Insights from behavioural sciences to prevent and combat violence against women

Literature review

Sara Rafael Almeida
Joana Sousa Lourenço
François J. Dessart
Emanuele Ciriolo

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Abstract
Insights from behavioural sciences to prevent and combat violence against women
This literature review unveils possible behavioural causes of violence against women and presents behavioural levers to its prevention and reduction, along with general principles for effective communication. Several awareness-raising and education initiatives in the field and containing a behavioural component are pointed out. The proposed approach puts a strong focus on the evaluation of actual impact. Four main conclusions are reached: 1. Initiatives should be designed to encourage or discourage a specific behaviour in a well-defined target group; 2. Initiatives should be designed using appropriate behavioural levers; 3. In order to ensure that initiative has the intended effects on the target audience, pretesting is crucial; 4. It is essential to set specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely objectives, and to evaluate them.
This literature review was carried out to support applicants to a call for proposals published by the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, to co-fund initiatives tackling violence against women in EU Member States.

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Executive summary

The objective of this report is to propose guidelines and success factors based on insights from behavioural sciences, to better design and evaluate initiatives aimed at preventing and combating violence against women. These principles are illustrated with numerous examples of actual awareness-raising and education activities that embedded a behavioural approach in order to tackle issues such as how to encourage victims to report cases of violence or how to incentivise people in the victim's social environment to take appropriate actions. This literature review was originally carried out in the context of a call for proposals issued by the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers to co-fund national initiatives tackling violence against women in EU Member States. Applicants to this call were encouraged to incorporate a behavioural approach in their proposed initiative. The present report proposes a step-by-step approach toward the achievement of an effective and positive behavioural change.

Firstly, attention should be given to the **identification of the behavioural causes** (i.e. behavioural elements) of violence against women and other related issues. The behavioural elements of a given behaviour might be grounded in attitudes, subjective social norms, perceived self-efficacy, demographics, culture, personality traits, exposure to social media or other factors. Since initiatives should purposely be designed to encourage or discourage a specific target group to perform a specific behaviour, this phase includes the **identification of the target group(s)** and of the **target behaviour(s)** the initiative is aimed at. Five different target groups for the prevention and reduction of violence against women are identified: (1) past and prospective perpetrators of violence, (2) victims of violence, (3) victim's relatives and friends, along with bystanders, (4) practitioners and relevant professionals (i.e. police officers, medical professionals, social workers, journalists, judges) and (5) the general public.

Secondly, once the behavioural causes, the target group(s) and the target behaviour(s) are identified, it is appropriate to design the initiative by **adopting behavioural levers** that induce the desired behavioural change. For example, people are particularly likely to perform a given behaviour when they perceive it as in line with social norms, which in turn are highly influenced by social referents, i.e. important individuals within a social group. One of the initiatives presented in this report shows how harnessing the power of social norms and social referents can help to challenge the perception that violence against women is a private issue, deterring people in the victim's social environment from intervening. Besides these examples other behavioural levers are proposed, such as knowledge raising, commitment devices, framing and salience.

Thirdly, to ensure the designed initiative has the intended effects on the target audience, **pretesting** is crucial. Pretesting can also be useful to compare the effects of different initiatives or different messages and to inform the choice of the most powerful one. For instance, suppose that for a campaign on billboards informing potential victims of a toll-free number to call for help, you hesitate between two spokespersons. Pretesting will allow the assessment of which of the two spokespersons will be the most effective in triggering the intended behaviour. The analysis provides guidance on how to carry out qualitative and quantitative pretesting in line with ethical standards.

Finally, a strong focus is given to the evaluation of initiatives. Some of the most relevant **evaluation methods** — such as after-only designs, before-after or pre-post designs, randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and field experiments — are described, along with a reflection on the aspects to consider when setting up an evaluation and on how an evaluation framework can be used to measure communication initiatives.

Overall, this analysis shows why and how a behavioural approach can be incorporated into the design, implementation and evaluation of awareness-raising and education initiatives tackling violence against women in order to deliver behavioural change.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and objectives

Violence against women can take many forms, including gender-based physical, sexual and psychological harm, and it can occur either in public or in private (United Nations, 1993). This human rights abuse occurs more often than police and criminal justice statistics suggest: survey data indeed shows that one in three woman in the EU has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, and roughly the same proportion (32 %) has experienced psychologically abusive behaviour by an intimate partner (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014).

To prevent and combat violence against women, policymakers and other stakeholders may carry out initiatives to raise awareness, educate or inform various target groups. For instance, campaigns may aim at encouraging people in the social environment to intervene when they witness any form of violence against women, information initiatives may seek to notify migrant women about their rights as potential victims and education programmes can target children at an early stage in order to discourage them from harassing girls. Not only can these initiatives help to prevent violence against women, they can also promote appropriate conduct by police officers, journalists and media professionals once such violence has occurred. Initiatives can also encourage victims to report violence to the police, to seek help in shelters or to call helplines.

