailed later) is an example of a change to the **choice architecture**. That is, a change to the decision context, which can be physical (i.e., the way food is displayed on supermarkets' shelves and canteen settings) or virtual (i.e., the layout of a webpage), where choices are presented (Sousa Lourenço, Ciriolo, Rafael Almeida, & Troussard, 2016). For instance, in the context of gender violence, if the aim is to encourage women to make use of various types of support resources they contact for help (e.g., shelters and safe-havens, social workers, etc.), a campaign could focus on changing the availability or salience in which different support options are presented.

Also, in framing messages conveyed in awareness campaigns, utmost attention should be paid at avoiding Cialdini's "Big Mistake": instances where the behaviour one is trying to discourage, rather than the appropriate behaviour, is communicated as being relatively common (thus inadvertently having a counterproductive effect) (See Sousa Lourenço et al., 2016). This point is of particular relevance for gender violence.

### **Loss aversion**

Loss aversion refers to the tendency for people to weigh losses more heavily than gains of equal size (i.e., the "pain of losses" is felt more than the "pleasure of gains"). In the context of communication, this insight would for example suggest framing messages such that a focus is put on how a given behaviour would harm a community rather than benefit it. For instance, in a public health campaign, rather than focusing in the gains brought by sanitation, focusing on the loss/harm to the community of continuing to defecate in the open (Rajadhyaksha, 2014). In the context of violence against woman, perhaps communication aimed at increasing reporting by bystanders could examine the effect of framing messages in terms of how inaction could result in costs to the community.

### **Commitments and plans to accomplish a given behaviour/goal**

Making a pledge to carry out a given behaviour, or a making a specific plan to achieve a given goal (with concrete steps and actions), can help individuals to accomplish a given behaviour/goal. For instance, in the UK a commitment-focused intervention had a positive effect in helping job seekers

to get back to work. Specifically, advisors asked individuals to make specific commitments to job-seeking activities in the following week (making the process more personalised and social by getting individuals to make public pre-commitments) (The Behavioural Insights Team, 2015). Also, in addressing irresponsible gambling behaviour, self-commitment strategies can be adopted to tackle gamblers' overconfidence in their abilities or chance of winning (Sousa Lourenço et al., 2016). For a relevant example in the field of gender violence see Box 9. Additionally, planning can reduce cognitive load (i.e., amount of mental effort required by the individual). This is an important aspect, since victims of violence are in a situation of scarcity (i.e., they can be under severe time/emotional/financial constraints, posing a threat to their safety or that of their close ones), which may impair their capacity to make better decisions and aggravate feelings of distress while draining mental resources.

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### Box 9: Reducing the social acceptance of violence against women

- **Target groups:** bystanders, general public
- **Initiative:** 'We Can' was launched in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India and Nepal in late 2004, in Pakistan in 2005 and in Afghanistan in 2007. The campaign has successfully paired communication strategies with the promotion of local change agents to change the social acceptance of violence against women. The campaign worked through local alliance partners who adapted and implemented campaign activities (e.g., workshops, street theatre, mobile vans, and distribution of campaign booklets). Moreover, it encourages individuals to sign a pledge in a **commitment to make small, incremental changes** in their own attitudes and behaviours toward violence and gender equity and then to **carry the campaign message to 10 others**. Research shows that, if a person makes a promise to perform a task, she often completes it. People believe they are consistent and will go to lengths to maintain this belief and appearance in public and private (Cialdini & Trost, 1998).
- **Impact:** In 2010, Oxfam Great Britain launched an impact evaluation of the campaign using a **random sample of 560 change makers** who had re-engaged with the program and **1196 structured interviews** with people in their circles of influence. Four outcomes and a set of indicators (against which to evaluate the level and degree of change observed) were identified. These included: 1) rejection/reduced tolerance of violence against women by community members and change makers; 2) greater acceptance of women who speak out against domestic violence; 3) increased awareness of the benefits of violence-free relationships for women, men and families; 4) increased evidence that change makers and other community members are taking responsibility to strengthen violence free relationships. On average, each change maker reached out to 5 people in their environment. 79% of change makers provided concrete and specific examples of taking action to prevent violence. 85% of change makers and 81% of people in their circle of influence endorsed the view that violence against women is not acceptable. 12% of those "most changed" nonetheless considered domestic violence warranted in some circumstances, a value rising to near 23% among change makers ranked as experiencing "no change" since joining the campaign. (Williams & Aldred, 2011)

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### 3.3.2. Framing of the message

The way that the message is conveyed can influence its perception and its effect. For instance, replacing the term "unemployment insurance" by "Job Seekers' Benefit" leads to more active searching behaviour (John & Nagy, 2010). Another example is a campaign carried out in New York which used framing to highlight that domestic violence is a crime, that there is no excuse, and that abusers are diverse. The campaign resulted in an increase in calls to a dedicated hotline (for additional details see Box 10 below). Framing factors include, for instance, the choice of words and

imagery, using emotions vs. rational arguments, or presenting the consequences of (in)action as losses vs. gains.

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### Box 10: Increasing reporting by women victims of domestic violence

- **Target groups:** women experiencing violence, relatives of women experiencing violence (main), violent men (secondary).
  - **Initiative:** A 2002 ad campaign by New York City focused on **increasing reporting by women experiencing domestic violence** via a 24-hour telephone hotline. The aim was to increase awareness of the hotline and to foster a positive attitude towards reporting of violence. Behavioural levers included **framing** messages to highlight that it is a crime, there is no excuse, and that abusers are diverse and include men with a positive image in society. The campaign used posters on subways and buses (approximately 20% of NYC buses and subways in 2002), in schools, hospitals, among others. Posters had an images of men (typically a college athlete or professional businessman) behind prison bars, with headings such as “Employee of the month. Soccer coach. Wife beater.”, “Big man on campus. Start athlete. Abusive boyfriend.”, or “Successful executive. Devoted churchgoer. Abusive husband”; and the subtext “There’s no excuse for violence against women. Men who hit or abuse their partner belong in jail. Report domestic violence and get the help you need.”
  - **Impact:** Results showed that calls to the hotline increased by 36% in the second week of the campaign. For further information, please see the review on campaigns on violence against women by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (Donovan & Vlasis, 2005b).
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### Emotions vs. rational arguments

A large amount of literature has focused on the impact of emotion induction vs. rational arguments to encourage certain behaviours. Emotions rely on what is known as the impulsive "System 1," whereas rational arguments harness the so called "System 2" (Kahneman, 2003). It is generally agreed that emotions are advantageously used when the goal is to change attitudes, whereas rational arguments can be leveraged to raise awareness about a specific issue (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Notwithstanding, in the context of the call for actions regarding violence against women, special attention should be paid to the use of emotions, since the Call encourages conveying positive messages whenever possible. Fear should be used with caution: inducing moderate levels of fear (e.g., for potential perpetrators, fear of the consequences of being convicted guilty of violence against women) can deter detrimental action, but extreme fear appeals may provoke a boomerang effect, whereby recipients reject and deny the message content (Janis & Feshbach, 1953). However, when considering emotional appeals more generally, a campaign aiming at increasing reporting by bystanders could remind male bystanders that victims could be their wives, friends, daughters, sisters, mothers etc., in an attempt to tap on the power of emotions to encourage action.

