Measuring meaningful change in violence against women in Samoa

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Introduction:
The EVE Project - Building the evidence for the prevention of violence against women in the highest prevalence settings globally

Case study: Samoa

- Small independent state in Polynesia
- ~200,000 inhabitants
- Two main islands – Upolo (urban) and Savai’I (rural)
- Unique combination of a traditional culture with modern influences
- Median prevalence of lifetime physical/sexual IPV = 40%
Does the involvement of communities improve the effectiveness of violence against women prevention interventions in high prevalence settings?

*Participatory Community-led Intervention Development (PCID) approach*
What do Samoan communities and survivors of violence perceive to be a meaningful change in violence against women?

*Mixed-methods participatory activities*

**Workshop with village representatives**
- Part of 3 day workshop, Dec 2021
- 2 groups of men + 2 groups of women aged 42-77yrs (n=26)
  - Types and frequencies of IPV (DCE + discussion)

**FGDs with women survivors of violence**
- Dec 2021-Mar 2022
- 5 groups of women aged 26-75yrs (n=23)
  1. Types of violence in Samoa (discussion)
  2. Consequences of violence for women’s lives (discussion)
  3. Impact of different types of violence (ranking + discussion)
  4. Types and frequencies of IPV (DCE + discussion)
  5. Levels of violence in the village (proportional piling + discussion)
Results:
1. Types of violence

- aggressive behaviour/physical abuse
- violence against children
- sexual abuse
- discrimination
- incest
- sexual harassment
- financial abuse
- physical abuse
- family violence against elders
- sexual abuse (esp. when on drugs)
- emotional abuse
- substance abuse
- exploitation
- physical abuse
- financial control
- sexual violence
- cultural abuse
- invading privacy
- financial violence
- violence between husband and wife
- verbal abuse
- family violence

[All five FGDs]
Results:

2. Consequences of violence for women’s lives

“I realised the whole time I’ve been controlled by his verbal abuse, I never thought it was affecting me until I... I reached out... and I realised oh my gosh, the whole time I thought I was being very humbling and very patient... always trying to handle things... on my own... I never thought I was being verbally abused until I came out and realised that... all these things he was... calling me names, calling me.... calling me all these things... and that it was affecting me **mentally**, not physically, but mentally... and my mind was starting to weaken and and... I was starting to lose... uhhhh... my self confidence and even who I was...”

[FGD2: Walk-in women, participant’s own emphasis]
Results:

3. Impact of violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most impact</th>
<th>Least impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse</td>
<td>Physical Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse (especially when on drug)</td>
<td>Financial Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Violence</td>
<td>Verbal Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Violence</td>
<td>Privacy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Median rank:

- Emotional: 2
- Verbal: 3
- Economic: 3
- Physical: 4
- Sexual: 4

[All five FGDs]
## Results:

4. Type and frequency of IPV
[Workshop and FGDs, n=45, ref. = Never. * p ≤ 0.05 , ** p ≤ 0.01 , *** p ≤ 0.001]
“It’s hard to know when you’re being sexually abused because […] us as women we always have it it’s a must to give our bodies to our husbands because it’s part of…us in the bible and… what we know from.. the world, that women must submit them to the men. Like each of. We own them. They own our bodies we own their bodies. So we don’t know…we can’t tell if we are being sexually abused or we are having - or we are doing - what we are supposed to. So we can’t tell the difference. [...] Because even if we don’t want to have sex, we have to have sex. It’s for… it’s something that’s been ordained, you know, it’s …to have each other, you know… our bodies for the men, and men….”
“The most frequent is this mental abuse, hey... so I think... this person must have no control over her life, you know like, you get beaten up sometimes, all the time you’re being told you’re nothing and then, your money you get, you know, I mean for me, you know that’s why. for this first person [...] it’s just physical and sexual, but it seems like she still has some control, like she’s not being mentally abused and she still has all her money to herself...”

[FGD1: Working women]
Results:
5. Low levels of violence in the village

[Mean (range) low level across all five FGDs]
Conclusions

- Emotional violence is a priority – We need better tools to measure in a standardised way
- Importance of formative research with communities
- Mixed-methods approach
- Sexual abuse difficult to quantify, but also abusive behaviour not always recognised as such - Are we asking the right questions? Are we involving institutions/actors with influence on gender norms in interventions?
- Meaningful change is subjective – survivors’ voices are needed
- Co-designing interventions centering community needs and priorities is essential to ensuring meaningful change
Thank you! 

- Thank you to our collaborators and project partners, including Helen Tanielu (NUS), who facilitated the workshop, and SVSG who facilitated the FGDs
- Thank you to the EVE Team village representatives and women of Samoa who have shared their stories and ideas
- Follow us @EVEprojectUCL on Twitter for more information
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