Ultimately, these initiatives all share a common objective: to change particular behaviours (e.g. violence, low reporting of violence, inappropriate handling of reporting, stereotyped media portrayal) within particular target groups (e.g. victims, perpetrators). To reach this goal these initiatives use a variety of tools, such as providing information, challenging attitudes and social norms or empowering actors.

Given the centrality of behavioural change for such initiatives to be effective, behavioural sciences may bring forward useful contributions. Insights from psychology, sociology and behavioural economics can indeed highlight the causes of these different behaviours. They can also help to target and design initiatives, for instance by testing the most appropriate message or spokesperson. Finally, these disciplines can contribute to measure *ex-ante* and *ex-post* whether the initiatives do have an effect on behaviours.

In this context, the objectives of this report are twofold. First, it aims at proposing guidelines and success factors based on behavioural sciences to better design and evaluate initiatives aimed at preventing and combating violence against women. The success factors are summarised below (Box 1). The second goal is to illustrate as far as possible the application of these insights by providing a number of examples of actual awareness-raising, education and information initiatives (henceforth, 'initiatives').

> **Box 1: Success factors designing effective awareness-raising and education initiatives**
>
> 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 initiative will aim to tackle.
>
> 3. Identify the target audience and describe it in terms of sociodemographics.
>
> 4. Set a measurable, ambitious, yet reachable objective: changing a given behaviour and/or tackling its behavioural causes.
>
> 5. Use behavioural levers to design the message and make sure the content is perceived

as 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 initiative is the most effective through pretesting.

10. Evaluate the actual impact of the initiative *ex-post* by using robust evidence and valid counterfactuals.

This exercise was carried out in the context of a call for proposals ([1]) for action grants published in July 2016 by the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, to co-fund national initiatives aiming at preventing and combating violence against women. The call for proposals was open to national authorities in charge of gender equality and encouraged them to embed a behavioural approach in their proposals by (1) identifying the potential behavioural element (i.e. the cause) of the target behaviour, (2) proposing behavioural levers that can be used to induce the behavioural change and (3) measuring the expected and actual impact of the initiatives. This literature review was originally carried out to support applicants in embedding this behavioural approach in their proposals.

1.2. Methodology

The guidelines, success factors and examples of initiatives provided throughout this report were gathered through a literature review of relevant findings. The sources used for this review included scientific publications in various disciplines of behavioural sciences, including psychology, sociology, health sciences, behavioural economics and social marketing, along with non-academic articles from policymakers, newspapers and expert practitioners in designing effective information, awareness-raising and education initiatives.

In addition to these references, this paper illustrates the success factors informed by behavioural sciences through numerous examples of actual initiatives to combat and prevent violence against women, retrieved through desk research. In that respect, it is important to note that little scientific evidence exists on the *ex-ante* and *ex-post* impact evaluation of initiatives applied specifically to violence against women. As a result, this review also sometimes illustrates the success factors with initiatives that do not directly relate to the issue of violence against women but are still pertinent to highlight the usefulness of the guidelines provided.

1.3. Structure

The rest of the document is structured as follows: Sections 2 and 3 highlight the importance of identifying clear target groups and target behaviours and different possible behavioural causes (i.e. 'behavioural elements') of violence against women and other related issues; Section 4 presents guidelines for actually designing the initiatives, such as the use of different behavioural levers to build a convincing and impactful message, along with general principles for effective information and awareness-raising

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([1]) Restricted call for proposals to support national information, awareness-raising and education initiatives aimed at preventing and combating violence against women — JUST/2016/RGEN/AG/VAWA — Rights, equality and citizenship programme (2014-2020) http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/files/2016_action_grants/2016_rgen_ag_vawa/just-2016-rgen-ag-vawa-call-for-proposals_en.pdf

campaigns; Sections 5 and 6 focus on the pretesting of the initiatives and the evaluation of their actual impact; Section 7 presents the concluding remarks.

Finally, the Annex presents how the principles laid down in this report can be taken into consideration by national authorities for the prevention of violence against women. More precisely, it presents the results of a hands-on session with national authorities as part of a workshop hosted in Brussels by DG Justice and Consumers on 12 September 2016. The workshop was open to representatives from all Member States. Among the attendees there were a total of 15 participants from 14 European countries (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. The Annex shows how workshop participants applied the steps proposed in this report to pre-design initiatives tackling three different behaviours related to violence against women.

2. Identifying the target group and target behaviour

One of the key learnings from behavioural sciences applied to policymaking is that one-size-fits-all solutions do not work. Therefore, initiatives designed to prevent and combat violence against women 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. 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.

> Success factor No 1.
>
> Identify clearly who the target group is and what the target behaviour is

Five different groups can be targeted in order to prevent and combat violence against women: (1) prospective and actual perpetrators; (2) victims; (3) victim's relatives and friends, along with bystanders; (4) relevant professionals (e.g. police officers, medical professionals, social workers, journalists); and (5) the general public.