Success factor #6:

Use emotions with caution

### Metaphoric imagery

A determinant factor to the success of an awareness campaign is that the target audience actually devotes attention to it and later remembers its content. People are bombarded with messages every day. In this context, messages are competing with each other to get through. One possible tool, among others, to attract attention and increase remembrance is to use visual metaphors, i.e., a

visual comparison between two distinct objects in order to infer similarities between the two. For instance, female victims were portrayed, in an Australian campaign (*Gewaltfrei leben*), as birds escaping a cage. All things being equal, visual metaphors increase positive attitudes toward the message and increase later recall of the message content (McQuarrie & Mick, 2003).

Success factor #7:  
Wisely use framing tools to attract attention  
and to increase remembrance

### 3.3.3. Source of the message

The sender of the message can have a major impact on how credible and convincing the message will be perceived. For instance, anti-tobacco organisations use former smokers to get their message through and advertisers hire celebrities to tout their products.

The spokesperson will be perceived as credible provided that he or she is seen as either expert, reliable or popular (Kelman & Hovland, 1953). Influential communicators are also those that the target audience can identify with (Cohen, 2001) or see as members of an aspirational group.

An experiment carried out in 2015 effectively chose influential students as spokespersons to change tolerant attitudes toward peer harassment in high schools (Paluck, Shepherd, & Aronow, 2016). Highly connected students thought to be social referents were selected to deliver the message that harassment was not acceptable. The experiment showed that these opinion leaders were more effective at reducing harassment than other kinds of students. Also, a trial ran in UK, aimed at reducing unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions by general practitioners (GPs) in England included a communication strategy targeted at GPs. More specifically, GPs were addressed through a letter from a high-profile figure - England's Chief Medical Officer –to increase the credibility of its content and bring behavioural change. Results showed fewer (73,406) antibiotic prescriptions and (£92,356) savings in direct prescribing costs for the public sector (Hallsworth et al., 2016).

This being said, there are successful campaigns that willingly opt not to explicitly mention support or patronage from a specific institution/person. For example, the campaign "Sprout to be Brussels" plays around the assonance between the Brussels' local vegetable - the *sprout* - and the idea of being *proud* of living in Brussels. The campaign's promoters deliberately did not want it to have a specific label. The objective was for the campaign to be perceived as bottom-up so that anyone could be free to gain ownership of the idea.

Success factor #8:  
Identify the ideal messenger, or opt for none

### 3.4. Choose the communication channel

There is a wide variety of communication channels to choose from, such as television, leaflets, billboards, newspapers, radio, and internet websites. Public events (e.g., concerts, information

booth at festivals, etc.) can also be used to convey the message. Online social networks are another option, which offer the possibility of interactivity and the potential viral dissemination of the message. It is generally agreed that an integrated communication program, which wisely uses different channels in combination, is advisable to reinforce the message. At the same time, when facing constraints regarding the number of communication channels, testing the efficacy of different channels in delivering the message could be relevant (for an example, see Box 11 below).

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### Box 11: Preventing sexual misconduct in schools

- Target groups: students
  - Initiative: The Prevention Innovations Research Center, University of New Hampshire, conducted a research study to examine the efficacy of **different methods to deliver campus sexual misconduct information** to first year students. Researchers and practitioners from seven campuses across the United States of America participated in the study. On each campus, five large classes were randomized into one of four interventions and a control group condition. In all five groups (the control and the four intervention groups), a pre-test was administered during the first or second week of the semester, and a post-test was administered during the fifth or sixth week of the semester. The full sample was made up of 3,088 students who completed pre-test surveys. Pre-test and post-test data was matched for 1,798 students (58% of the sample):
    - Group 1: **control** (students completed pre-tests and post-tests but did not receive any intervention);
    - Group 2: online **video** (3 days after the completion of the pre-test, students received an e-mail with a video on an embedded link. In the video, four student actors alternated reading the campus sexual misconduct policy specific to the institution);
    - Group 3: policy **read to class** (after the pre-test, two members of the campus research team read the campus sexual misconduct policy to the class);
    - Group 4: policy read to class followed by facilitated **discussion** (20 minutes class discussion about the campus policy);
    - Group 5: policy read to class, facilitated discussion, and **e-mailed link to online video**.
  - Impact: Results showed that the largest change in scores was seen in groups that received the **information presented in two or more ways** (e.g., Group 4 participants to whom the policy was read in class and who then immediately participated in a facilitated discussion). Participants in Group 2 and Group 5 were asked to watch an online video about their campus sexual misconduct policy. In both groups, the majority of participants (over 70%) reported that they did not watch the video. The study suggests that **for web-based information to be effective, students may need reminders and incentives (fitting the target audience) and should be sent by influential members of the institution (social referents)** (Potter et al., 2015).
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## 4. Pretesting actions

### 4.1. Benefits of pretesting

In order to ensure that the designed action has the intended effects on the target audience, it is crucial to pretest it. Pretesting can also be useful to compare the effect of different actions or different messages and therefore choose the most powerful one. For instance, suppose that a campaign on billboards informing potential victims of a toll-free number to call for help, you hesitate

between two spokespersons. Pretesting will allow assessing which of the two spokespersons will be the most effective in triggering the intended behaviour.

Success factor #9:

Assess which message or which action is the most effective through pilot pretesting

#### 4.2. Ethical pretesting

Prior to the actual pretest phase, it is highly advisable to submit the envisaged actions to an independent **ethical committee**. These national independent bodies (e.g., in Belgium, the Belgian *Jury d'Éthique Publicitaire*) can provide an assessment of whether the actions comply with official regulations and ethical codes self-established by advertisers associations.

#### 4.3. Qualitative pretesting

Ideally, the first phase of a pretest should use qualitative methods to get insights on the reactions of the intended target audience to the different messages. This can take the form of offline or online focus groups. Alternatively, individual in-depth interviews can be conducted if the topic is too sensitive for people to freely talk about it in a group (e.g., if victims are the target audience). Participants in the qualitative pretest should belong to the target audience as defined earlier in the process.

Qualitative pretesting should involve showing the different communication devices and gathering feedback on the message appeal, comprehension, cultural acceptance, and credibility. If relevant, it should also examine the recipients' emotional reactions to the message and their sense of identification with the spokesperson.

In doing so, qualitative pretesting can detect problems with the materials, identify ways to enhance the message and, possibly, narrow down the number of alternative final messages to be used for the actual campaign.

