



Keywords:

Over the past 20 years, there has been substantial progress made in research on how to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) in low and middle income countries (LMICs) [1, 2]. The extent of the problem and risk factors for VAWG have been well documented [3–5], as have the serious mental and physical health consequences of violence for women’s lives [6–8]. In order to address violence and its consequences in LMICs, available evidence points to the potential of community-based interventions that use group training and community mobilisation techniques to prevent VAWG [9]. A handful of cluster randomised trials of curriculum-based community mobilisation interventions have equally demonstrated that reducing the prevalence of violence in relatively short timeframes is indeed possible [10–12], and recent evidence from the global programme on “What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls” emphasises that carefully planned interventions adapted for local contexts with a clear theory of change can achieve positive outcomes [13].

While well-designed interventions that target risk factors of violence is a useful starting point for thinking about how to design successful VAWG prevention interventions, the adaptation of predefined curricula in different settings around the world raises concerns around power and privilege when working with communities in LMICs with a colonial history. The social and structural factors that contribute to high levels of VAWG, including gender inequalities, extreme poverty and social marginalisation, are often magnified for communities with a legacy of colonialism [14]

the importance of an anti-colonial approach to research [25–28]. These scholars point to the essential need to conduct research about indigenous issues in meaningful collaboration with communities and ensure that an indigenous worldview underpins research with direct bene-

identities in Andean communities [45], and broader indigenous experiences of discrimination [46].

#### *The Independent State of Samoa*

The Pacific islands is the region with the highest prevalence of VAWG in the world: 68% of women will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime [6]. In Samoa, a recent report from the Office of the Ombudsman reported that 86% of women currently experience physical violence from an intimate partner including kicking, punching and slapping [47]. Samoa has a com-

own thoughts and ideas about how violence could be prevented in their community. This will help to ensure that every CBR is able to input their own ideas

### *Community participants*

The CBRs in each setting will select participants from their communities to participate in the study. During a training workshop on research techniques, CBRs will take part in an activity to discuss who they might select. CBRs will be encouraged to think creatively, considering all community members that may have knowledge on the problem of VAWG, rather than only selecting victims or survivors of violence and community members in positions of power. In Samoa, men will be encouraged to interview men and women to interview women to be considerate of local gender norms and to encourage open and honest dialogue.

Decolonising research about violence against women and girls

The four domains of VAWG research targeted as part of the EVE Project correspond with the project's objectives and timeline. Each domain represents an independent



for a series of 4-



been only three confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country [82]. Whilst international borders remain closed, movement within Samoa is permitted as usual. In Peru, the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 were in March 2020. This was promptly followed by a strict national lockdown and a ban on international and domestic travel. At the time of writing, Peru was preparing for a possible third wave of the pandemic with additional tightening of restrictions and very limited mobility within and in and out of the country. The pandemic will impact the activities that can take place.

For example, to develop local ethical guidelines for the projects in both Amantani and Samoa, the plan is to conduct a series of large community meetings at the beginning of the project to discuss and generate ideas. If this is not possible due to restrictions on large gatherings, ethical guidelines will be developed as part of a longer, more iterative process. CBRs will conduct interviews in their communities and work with the local organisations and the research teams in small groups to collaboratively develop these ethical approaches throughout the project. Moreover, training workshops for CBRs in Samoa will need to be delivered by the local partner organisation with a staff member at the National University of Samoa (NUS) acting as facilitator, instead of the UK research team as originally planned. As a respected local organisation, this will provide an opportunity for SVSG to foster a sense of community and togetherness during the training, which may not otherwise have been possible. This adaptation in particular will contribute towards increasing community involvement and ownership of the project; an overarching objective of the EVE Project.

As a result of restricted travel across Peru, the Peruvian team will conduct a remote health systems assessment as a method of gaining knowledge around the structures in place in Amantani and Puno (the broader region) before community-based activities can begin. The exploration of how local governance works with regard to VAWG and what services are available to support victims and survivors will help to establish networks within the local area and lay the foundations for the project in Amantani. Following this, the team will use a small number of local contacts in Amantani to recruit 10 women as CBRs to begin collecting artefacts relevant to the project. This activity can be done remotely through the use of smartphones to capture images and provide a platform for the sharing of stories. This process will help to gain a better understanding of the local context, whilst also building relationships within the communities for the next phase of the project. This will enable the research process to be much more iterative and flexible, providing greater space for CBRs to contribute to the methodologies involved in the

next phase. This is a necessity when working towards a decolonised approach to VAWG research; ensuring that it is informed by local constructions of knowledge and meaning.

This EVE Project study design described in this article reflects our collective thinking about how to decolonise our own research practices in VAWG research. This is



### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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1.  $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{4}$