Within these groups, initiatives may promote or discourage different types of behaviours. These actions may aim, for instance, at deterring potential perpetrators of violence from acting; at encouraging victims to report the violent acts to the relevant authorities or to seek help in dedicated shelters; at incentivising relatives or friends of victims to take action or relevant authorities to appropriately support victims in their reporting; or at motivating journalists to change stereotypes by changing the way they portray violence against women. Table 1 provides details into the various potential behavioural targets corresponding to the five target groups and their subgroups.

It is important to note that, within this framework, 'target behaviours' refer to the end goal pursued by the initiatives. However, as shown in the next section, in order to ultimately encourage or discourage a specific behaviour (e.g. to go to the police and report violence), an action often tackles a specific behavioural cause (e.g. the perceived social norm that violence within a couple should be privately dealt with).

Target groups	Target subgroups	Examples of target behaviours
Perpetrators	Prospective perpetrators	Refrain from committing violence on women.
	Actual perpetrators	Refrain from recidivism.
Victims	Victims	Report violence to the police. Seek help in dedicated shelters. Stay away from perpetrator.
Social environment	Relatives or friends	Support the victim in reporting and in taking other appropriate actions.
	Bystanders	Directly intervene.
Professionals	Police officers	Appropriately support victims in their declaration. Refer victims to proper support services.
	Medical professionals	Encourage victims to report. Support perpetrators in preventing recidivism.
	Social workers	Detect signs of violence against women. Provide safe environments where women can get out of the cycle of violence.
	Journalists and bloggers	Change people's attitudes regarding violence against women. Avoid portraying violence against women as a 'crime of passion.'
	Judges	Provide a fair and speedy trial for cases of violence against women
General public	Adults	Dare to talk about violence against women. Participate in prevention initiatives.
	Children and teenagers	Decrease likelihood of acting violently against women during adulthood. Report violence witnessed at home to teacher.

Table 1: Potential groups, subgroups and behaviours to be targeted by initiatives

To illustrate the principles laid down in this report, a recent campaign carried out in England with the objective of decreasing unnecessary antibiotic prescription among general practitioners is worth mentioning (Hallsworth et al., 2016). Regardless of the apparently limited relevance of the objective of this initiative for the issue of violence against women, it makes pertinent points that apply to any information, awareness-raising or education action. In this 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.

3. Understanding the causes of target behaviour

3.1. On the importance of identifying behavioural causes

Effective initiatives to prevent and combat violence against women should clearly identify the cause(s) of the target behaviour that the action aims to tackle. Identifying behavioural causes — also known as behavioural *elements* — is indeed crucial for the next step of the process, i.e. designing the action by identifying the target audience and framing the message.

The next paragraphs first provide a theoretical framework to map the multilayer nature of behavioural causes, which is subsequently applied to investigate the possible causes of violence against women and other related behaviours, such as *omertà* among bystanders and inappropriate handling of violence reports.

3.2. Different layers of behavioural causes

The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and the more elaborate integrative model of behavioural prediction (Fishbein and Yzer, 2003) offer interesting frameworks to understand the multiple layers of factors that may explain a given behaviour, such as violence against women or under-reporting among victims.

The theory of planned behaviour states that a prerequisite for someone to perform a given behaviour is that this person has an intention in line with this behaviour. For instance, a victim's friend must be willing to assist the victim in order to actually take action. There are, in turn, three immediate conditions for an intention to take shape: one has to (1) hold a positive opinion toward the behaviour (i.e. **attitude**); (2) consider that this behaviour is socially acceptable (i.e. **norms**); and finally (3) believe that one is actually able to perform that behaviour (i.e. **self-efficacy**). Together with intentions, these three factors represent the first layer of behavioural causes. For instance, a victim may fail to report violence to the police because she has a negative opinion toward reporting violence (i.e. attitude), because she thinks others will disapprove her actions (i.e. norm) or because she thinks she lacks the mental strength to do so (i.e. self-efficacy). Very often these three factors reinforce each other, for instance positive perceived norms strengthen positive attitudes toward the behaviour.