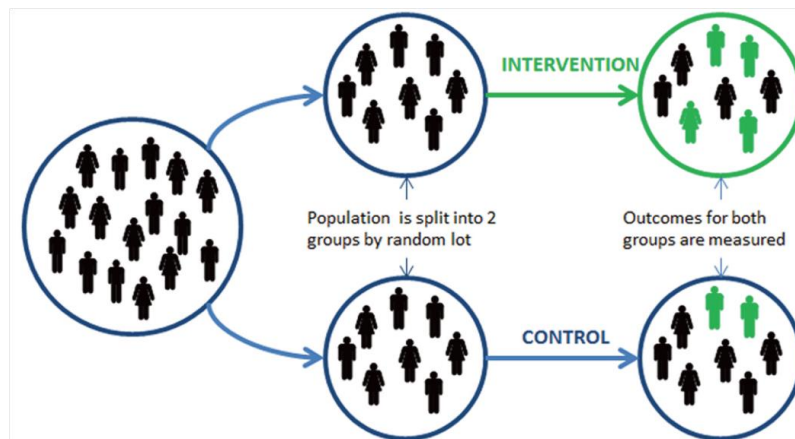
#### 4.4. Quantitative pretesting

Quantitative pilot pretesting should be performed whenever possible, to compare the effect of different message alternatives and to assess ex-ante the expected effect of the information, awareness-raising, or education action.

As for qualitative pretesting, participants in the quantitative pretesting should be as similar as possible to the target audience of the action. For instance, if nurses and doctors working in hospital emergency services are the target audience of the awareness-raising action, then the quantitative pretest should seek participants that correspond to this profile.

Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) are the most robust method to quantitatively pretest the effect of (different) messages. Similarly to the experimental methods used in medical research, RCTs randomly assign participants to different conditions (also known as "treatments" or "interventions")

in order to assess their isolated effects, compared to a baseline condition (called the "control" condition) (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2: The basic design of a randomised controlled trial (RCT)**

Source: (Haynes, Service, Goldacre, & Torgerson, 2012)

For instance, assume an awareness-raising action that includes the creation of a website to challenge stereotypes regarding violence against women. One of the decisions that need to be taken is the name and URL address of the website. Let us suppose that, after qualitative pretesting, two alternative website names were selected (for instance [www.stopgenderstereotypes.eu](http://www.stopgenderstereotypes.eu) and [www.enoughwithgendercliches.eu](http://www.enoughwithgendercliches.eu)). An RCT would gather participants and randomly assign them to one of the following three groups:

- (1) intervention group #1: a group that is exposed to the website with the first name;
- (2) intervention group #2: a group exposed to the exact same website as group #1, with the exception of the name being changed to the second envisaged alternative;
- (3) control group: a group not exposed to neither of the websites.

The RCT conducted by the UK Behavioural Insights Teams to test how different messages and pictures would prompt individuals to join the NHS Organ Donation Register provides a nice illustration. Specifically, eight messages (seven behaviourally-informed messages and a control one) were tested. Messages were included on a high traffic webpage on GOV.UK that encourages people to join the Organ Donor Register. During the 5 weeks of the pretesting, over 1 million people viewed the corresponding webpage and were randomly assigned to see one of the eight message variants. During the trial, 1,203 more people registered under the best performing variant (drawn on reciprocity by asking: "If you needed an organ transplant would you have one? If so please help others.") compared to the control group ("Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register."). These findings show how a small change in the context can lead to a large impact. The initiative was run in partnership with several entities: National Health Service Blood and Transplant, the Government Digital Service, the Department for Health, and the Driving & Vehicle Licensing Agency (Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team, 2013).

RCTs can be run as field experiments, that is, in a natural setting in which participants are not aware that they take part in an experiment. However, for pilot pretesting, it is more usual to run "laboratory" experiments, in which participants knowingly react to the stimuli. Laboratory



experiments can consist in participants coming to a physical location (i.e., offline lab experiment) or using their computer or smartphone to receive and react to the communication materials.

One of the drawbacks of laboratory experiments is that participants, because they know that they are being observed, may not respond honestly or naturally to the stimuli. For instance, they may try to infer the experimenter's goal and try to give answers that contribute to or, conversely, hinder that goal (i.e., the so-called "demand characteristics bias"). They also may analyse and respond to the messages shown in a more diligent way than they would in a natural setting (i.e., the "Hawthorne effect"). To counter these drawbacks, one needs to make sure that participants are not aware – at the moment of participation<sup>3</sup> – of the precise goal of the experiment. Moreover, the message should be included in a natural setting that does not artificially attract attention: for instance, a TV ad to raise awareness on violence against women should be included in a series of other unrelated ads.

Once pretest participants have been exposed to the different conditions (treatment vs. control), an RCT measures the outcome. For pretests, the dependent variable(s) should correspond to those decided in the objectives setting phase. For instance, if the action aims at reducing victim's fear of being stigmatized if they report violent acts to the police, then the pretest should measure this variable with survey questions. If the action aims to reduce social acceptance of domestic violence, a survey question should measure this outcome variable.

This leads us to the issue of validly measuring outcome variables. Violence against women, gender stereotypes and social norms about intervening in couple conflict are issues that are highly subjected to social desirability biases: people will not readily admit their true attitudes if these go against established social norms. For instance, few people will acknowledge that they tolerate partner violence. To address this issue, anonymised questionnaires self-administrated by the respondents (rather than conducted by an interviewer) can help. Indirect ways to ask questions can also help, for instance by using projective techniques (e.g., collage, sentence completion, personification) where instead of directly voicing what their thoughts/feelings, individuals project these (e.g., select a pictures from a given set and voice their thoughts). In any case, these biases apply to both the control and the treatment groups and should not, therefore, affect the measured effect of the intervention.

Finally, a statistical analysis of the differences in the outcomes for the different groups (intervention/treatment vs. control) will reveal whether the treatment (i.e., the action) does have an effect, and which actions work best (e.g., which name for the website yields most recall).

## 5. Evaluating the actual impact of actions

Impact of an intervention can be broadly defined as the difference between what happens to the individuals receiving the 'treatment' and what would have happened to them in its absence. While the former refers to the observed, the latter refers to the unobserved or counterfactual. For instance, in the context of a counselling programme targeted at young unemployed graduates, the placement rate with counselling would be the observed, whereas the placement rate without

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<sup>3</sup> Ethics standards foresee, however, that participants should be debriefed on the precise purpose of the experiment at the end of it, and they should have the possibility to have their data deleted if they wish so.



counselling would be the unobserved/counterfactual. Impact evaluation is a way to determine what the unobserved/counterfactual scenario would be (J-pal Europe, 2011). There are a number of methods for impact evaluation.

This section is structured in three parts: first, the most relevant evaluation methods for the purpose of the current work are briefly described; then important aspects to consider when setting up an evaluation are outlined, and, finally, a brief overview on the evaluation of communications is presented.

## 5.1. Evaluation methods

### **After-only designs**

In this type of design, measurement occurs only after the intervention. Statistical controls (e.g., statistically controlling for predictors of cigarette use and/or exposure to media, in the context of an after-only design to evaluate an anti-tobacco media campaigns) can help to account for the potential effects of exogenous variables. However, it is still possible that other, non-controlled-for variable(s) would be responsible for the observed effects. As such, this approach is of poorer quality compared to an approach using proper control groups (Hornik, 2002a).

### **Comparing participants and non-participants**

In this type of design that admittedly is not very relevant for awareness campaigns, those who received the intervention are compared with those who were eligible to receive it but chose not to participate. However, the use of this simple design also imposes a serious limitation, that is, participants in the two groups will likely differ in observable and/or “unobservable dimensions.” Let us consider the example of the counselling programme for young unemployed graduates. Those who opted not to participate might differ from those who received the intervention (i.e., treatment group) on dimensions such as gender, age, etc., but also on other “unobservable” and harder to isolate variables, such as motivation to find a job. This imposes a serious confound, and, as such, this type of design will almost always result in a measure of impact that is different from the real impact. Statistically matching participants and non-participants, so that pairs of individuals resembling each other are created and compared within those pairs, could partly help to overcome this limitation. However, doing so is highly complex (e.g., how to define appropriate matching criteria?) (J-pal Europe, 2011).

### **Before-After or Pre-Post designs**

In this type of design, measurement occurs before and after the intervention, using the exact same population. Although preferable to after-only designs, before-after designs also have limitations. Specifically, they rely on the strong assumption that the variable of interest would not have changed in the absence of the intervention. To more clearly see the limitations of this type of designs, let us consider an example. Assume that the counselling programme targeted at young unemployed graduates took place in 2008. Examining the success of the programme by comparing placement rates in 2008 with those in 2007 would likely be meaningless, since an economic recession occurred in 2008. In other words, before-after designs open the possibility that observed effects are due to potential confounds. It is worth noticing that this limitation does not apply when no relevant confounding event took place during the study period. Moreover, the impact of confounding events

can be minimised through the use of statistical controls, as well as analysis of available indicators related to the observed effect.

A good example of this is a mass media campaign ran by SunSmart (Melbourne, Australia) which aimed to raise awareness and to encourage preventive behaviour such as the use of sunscreen and hats, etc., and to present this "SunSmart" behaviour as fashionable (especially among young people). Using a pre-post design, the campaign showed a decrease in dangerous sun exposure and sunburn. Additionally, researchers showed that beliefs related to the risk of sun tanning and positive values of suntans were shifting in the desirable direction, thus adding confidence that the positive effects found were due to the campaign (instead of a confounding variable, such as weather changes). Before-after designs frequently result in a measure of impact that is different from the real one, except in circumstances where the outcome of interest is very stable over time (Hornik, 2002b) (J-pal Europe, 2011).

### **Randomized controlled trials (RCTs)**

As detailed in the previous section, two features of RCTs make them the most robust type of evaluation design. These are the introduction of a control group and the use of randomization, which minimize the risk that observed changes are due to external factors (e.g., selection bias), rather than to the intervention itself. RCTs allow identifying a cause-effect relationship between a specific feature (e.g., a new intervention) and its impact, while controlling other features by design (Sousa Lourenço et al., 2016). Additionally, in large enough samples, RCTs allow the identification of the effect of the intervention in different subgroups (e.g., age cohorts, education levels). This represents valuable information for optimizing the eligibility criteria before scaling up the intervention (J-pal Europe, 2011). Although RCTs are a powerful evaluation tool, setting them up can be complex and requires expert knowledge so that validity is maximized, biases are minimized and robust results are achieved.

### **Field experiments**

Rather than a control group, at times there may be worthwhile to use a control site, such as when a "treatment city" is compared with a "control city." Such designs require careful consideration, especially when there is a single treatment and control site. In other words, validity of this approach is dependent on the assumptions that the two cities under comparison would be equivalent at the start and would have changed at the same rate. Selecting several "equivalent" city pairs, and randomly assigning treatment and control interventions to each of the cities in the pair, would help making the design more robust (Hornik, 2002b).

**Determining which evaluation method to use** is a trade-off between the cost (time, money) of experimentation and the cost of scaling up an ineffective intervention because a faulty evaluation design showed positive results (J-pal Europe, 2011). In terms of choosing the right trade-off, in general, an expensive and very innovative programme would highly benefit from being evaluated through an RCT. By contrast, RCTs would be less relevant to evaluate the impact of a cheap, not particularly innovative intervention (i.e., an intervention for which there is good evidence of success from previous studies). In other words, the cost of scaling up the intervention and the degree of uncertainty about the effectiveness of an intervention are two important elements to consider when positing which design to use. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that evaluation methods that return robust results, convincingly showing the extent to which an intervention is effective, facilitate

decisions about scaling up and are more likely to gain support from stakeholders. For a relevant example, illustrating the crucial role of evaluation to prevent ineffective or counter-productive "awareness-raising" initiatives from being deployed see Box 12.

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### Box 12: Deterring criminal activity

- **Target groups:** juvenile delinquents or pre-delinquents
  - **Initiative:** In 2013, the Campbell Collaboration carried out and published an analysis of 9 relevant trials tackling the possibility of **deterring criminal activity** – of juvenile delinquents or pre-delinquents - through "awareness-raising" initiatives mainly based on organised **visits to prisons**. "Scared Straight" (from the name of the Oscar-winning documentary aired on television in the late 1970s) and other programmes were designed to deter participants from future offending, through first hand observation of prison life and interaction with adult inmates.
  - **Impact:** The analysis showed the intervention to be ineffective or even counter-productive. Given these results, these programmes or similar ones are not recommended as a crime prevention strategy. This may also apply to violence against women. (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, Hollis-Peel, & Lavenberg, 2013)
- 

For a useful list of resources on impact evaluation and further details on the methods described above, we recommend reading "Social Experimentation - A methodological guide for policy makers" (J-pal Europe, 2011). Additionally, the recent video on the use of counterfactual impact evaluation, by the Centre for Research on Impact Evaluation (CRIE) of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, presents an useful and brief introduction to the topic (JRC CRIE, 2015).

## 5.2. Important aspects to consider when setting up an evaluation

**As detailed next (for a summary, see Box 13), several factors contribute to making the evaluation design stronger** ((Hornik, 2002b) (J-pal Europe, 2011)):

- Conducting a thorough literature search. This is crucial to identify similar work done within the area and its corresponding impact, as well as to avoid pitfalls;
- Making the "model of the effect of the programme" explicit at the start (i.e., degree of exposure to the programme; identification of the target group(s); defining hypotheses as to the direction, size, and expected 'timing' for the effects; and suggesting a possible logic chain of explanation or a mechanism of the effect);
- Measuring the effects at several points in time (both pre and post intervention);
- Using appropriate control groups. Keep in mind that random assignment of participants to the control and treatment group is the "golden standard" for achieving treatment and control groups that are comparable in all relevant aspects. This maximizes the likelihood that potential effects are due to the intervention, rather than to differences between groups;
- Triangulating evidence (i.e., using more than one approach to show the effects of the intervention);
- Focusing on the target population rather than on the general population as a whole;

- Using larger samples. This makes the effect easier to detect, makes it possible to test interactions, and allows analysis of effects across subgroups (e.g., across gender, age, etc.).

In addition, a few aspects are worth further elaborating. First, it is important to identify and describe the different **incentives, opportunities, and constraints** that the target population will be faced with and to ensure that the intervention is compatible with these. For instance, if an intervention entails weekly hourly sessions, are participants able and willing to meet this requirement? Moreover, this illustrates the importance of involving all relevant stakeholders at an early stage of the project discussion in order to more effectively design the intervention and the corresponding evaluation (J-pal Europe, 2011).