The integrative model of behavioural prediction (see Figure 1) adds more indirect layers of behavioural causes, such as beliefs, demographics, culture, personality and exposure to media. 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 violence against women. It suggests that distal variables (e.g. culture, attitudes, media exposure) may indirectly influence behaviour via beliefs, attitudes, norms and self-efficacy. The model also adds unintentional factors (i.e. skills, knowledge and environmental constraints) that may explain why intentions may not always translate into behaviour. For instance, a victim may hold a positive attitude toward seeking help, but may not be physically able to go to a shelter or may simply not know where to find support services.
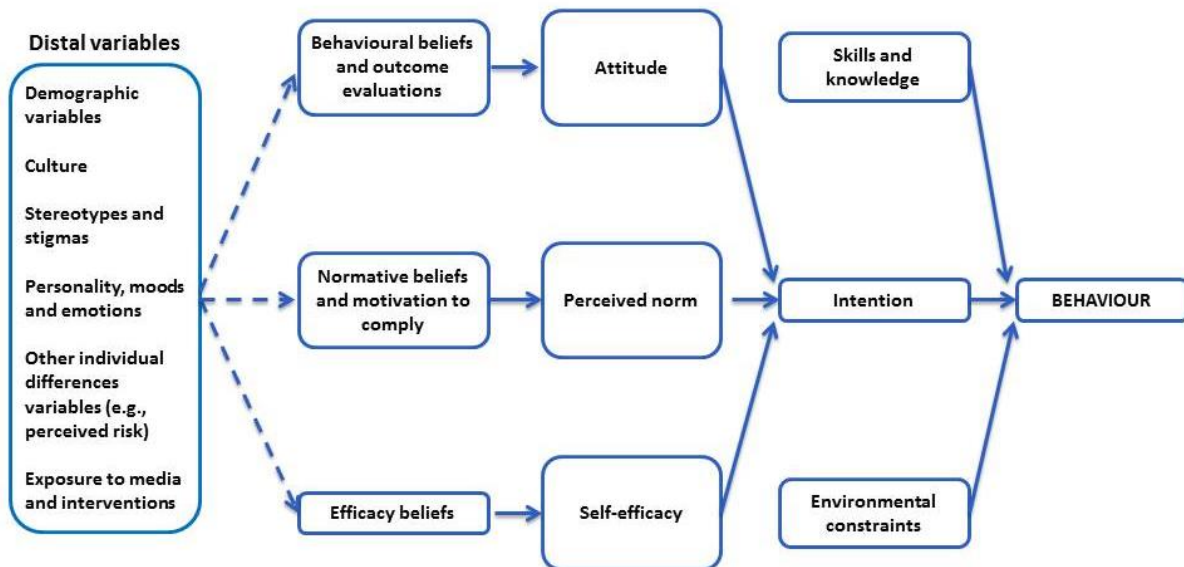
Figure 1: An integrative model of behavioural prediction (adapted from Fishbein and Yzer, 2003)

The following subsections highlight how these theoretical models can be useful to identify the causes of violence against women, low reporting and other relevant behaviours. 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 recognised and its causes began to be conceptualised 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).

3.3. Causes of low reporting amongst victims

In line with the theory of planned behaviour it takes several steps for a victim to report violence to the police or to seek out support:

(1) she must hold positive attitudes toward reporting violence;
(2) she must believe that others will approve her behaviour (i.e. norm);
(3) she must think that she is actually able to do this (self-efficacy);
(4) she must know about the behaviour and must not be constrained by her environment (i.e. skills, knowledge and environmental constraints).

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

(1) Victims may hold negative **attitudes** toward reporting the perpetrator because of (often perceived) lack of support from the criminal justice and healthcare system (Flood and Pease, 2009). Some victims may also hold negative attitudes toward reporting violence 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 will lead to ending the relationship with their partner (Fugate, Landis, Riordan, Naureckas and Engel, 2005), or will lead to retaliation or repeated violence from the perpetrator, should they not receive proper support.

(2) Victims may believe that others, such as family and friends, will disapprove of reporting, and blame and stigmatise her (Flood and Pease, 2009), leading to expected feelings of shame. As a result of this internalised **social norm**, victims

of violence may perceive the risk of possible social rejection and isolation. Also, due to 'amoral familyism' (Baldini, 1954), i.e. the existence of strong family ties impeding the development of extra-familiar bonds, victims may follow the archaic principle 'not to wash their dirty linen in public'. An effective initiative could thus 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 (i.e. low **self-efficacy**). Alternatively, victims may think they are not able to go through the hassle of reporting and trial. An effective initiative could highlight that professionals are ready to help victims in this process in order to empower women ([2]). Moreover, people have a preference toward the current state or, in other words, they have a bias toward the status quo (Kahneman, Knetsch and Thaler, 1991), which may impair their self-efficacy. 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.

(4) Besides the abovementioned factors, female victims of violence may not take action simply because they are unaware of the available help such as hotlines and shelters (i.e. low **knowledge** of the available services) or unable to access them (i.e. impeding **environmental constraints**). An informational campaign typically uses a knowledge lever, for instance by advertising the telephone number of a support line.

3.4. Causes of violence against women

Using the same analytical framework, a non-exhaustive list of causes of violence against women can be identified, as presented below.

(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 tolerant 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 once adults, and the daughters of beaten wives are more likely to be abused by intimate partners when they become adults (for a review see Jewkes, 2002).

Moreover, perpetrators of violence may express a *myopic attitude* toward violence against women by *underestimating the long-term consequences* of their act on victims (e.g. long-term physical impairment such as chronic pain, financial losses due to incapacitation), on themselves (e.g. incarceration) and on the victim's children (e.g. poor school performance and higher risk of becoming a perpetrator).