Second, **targeting** is key. In the context of impact assessment, mis-targeting will result in lower average impact as the intervention will comprise individuals who will not benefit from it (e.g., including all children in a nutrition intervention, rather than focusing on children with faltering growth or malnourished). At the same time, it is essential to build a comprehensive understanding of which target group(s) would be likely to generate the largest impact. For instance, in 1995 in Bangladesh, a programme aimed to reduce malnutrition and targeted mothers of young children by providing them with nutritional counselling and supplementary feeding. However, later on, evidence from qualitative research revealed that the programme would likely have been more successful if husbands and mothers-in-law had also been involved in the nutritional counselling offered. Why? In rural Bangladesh men are usually the ones in charge of market shopping and when the household is shared with mothers-in-law, they tend to have more influence on nutrition decisions than the mothers of the children. Additionally, it is fundamental to avoid selection-bias (i.e., selecting a set of participants for the intervention who are not representative of the target population). In other words, the decision about who to include is key, as are the sample methods used (White, 2009).

Thirdly, it is important to **identify and clearly describe the set of outcomes** the intervention is expected to have (J-pal Europe 2011) as well as to consider what is the expected **magnitude of the effect**, as this will help determine the sample size (Hornik, 2002b).

Fourth, it is important to consider how long after the intervention the effects are likely to be observed. In other words, if a change in behaviour is not expected immediately (e.g., the intervention is expected to change the social norm), the evaluation design should take this into consideration to measure effects at the appropriate moment(s) in time (Hornik, 2002b).

Finally, beware of **attrition rates** (i.e., drop-out rate from the intervention). As a rule of thumb, these should not be higher than 20%. Moreover, in designs that entail a control group(s), it is important that the attrition rate is not significantly different between the treatment and the control groups. The existence of significant differences in attrition between groups would threaten the validity of the design as comparability between groups would no longer be assured (J-pal Europe, 2011).

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### **Box 13: Making your evaluation design stronger – Important elements to keep in mind.**

- Conduct a thorough literature search.
  - Be explicit from the start about the key elements of the intervention (target group, objectives, direction and size of the expected effect, etc.).
-

- Identify the most appropriate target group, and focus on this segment rather than on the general population.
- Identify and describe, at the start, the different incentives, opportunities, and constraints relevant for the target group.
- Set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) objectives ahead of the evaluation.
- Identify and clearly describe the set of outcomes on which the intervention is expected to have an impact.
- Use appropriate control groups and, where possible, use randomized controlled trials.
- Use large enough samples to detect the expected effects.
- Measure the effects at several points in time (both pre and post intervention).
- Triangulate evidence.
- Beware of attrition rates (i.e., drop-out rate from the intervention).

### 5.3. Evaluation of communication

Regarding the evaluation of communication, the UK Government Communication Service (GCS) Evaluation Framework constitutes a useful resource. This framework is a tool to systematically evaluate communication (see Figure 3 below). The framework identifies eight golden rules of evaluation:

Set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) objectives ahead of the evaluation; Take the target audience into consideration when selecting metrics; Adopt an integrated channel approach; Collect baselines and benchmarks, if possible; Use a mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence; Review performance frequently; Use new insights to continuously improve and to inform future planning; and make the link between the activity and its impact with the organisational objectives ((UK GCS, 2016); see also (UK GCS, n.d.)).

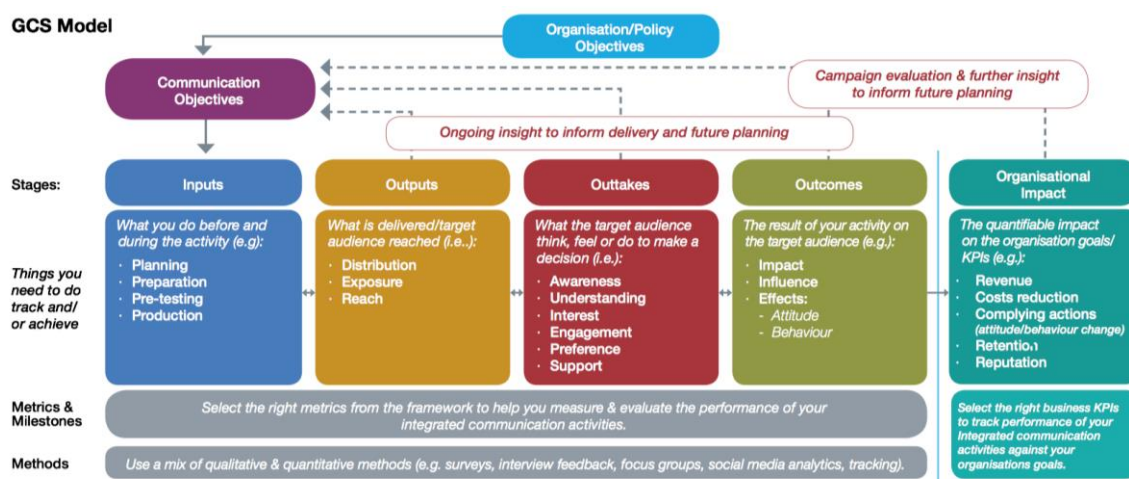
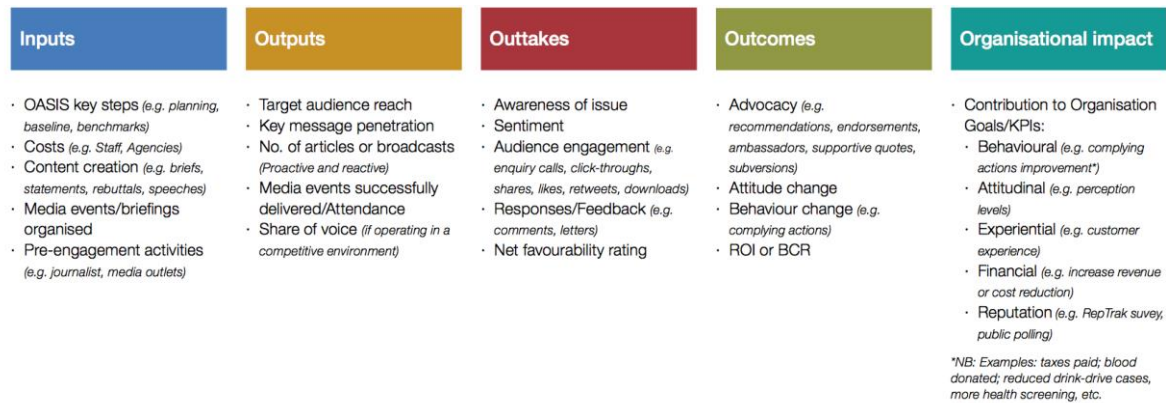


Figure 3: UK Government Communication Service (GCS) Evaluation Framework

Source: (Government Communication Services, 2015, p. 3)

The GCS Evaluation Framework outlines a series of evaluation measures – outputs, outtakes, and outcomes – for gathering, analysing, and reporting data on different types of communication

activities (e.g., digital, media, stakeholder engagement, etc.). In brief, **outputs** refer to the communications delivered and to the reach of the target audience (e.g., publicity volume and reach), **outtakes** refer to “what the target audience think, feels or do to take a decision” (e.g., awareness, understanding, interest), and **outcomes** refer to effects on the target group as the result of the communication activity, such as a changes in the behaviour of interest (e.g., adopting a service). For a concrete example focusing on media communication see Figure 4 below.



**Figure 4: UK Government Communication Service (GCS) Evaluation Framework in the context of media communication**

Source: (Government Communication Services, 2015)

Finally, the AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework constitutes another useful resource (AMEC, 2016).

## 6. Concluding remarks

One of the key learnings from behavioural sciences applied to policy is that there are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Therefore, policy initiatives – including the actions covered by the call – should be as targeted and as tailored as possible, so that the focus is on the real causes of the problem and on the relevant target audience. In the previous sections we gave account of different possible behavioural causes (i.e., "behavioural elements") of violence against women and presented different behavioural levers that may be used to prevent and combat violence against women, along with general principles for effective information and awareness-raising campaigns. We also focussed on the pretesting of the initiatives and the measurement of their real impact. As stressed throughout this literature review, piloting/pretesting initiatives before deploying them and systematically evaluating their impact is crucial in order to implement initiatives that work, while "pulling the plug" on initiatives that are ineffective or even counter-productive. In other words, evaluation must not just be a 'tick box' exercise, should be conceived from the start, and is critical to ensure that the focus is on "what works."

There are a number of insights from the behavioural sciences literature as it relates to preventing and combating violence against women using awareness-raising and education activities. Next, we highlight some key insights, though reading of the earlier sections is warranted for a more comprehensive and complete picture.

First, targeting is key. Initiatives should be purposely designed to encourage or discourage a specific target group to perform a specific behaviour. At the same time, as broadly recognized today, no single factor is sufficient to explain violence against women, rather multiple factors are at play (e.g., attitudes, subjective norms, demographics, culture, etc.). Thus, it would be unrealistic for a given intervention to try and tackle all factors at once. Instead, initiatives should focus on tackling a limited number of the identified behavioural causes ("behavioural elements") which hold particular relevance for the problem and target audience in question. A thorough literature review, and when relevant, exploratory research (e.g., using qualitative methodology, such as on-site observations) will be very valuable at an early stage.

Second, once the target group, the target behaviour and the behavioural causes/elements have been clearly identified, the initiative has to be designed using the appropriate behavioural levers. There are a number of these and its choice should be informed by a number of factors including, in particular, the behavioural cause(s) to be tackled, the corresponding target group, and the communication channel(s). Some examples of behavioural levers in context include using *social norms* to change perceptions about the social acceptance of violence against women, *eliminating hassle factors* (e.g., delayed response of healthcare services, cumbersome administrative procedures) which may hinder women from using support services, or *framing* messages such that domestic violence is portrayed as a crime that requires as much attention as any other. The way that the message is framed and conveyed is important, as it can largely influence its perception and its effect.

Third, it is essential to, from the start, clearly define the objectives of the intervention and outline the hypotheses as to the direction, size, and expected 'timing' for the effects. This will help setting specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely objectives.

Fourth, in order to ensure that the designed initiative has the intended effects on the target audience, it is crucial to pretest it. Pretesting can also be useful to compare the effect of different actions or different messages and therefore choose the most powerful one. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that RCTs are most robust method to pretest an intervention, since they introduce of a control group(s) and use randomization (thus minimizing the risk that observed changes are due to external factors). Moreover, they allow identifying a cause-effect relationship between a specific feature (e.g., a new intervention) and its impact.

Fifth, EVALUATE your intervention! Our desk research revealed that initiatives were often not accompanied by an evaluation of their actual impact (or at least it was not made explicit), or evaluation was carried out ad-hoc using available data, and was thus suboptimal. It is essential to plan for evaluation from the start, to make sure that the most appropriate evaluation design is used, and to set-up robust and feasible metrics that allow determining the real impact of the intervention. Doing so can also contribute to improve the effectiveness of the overall programme by allowing one to focus on "what works" when deploying the initiative on a larger scale. Additionally, initiatives that have not produced the expected effects should not simply be disregarded. In fact, a well-thought-off, well carried out, and properly evaluated initiative which yielded no impact can be as relevant for improving future interventions as initiatives that worked (for example, by pointing out particular problems or barriers to success). Moreover, in an area such as violence against women, where negative effects can pose severe consequences, one must be particularly wary from deployed



initiatives with no explicitly demonstrated benefit. Furthermore, evaluation methods that return robust results, convincingly showing the extent to which an intervention is effective, facilitate decisions about scaling up and are more likely to gain support from stakeholders.

Sixth, determining which evaluation method to use is a trade-off between the cost (time, money) of experimentation and the cost of scaling up an ineffective intervention because a faulty evaluation design showed positive results.

Finally, and more generally, the setting up of an intervention has to be aligned with on-the-ground activities: for instance, when a campaign advertises a specific service, it is essential to ensure that there has been an appropriate expansion of the service capacity to meet potential demand. Failure to do so can prevent an effective initiative from delivering its full potential, or even lead to counter-productive effects. Additionally, there is a wide variety of communication channels to choose from (e.g., leaflets, billboards, radio, websites, etc.) and it is generally agreed that an integrated communication program is advisable to reinforce the message. Clearly describing the target audience will enable a better choice of the message(s) and the selection of the appropriate communication means.

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## Annex – Applying behavioural insights to specific issues of violence against women: results from a hands-on session with practitioners

### ISSUE A: INCREASING CALLS TO A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

#### 1. Define the aim and outcome(s) of the initiative

The preliminary design of this initiative has been collectively proposed by 3 participants, supported by a behavioural expert from the JRC during a hands-on session that took place at a workshop hosted by DG JUST in Brussels, on 12 September 2016.

Increase the number of valid calls to the domestic violence hotline by 5%, three months after the campaign.

Increase the number of (relevant) cases that get referred to a service by 50%, three months after the campaign.

Get the appropriate service to contact all victims within the referral period specified during the call to the helpline (maximum referral period tbd).

Improve victims' health and wellbeing, as well as perception that information and support is available, six months after initial referral.

The outcome measures would have to be closely aligned with the aims above, but were not discussed in detail. Additionally, as a starting point, it was assumed that (a) multiple helplines were in place and that none of these operated 24/7; and that (b) one of these hotlines would be extended to a 24/7 service, with national coverage. Finally, this extension of the service would have to be factored in when calculating whether or not there was an increase in the number of calls.

#### 2. Identify the target population

Main: women, bystanders. Secondary: relevant professionals (medical professional, social workers, police officers, etc.).

#### 3. Analyse the context and the possible behavioural elements at stake

In terms of **behavioural biases**, a number of these were identified:

- In the case of victims, the fact that hotlines were not operating 24/7 could lead to a situation of uncertainty regarding whether or not there would someone on the other end of the line available to help. Given this uncertainty, **risk aversion** could result in inaction.
- In the case of victims, the fact that there are a number of hotlines to support victims, as well as a mix of messages stemming from different posters in hospitals, policy stations, etc., could make action harder. Namely, the quantity, diversity, and complexity (due to lack of clarity or consistency) of the information may result in **information overload** which can inhibit action. Moreover, people victim of domestic violence are in a situation of scarcity, which can lead to reduction on cognitive resources and/or “tunnelling”.
- In the case of victims, waiting periods in the hotline likely trigger fearful thoughts and are stressful. Due to **myopia** (i.e., avoiding the immediate stress), the caller may give up on staying on the line regardless of the longer-term benefit (e.g., getting help from an advocate).
- In the case of bystanders, factors such as **social norms** (i.e., intimate partner violence is a private issue, rather than a public concern) or lack of information on appropriate actions could be acting as barriers to reporting.