Another indirect but definitely relevant cause of tolerant attitudes is the *lack of a common understanding* or definition of violence against women. For example, pervasive beliefs about rape, i.e. rape myths, affect the subjective definitions of what constitutes a 'typical rape'. These myths contain problematic assumptions about the likely behaviour of perpetrators and victims, and provide a distorted

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([2]) 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 and Vlais, 2005).

picture of the antecedents and consequences of rape (Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler and Viki, 2009). Although most people would agree that rape is morally wrong (i.e. negative attitude), not all would agree on what exactly constitutes rape. For a related example see Box 7.

(2) Linked to attitudes, perpetrators may internalise **social norms** whereby some cultures 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 violence in the media may contribute to the shaping or maintenance of this social norm (Happer and Philo, 2013). More generally, gender roles may strengthen tolerance toward violence against women (Jakupcak, Lisak and Roemer, 2002).
Even if they are aware that society disapproves of violence against women, perpetrators may feel overconfident that they would go unpunished, and thereby fail to comply with the social norm. 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 (Kelly, Lovett and Regan, 2005).

(3) 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 **environmental constraints** play a role. Some authors highlight the role of these factors, suggesting a 'young male syndrome' (Wilson and Daly, 2016). These quasi-non-intentional factors are important to understand violence against women. Actions to prevent and combat violence against women may also address these risk factors.

3.5. Causes of *omertà* in the victim's social environment

Bystanders of violence against women and 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 believe in the **norm** that intervening in others' private lives is not socially accepted. A well-known phenomenon of diffusion of responsibility (Darley and Latane, 1968) may play a role in this norm: 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 in 1964 outside her apartment building and where none of the 38 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.

(3) They may feel too weak to physically intervene, may feel threatened or may want to avoid the hassle of reporting (i.e. low **self-efficacy**). This seems to suggest that awareness campaigns offering scenarios and pathways to intervention and reporting could prove to be useful and effective.

3.6. Causes of men's low involvement in violence-prevention initiatives

Men may be reluctant to take part in initiatives related to anti-violence against women or to advocate gender equality for the following reasons.

(1) They may hold negative **attitudes** toward being involved in such initiatives.
(2) They may think that the **social norm** dictates that men should not take part in such initiatives.
(3) They may assume they do not have the skills or competences (i.e. **self-efficacy**) to do so.

Box 2: Engaging men in the prevention of violence against women

- **Target group:** Men.
- **Target behaviour:** Getting involved in anti-violence initiatives.
- **Behavioural cause and lever:** Perceived social norms.
- **Initiative:** An American study (Casey and Smith, 2010) examined the behavioural causes of men's involvement in anti-violence initiatives. The authors conducted qualitative interviews with 27 men (aged 27 to 72) who had recently become involved in anti-violence initiatives, such as prevention education programmes for young people, fundraising initiatives and male-focused anti-violence awareness events.
- **Impact:** Results showed that most of these men changed their attitudes toward taking part in such these initiatives after a priming experience that raised their level of consciousness regarding issues of violence or gender inequity. However, appropriate information was not the only cause of involvement. These men changed their attitudes toward getting involved to prevent violence against women thanks to personal connections within their community, which allowed them to make linkages with concrete anti-violence opportunities. They were also encouraged by *trusted peers* or mentors and followed the example of male leaders who helped them change *social norms*.

3.7. Causes of inappropriate handling of victims' claims by police officers

As mentioned earlier, one of the potential causes of victims' reluctance to report is their fear of being blamed by their family. Policy officers may also sometimes blame victims, which may be due to similar attitudes, norms and self-efficacy causes identified earlier.

Box 3: Victim and perpetrator blaming by the police

- **Target group:** Police officers.
- **Target behaviour:** Fair treatment of violence reports.
- **Behavioural cause:** Gender stereotypes, judgements of blame to both victims and perpetrators
- **Initiative:** An experimental study in Queensland, Australia (Stewart and Maddren, 1997) investigated police officers' judgements of blame of 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 mock cases of assault, where three factors were experimentally varied: the victim's gender (male vs female), alcohol consumption by the victim and/or by the assailant and the gender of the police officer.
- **Impact:** Although male and female police officers showed no differences in judgement of blame and in their likelihood of charging the assailant, results showed gender stereotypes in the level of blame attributed to both the assailant and the victim: female police officers evaluated the victim more favourably than male officers. Results thus showed that police officers hold gender stereotypes that influence the way they respond to violence. These responses have effects on the victims themselves and might contribute to underreporting of violence.

4. Designing the initiative

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

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

4.1. Determine the objectives

The goal of initiatives may be, for instance, to reduce the number and the severity of cases of violence against women or, as a first step, to increase reporting of violence. These objectives relate to the *target behaviour* identified earlier.

As mentioned in the previous section, there are also a number of intermediate *behavioural causes*, which relate to attitudes, norms and self-efficacy, and more distal factors (e.g. media exposure). Therefore, initiatives can also set objectives linked to the behavioural causes rather than the behaviour itself. For instance, the objectives could be to reduce tolerant attitudes toward violence against women, to reduce the social norm that people should not intervene when they witness this type of violence or more generally to reduce negative stereotypes against women.