Finally, a key constraint was also identified. That is, making sure that the initiative is aligned with on-the-ground activities/available resources. For instance, given that an increase in the number of calls is expected, it is essential to ensure that there has been an appropriate expansion of the service capacity prior to the campaign launch. This is to meet potential demand and thus avoid counter-productive effects (e.g., increase in waiting times and corresponding decrease in the caller's

willingness to wait).

#### 4. Select the possible behavioural levers to be used in tackling the behavioural elements identified (see #3)

For victims and bystanders, a communication campaign was envisaged using a number of behavioural levers to tackle the different biases identified. Because these biases differ between victims and bystanders, tailored messages would have to be designed for each of these target groups. Careful choice of the communication channels was seen as very important, but not discussed in detail.

Regarding **victims**, for each behavioural bias, a possible **behavioural lever** was identified:

- On risk aversion, the campaign could put the focus that it is a 24/7 hotline and that, as such, "help would always be there for you". Moreover, it could promote that calls are free and anonymous (e.g., not listed or not traceable back as a call to the hotline on the phone bill) since doubts about these could act as a barrier to action.
- On information overload, a central website could offer plain and structured information on support services, their location, capacity and availability, as well as provide a list of specific steps to follow when seeking help. This would likely reduce possible hassle factors hindering women from using support services.
- Furthermore, pre-commitments could be used as a tool for behavioural change (e.g., during the call, getting the victim to openly commit to the advocate to a plan and to take the next concrete step in seeking help).
- On myopia, the negative could be turned into a positive by, rather than playing music or having silence during the waiting period in the hotline, communicating about the different types of support available, how to get these and the existence of a website with centralised information (to be set up, and pre-tested with potential users, in advance of the campaign).

Regarding **bystanders**, it would first be important to determine the factors (e.g., social norms, lack of

information, etc.) that are acting as barriers to reporting. This is essential so that campaign messages address these factors, and thus encourage the target behaviour (i.e., reporting).

Finally, an educational activity was considered relevant for **professionals** (medical staff, social workers, police officers, etc.). Specifically, this could focus on providing information about the hotline and the centralised website, training about the different types of support services (their location, capacity and availability) so that the different professionals can best support victims (e.g., refer victims to a support service that, in some cases, may be more appropriate than their own). Additionally, for medical staff and social workers, training could also focus on how they could further support victims with their established plan, rewarding them for steps already achieved (via positive comments) and helping them to specify the next steps.

#### 5. Put forward an evaluation approach

Pretesting of the different campaign messages was considered important in order to ensure that they have the intended effects on the target audience. It could also be used to compare the effect of different messages, in order to choose the most powerful one.

Regarding evaluation, two approaches were discussed: (a) pre-post design (i.e., measuring outcomes before and after the intervention, using the exact same population); or (b) the use of a "control city" (matched with the "treatment city" in key factors, such as number of inhabitants, size, stats on physical domestic abuse, etc.). The city which would be the control and that which would be the treatment would be determined at random. In case outcomes were positive, treatment would then be extended to the control city, followed by evaluation to determine whether positive outcomes (of the expected size) were also observed. If possible, several control and treatment cities would be used instead. A randomized control trial (using a control and a treatment group, within the same city) was not considered possible due to constraints associated with communication channels for the campaign.

## Issue B: REDUCING JUDGEMENTS OF BLAME ATTRIBUTED TO VICTIMS

### 1. Define the aim and outcome(s) of the initiative

The preliminary design of this initiative has been collectively proposed by 5 participants, supported by a behavioural expert and a foresight expert from the JRC, during a hands-on session that took place at a workshop hosted by DG JUST in Brussels, on 12 September 2016.

At the beginning of the discussion, some group members mentioned that awareness raising campaigns have been successful in encouraging victims of violence to seek assistance and to file a complaint. However, most complaints are not fully dealt with, due to several reasons. For example, in some countries there are rigid requirements in place for victims to have access to subsidized legal support (e.g., need to apply for a grant, requirements of minimum income); victims of violence can be exposed to judgments of blame by authorities/family members which can lead them to withdraw their complaint; evidence gathering procedures can be unpleasant for the victims particularly if they are required to explain the incident of violence to five different entities before assistance is provided; and procedures can last two years until a decision is made. Therefore, a second step is needed so that more complaint procedures are fully dealt with and cases of violence against women are subject to a formal decision.

The group set two main aims for the initiative: encourage more victims to follow the full complaint procedure and increase the number of court rulings on violence against women.

### 2. Identify the target population

The main target population would be judges, both at the start and throughout their career.

### 3. Analyse the context and the possible behavioural elements at stake

The following **behavioural elements** were identified:

- In the case of victims, the situation of uncertainty regarding whether or not their complaint will be fully dealt with and will lead to a reassuring outcome accentuates **loss aversion**.
- The fact that **complaint procedures** tend to be **heavy, cumbersome** (i.e., lack of simple, progressive and outcome-based steps) and **long-lasting** (also leading to situations of **information overload**) can prevent victims and bystanders from reporting.
- In the case of victims and judges, factors such as **social norms** (i.e., intimate partner violence is a private issue, rather than a public concern) and potential **gender stereotypes** could interfere in the way these cases are interpreted and acted upon.
- Judges might be **overconfident** in the way they deal with this type of cases and miscalibrate the subjective probability of re-incidence, for example, particularly if instances of violence against women infrequently reach the courts.
- The judges' potential **limited knowledge** of gender specific issues and imperfect preparedness to deal with such complexity are significant elements to factor in.

### 4. Select the possible behavioural levers to be used in tackling the behavioural elements identified (see #3)

For **judges**, the following activities would tackle the behavioural issues mentioned in #3:

- A **training module** targeted at judges at the start and during their career would tackle any potential overconfidence, gender stereotypes and lack of knowledge on gender related issues, beyond violence. This training would empower

judges to make decisions taking into account a wider range of gender specific factors that would render their understanding of the issue more robust. In order to encourage judges to perceive the training as valuable for their career prospects and for the immediate exercise of their profession, **incentives** to participate in the training would also be put in place.

- As individual behaviours are influenced by what is considered typical and acceptable by peers (i.e., social norms) another initiative would test whether some **judges acting as social referents** for a period of time (e.g., 1 year) would change their peers' perceptions of social norms about gender issues (for example, some might hold tolerant views toward intimate partner violence). Judges acting as social referents would be highly connected and respected individuals whose behaviour would serve as a reference point for other judges to infer the norms of the group as a whole. They would exert influence on their peers' perceptions of gender based violence and stress the role of the jurisdiction in contributing to reducing it.

##### 5. Put forward an evaluation approach

In what concerns to evaluation, the training module could be implemented through a **Randomized Control Trial** (RCT). Using randomization the training would be given to judges spread across several geographical areas and with different demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, number of years spent in the activity) to allow representativeness and comparison of the results according to more criteria, and would involve a control group. Since the immediate effects of the training (beyond the assessment of the participants) would be difficult to understand before the judges' return to their activity, the evaluation of the training would also take place in a longer time span in which subsequent court cases dealt with by those that participated in the course vs those that did not.

**Pretesting** would ensure that the content and the format of the training would deliver the necessary quality and empower judges to carry out their activity.

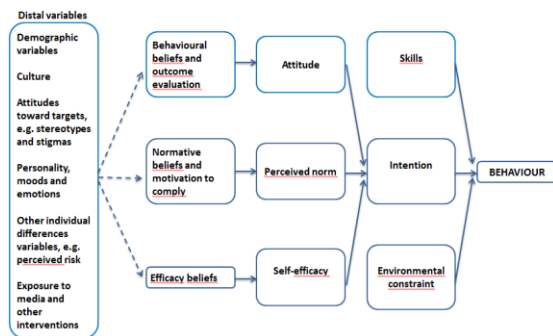
The impact of the activity carried out by the social referents could be evaluated by administering a survey to the judges that were in contact with them and by analysing the way evidence in the cases of violence against women was interpreted and factored in the court ruling.



## ISSUE C: BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES AT AN EARLY STAGE

### 1. Define the aim and outcome(s) of the initiative

The preliminary design of this initiative has been collectively proposed by 5 participants, supported by a behavioural expert from the JRC during a hands-on session that took place at a workshop hosted by DG JUST in Brussels, on 12 September 2016. The working group identified this specific issue - "breaking gender stereotypes at an early age -taking inspiration from the integrative model of behavioural prediction, a framework of analysis presented in the morning session (see below or Figure 1 in Section 2.2).



Indeed, the group argued that it is necessary to combat gender violence by going at the source of our (mis)beliefs, and "breaking stereotypes at an early age." In order to change the ultimate behaviour, the group proposed to tackle the distal variables (on the left-hand side of the diagram above) from which our (mis)behaviours originate.

The main idea is to select a sufficient number of schools ready to adopt and actively use the "Game of respect," a playful-pedagogical kit (see below) that aims at combatting discrimination and promoting equal opportunities.



The aim of the initiative is to bring about a statistically significant reduction in gender

stereotypes in the treatment group by the end of the school year, with respect to the children in the control group. The initiative is also thought to generate positive spillover effects on teachers and parents, with regard to their respective perceptions of the role of women in society.

### 2. Identify the target population

The main target population would be children aged 3-7. The secondary target population would include both teachers and children's parents.

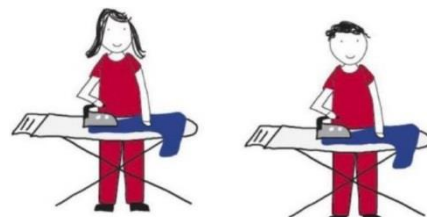
### 3. Analyse the context and the possible behavioural elements at stake

The context is a delicate one in many respects:

- The main target population includes children under the age of 12 and this requires paying utmost attention at specific **ethical rules**;
- Pedagogical approaches are under the limelight and past critics of the "game of respect" claimed the game will confuse children about their sexual identity. Hence a simple and clear **information** strategy should accompany this initiative;
- From a behavioural perspective – and linked to point B - there could be resistance to change. In the behavioural jargon, this is often referred to as **status-quo bias**.

### 4. Select the possible behavioural levers to be used in tackling the behavioural elements identified (see #3)

For children, the proposal entails challenging young children's received ideas about gender through **play at schools**.



The “Game of respect” comprises a number of activities, including a memory game that contains gender-neutral images with different adult occupations, such as male homemakers and female plumbers (see above). Such a recreational approach is thought to be effective in combatting gender stereotypes.

For teachers, the initiative would require **training**, along the lines of what was implemented in Trieste, in the 45 schools that firstly embraced the idea. Also, the game could be a starting point for revisiting fairy tales in a gender-neutral perspective. Indeed, fairy tales are the source of several stereotypes where the male is often associated with strength, action, self-esteem, dominance, while the female tends to be related to an idea of submission, remission and victimisation.

Finally, in order to tackle possible status-quo bias from parents (and the press), a carefully-designed simple and clear **information campaign** should be rolled out. This could also imply inviting parents to have **hands-on sessions** with the game, to cast away any doubt that the game promotes the gender theory.

##### 5. Put forward an evaluation approach

This initiative would lend itself very well to experimentation and could possibly be run as a RCT (Randomised Controlled Trial).

The proposal would imply identifying a treatment group (say 25 schools) where the initiative would be run, together with an equivalent number of

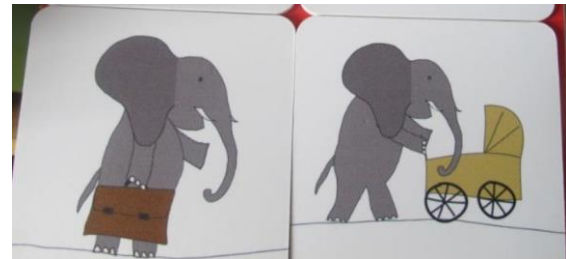
schools where the initiative would not be run and which would constitute the control group.

The information campaign for the parents and the press should be pretested, as this does not require too much time, and could significantly improve the outcome. The effectiveness of the game itself in combatting gender stereotypes – on the other hand – should be the object of the RCT itself.

Outcomes to be observed are both qualitative and quantitative and could be collected and analysed through a mix of focus groups, interviews and surveys. On children, for example, one could show the image below and ask the following questions:

Is the elephant with the briefcase male or female?

Is the elephant pushing a pram male or female?



In a complementary way, one could collect information as to the extent to which professional ambitions of young children are gender-neutral.

Obviously, the experimenters should run a comparative evaluation, assessing the collected information in the treatment group, with respect to the information gathered in the control group.

## List of boxes, figures and tables

**Box 1:** Success factors designing effective awareness-raising and education activities

**Box 2:** Using collective norms and social referents to prevent harassment in schools

**Box 3:** Engaging men in the prevention of violence against women

**Box 4:** Examining judgements of blame attributed to perpetrators and victims

**Box 5:** Shifting the public perception of domestic violence

**Box 6:** Changing misconceptions among male college student about their peers' sexist beliefs

**Box 7:** Preventing sexual and intimate partner violence

**Box 8:** Increasing hotline callers' willingness to wait to reach an advocate

**Box 9:** Reducing the social acceptance of violence against women

**Box 10:** Increasing reporting by women victims of domestic violence

**Box 11:** Preventing sexual misconduct in schools

**Box 12:** Deterring criminal activity

**Box 13:** Making your evaluation design stronger – Important elements to keep in mind!

**Figure 1:** An integrative model of behavioural prediction (Adapted from Fishbein & Yzer, 2003b)

**Figure 2:** The basic design of a randomised controlled trial (RCT)

**Figure 3:** UK Government Communication Service (GCS) Evaluation Framework

**Figure 4:** UK Government Communication Service (GCS) Evaluation Framework in the context of media communication

**Table 1:** Potential groups and subgroups to be targeted in awareness campaigns