Furthermore, the objective should be measurable, if possible with quantifiable indicators. For the objectives related to changing a target behaviour, these indicators can include, for example, the number of calls to helplines or the number of cases reported to the police. For the objectives aiming to tackle specific behavioural causes, indicators can be obtained through surveys measuring, for example, men's stereotypes against women, men's tolerance of intimate partner violence and women's level of awareness of helplines and shelters.

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. In summary, the objectives should be SMART, i.e. specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (Hornik, 2002) (J-pal Europe, 2011). Once the intervention has been implemented, its actual impact will be evaluated *ex-post* and compared to these objectives (see Section 6).

4.2. Identify the target audience

In principle, the target audience of the intervention is 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 sociodemographic characteristics (e.g. age, place of living, marital status, level of education), psychological traits and habits. This will enable the message to be better chosen and the appropriate media to communicate with the target audience to be selected. For instance, suppose that it turns out that most perpetrators of violence against women are men from a particular group. One should select the media read and watched by this segment of the population.

In some cases 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 (e.g. opinion leaders). The selection of the target audience can be based on the severity of the behaviour or behavioural causes. For instance, one could focus 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 to form attitudes and social norms (Kelley, 1952). For instance, an awareness-raising campaign could, as a first step, target opinion leaders such as popular sport athletes, music celebrities or journalists. The rationale is that these influential persons will then disseminate the message to the general public, and could be perceived as more convincing than anonymous messengers (see Section 4.3.3). For an example of how interventions can focus on 'change makers' as target audience to then disseminate behavioural change among the general population see Box 6.

4.3. Design the message: content, framing and source

When designing the message of information, awareness-raising or education initiatives, the following 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?

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

4.3.1. 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 nine out of ten 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 initiatives. 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 and Vlais, 2005).

> Success factor No 5.
>
> Use behavioural levers to design the message and make sure the content is perceived as credible

The following paragraphs 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 illustrate 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 (Cialdini and Trost, 1998). For example, comparing an individual's conduct with that of the majority of his or her peers, neighbours or friends is an effective way to change behaviour (Allcott, 2011). In the field of violence against women, a campaign by the James Madison University (JMU) provides a good 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 4 below).

Other initiatives tapping into social norms could, for example, focus on challenging social norms that may tolerate some forms of violence, along with, for example, norms that perceive intimate partner violence as a private issue rather than a public concern (Devries et al., 2013). Promising interventions include initiatives that use media to promote non-violent gender-equitable relationships and encourage bystanders to take action when it occurs (Heise, 2011).

- **Target group:** Male university students.
- **Target behaviour:** Inappropriate sexual behaviours and sexual assault.
- **Behavioural cause and lever:** Perceived social norms.
- **Initiative:** In 1999-2000, James Madison University (JMU, United States of America) ran a campaign aimed at changing misconceptions among male college student about their peers' sexist beliefs. To this end, the campaign used a series of posters and flyers containing contextualised normative messages, i.e. messages that show what the majority of people similar to the viewers thinks or does. It has indeed been shown that contextualised social norms tend to have a larger impact on behaviours that norms that relate to dissimilar others (Goldstein, Cialdini and Griskevicius, 2008). The messages were pretested through interviews and focus groups and the selected ones included, including '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 increase 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 and Vlais, 2005).

Reducing hassle efforts

Hassle factors, such as slow or cumbersome report-handling procedures or delayed response of healthcare services, can hinder women's use of support services when they need them and witnesses' perceived self-efficacy to report violence to the police. Eliminating these hassle factors 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.

To illustrate this, the example mentioned above, which applied social norms to reduce unnecessary prescriptions of antibiotics, used a message that 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

As mentioned earlier, one potential cause of low reporting of violence against women is the lack of knowledge of the appropriate structures in place to appropriately aid 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 5.

- **Target group:** Bystanders.
- **Target behaviour**: To intervene in order to stop violence and to assist victims.
- **Behavioural cause and lever:** Knowledge and individual responsibility.
- **Initiative:** The 'Bringing in the bystander' programme is an interpersonal violence

prevention programme focused on jointly increasing bystander awareness of sexual and intimate partner violence and expanding individuals' 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 in 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 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.

- **Impact:** The programme was rated as promising by the American National Institute of Justice. Compared to non-participants, participants in the programme improved their knowledge of rape-myth acceptance and their likelihood of intervening in order to end sexual violence (Banyard, Eckstein and Moynihan, 2009).

Commitment devices

Making a public 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 accomplish a given behaviour by raising their perception of self-efficacy (Brocas, Carrillo and Dewatripont, 2004).

For instance, in the United Kingdom a commitment-focused intervention had a positive effect in helping jobseekers to get back to work. Specifically, advisors asked individuals to make specific commitments to job-seeking initiatives 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, Ciriolo, Rafael Almeida and Troussard, 2016). For a relevant example in the field of violence against women see Box 6.

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: they can be under severe time, emotional and/or financial constraints, posing a threat to their safety or that of their close ones. Scarcity may impair their capacity to make better decisions and aggravate feelings of distress while draining mental resources.

Box 6: Reducing the social acceptance of violence against women

- **Target group**: General public.
- **Target audience:** Change makers.
- **Target behaviour:** Reducing violence against women.
- **Behavioural causes and levers:** Social norm of acceptance, commitment devices
- **Initiative:** The 'We Can' campaign was launched in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka in late 2004, in Pakistan in 2005 and in Afghanistan in 2007. The campaign successfully paired communication strategies with the targeting 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 initiatives, such as workshops, street theatre, mobile vans and distribution of campaign booklets. Moreover, the intervention encouraged 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, he or she often completes it. People believe they are consistent and will go to great lengths to maintain this belief and appearance in public and in private (Cialdini

and 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 programme and 1 202 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) tolerance of violence against women by community members and change makers; (2) acceptance of women who speak out against domestic violence; (3) awareness of the benefits of violence-free relationships for women, men and families; and (4) evidence that change makers and other community members are taking responsibility to strengthen violence free relationships.

  On average, each change maker reached out to five 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 figure rising to near 23 % among change makers ranked as experiencing 'no change' since joining the campaign (Williams and Aldred, 2011).

Status quo bias and the use of defaults

People have a preference toward the current state or, in other words, they have a bias toward the **status quo** (Kahneman et al., 1991). As such, people often stick with a previously taken decision and refrain 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 9, which presents an initiative aimed at increasing hotline callers' willingness to wait to reach an advocate.

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, procrastination and inertia can lead to people not saving enough for retirement. To tackle this issue, in October 2012, the UK 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 requires little action from the individual, are a way to boost the likelihood that people make 'better' choices (Johnson and Goldstein, 2003).

Changes to default options require, however, careful consideration and should be pretested to prevent possible adverse effects. For instance, in the United States, 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 fewer low-income African-Americans were hired (i.e. race was used as a proxy for criminal history) (Mullainathan, 2016).

4.3.2. 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' with 'jobseekers' benefit' leads to more active searching behaviour (John and 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 7 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.

Box 7: Increasing reporting by women victims of domestic violence

- **Target group:** Victims.
- **Target behaviour:** Reporting violence to police and seek assistance.
- **Behavioural causes and levers:** Knowledge (of hotline), framing (of violence as crime).
- **Initiative:** A 2002 advertising 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 toward reporting of violence. Behavioural levers included framing messages to highlight that violence is a crime for which 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 and in hospitals, among others. Posters showed pictures 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', along with 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 (Donovan and Vlais, 2005).

Choice architecture

Choice architecture, i.e. the way options are presented or a message is framed, can influence decisions. Altering the choice architecture involves 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) (Sousa Lourenço et al., 2016). For instance, in the context of violence against women, 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.

Furthermore, in framing messages conveyed in awareness campaigns, utmost attention should be paid to avoiding Cialdini's 'big mistake' (Cialdini and Trost, 1998): 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 effects). This point is of particular relevance for violence against women.

Box 8: Shifting the public perception of domestic violence

- **Target groups:** Victims and police officers.
- **Target behaviours:** Reporting violence to the police, appropriate handling of reports by the police.
- **Behavioural causes and levers:** Knowledge, framing (of violence as crime).
- **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 target groups. Interestingly, based on the observation that calls to report domestic violence situations were generally

minimised as 'just domestic' by police officers, messages targeted at them aimed at promoting 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 ads, 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 perpetrators), a 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 (Donovan and Vlais, 2005).

Loss aversion

Loss aversion refers to the tendency for people to weigh losses more heavily than gains of equal size: the 'pain of losses' is felt more than the 'pleasure of gains' (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984). In the context of communication, this insight would for example advocate 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 to deter Indians from defecating in the open, it is more effective to highlight the consequences of this behaviour in terms of harm to the community rather than to focus on the gains brought by sanitation (Rajadhyaksha, 2014). In the context of violence against women, perhaps communication aimed at increasing reporting by bystanders could also examine the effect of framing messages in terms of how inaction could result in costs to the community.

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 '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 and Armstrong, 2010).

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 altogether (Janis and Feshbach, 1953). For instance, a Scottish campaign against domestic violence in the 1990s used fear-arousing and shocking imagery. The campaign was discovered, in qualitative post-tests, to have actually triggered attacks from violent partners (Hastings, Stead and Webb, 2004). 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 into the power of emotions to encourage action.

> Success factor No 6.
>
> Use emotions with caution

Box 9: Increasing hotline callers' willingness to wait to reach an advocate

- **Target group:** Victims.
- **Target behaviour:** To hold the line while waiting for call to be taken by hotline advocate.
- **Behavioural causes and levers:** (Reducing) emotions while waiting.
- **Initiative:** The 'Behavioral interventions to advance self-sufficiency' (BIAS) project, sponsored by the US Administration for Children and Families, implemented an intervention aimed at encouraging people who called the National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH) to stay on the line while waiting for an advocate to take their call. When a call was received 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 callers' likelihood of hanging 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 barriers to stay on the line were as follows.
    - (a) Waiting likely triggers fearful thoughts and is stressful. Due to present bias (i.e. the tendency to prefer avoiding the immediate stress), the caller may give up on staying on the line regardless of the longer-term benefit (i.e. getting help from an advocate). Moreover, victims of domestic violence are in a situation of scarcity (i.e. they operate under severe time and emotional constraints, which affect the way they behave), resulting in 'tunnelling' (i.e. focusing on solving the next imminent crises).
    - (b) Uncertainty about the waiting time, due to a lack of a reference point, which may result in status quo bias (i.e. if callers are waiting now, they may wait indefinitely, which may increase their willingness to hang up).
    - (c) Unexplained waits seem longer. Also, callers most likely remember calls for which they had waited a long time since these will likely be associated with more emotional (e.g. 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 expressing 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 for you'. Moreover, explanation of the reasons behind waiting times — queue due to the handling of other requests for help — highlights that the caller is not alone, which was found to reduce anxiety (Schachter, 1959).
- **Impact:** Testing of alternative messages using an RCT was planned, but no further data on the outcomes could be found (Richburg-Hayes et al., 2014).

Metaphoric imagery

A determinant factor to the success of an awareness campaign is that the target audience actually devotes attention to the message 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 to 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 Austrian 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 and Mick, 2003).

4.3.3. Source of the message

The sender of the message can have a major impact on how credible and convincing the message will be perceived as being. 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 and Hovland, 1953). Influential communicators are also those that the target audience can identify with (Cohen, 2001) or see as members of an aspirational group.

For instance, in a trial run in the United Kingdom and aimed at reducing unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions, general practitioners were addressed through a letter from a high-profile figure — England's chief medical officer — to increase the credibility of its content and to encourage behavioural change. Results showed that this message led to 73 406 fewer antibiotic prescriptions and to GBP 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 or 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 spokesperson. The objective was for the campaign to be perceived as bottom-up so that anyone could be free to gain ownership of the idea.

Box 10: Using social referents to prevent harassment in schools

- **Target group:** High-school students.
- **Target behaviour:** Reducing harassment against girls.
- **Behavioural cause and lever:** Social norm, social referents as spokespersons.
- **Initiative:** In response to high levels of peer harassment among girls, 56 US high schools ran a programme called 'Names can really hurt us' (NAMES). Building on the notion that individual behaviours are influenced by what is considered typical and acceptable by peers (i.e. the social norm) (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004), a year-long field experiment was carried out. The experiment (291 participants) tested whether 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 and Sherif, 1964) — could affect their peers' perceptions of school norms regarding the acceptance of peer harassment and regarding the incidence of harassment behaviour. Eighty-three social referent students were identified using surveys and were prepared to be the spokespersons of anti-harassment initiatives throughout the whole school year. These initiatives included reading announcements over the loudspeaker during morning announcements, creating a special NAMES lunch table where referents 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.
- **Impact:** Results showed that male referents exerted a significant influence on their peers, leading to lower perceived acceptability of harassment and lower participation in harassment behaviours. In contrast, female referents exerted influence over fewer of their peers' behaviours than males. One possible explanation for this result is that, because levels of peer harassment were higher among girls, female referents became less credible and less respected over the course of the school year (Shepherd and Paluck, 2015) (Paluck, Shepherd and Aronow, 2016).

4.4. Choose the communication channel

There is a wide variety of communication channels to choose from to convey messages to prevent and combat violence against women, such as television, leaflets, billboards, newspapers, radio and websites. Public events (e.g. concerts, information booths at festivals, etc.) can also be used to communicate the message. Online social networks are another option, offering the possibility of interactivity and the potential viral dissemination of the message. It is generally agreed that an integrated communication programme, 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).

Box 11: Preventing sexual misconduct in schools

- **Target group:** University students.
- **Target behaviour:** Decrease sexual misconduct.
- **Behavioural cause and lever:** (Raising) knowledge of sexual misconduct policy, social referents as spokespersons.
- **Initiative:** The Prevention Innovations Research Center at the University of New Hampshire conducted research on seven American campuses to examine the efficacy of different communication channels to explain to first-year students the policy regarding campus sexual misconduct. On each campus, five large classes were randomly assigned to one of the following five conditions.
  - Group 1: control (no intervention).
  - Group 2: policy read in an online video (students received an email directing

them to a video in which four student actors read the campus sexual misconduct policy specific to the institution).

- o Group 3: policy read in class (two members of the campus research team read the campus sexual misconduct policy to the class).
- o Group 4: policy read to class followed by facilitated discussion (20-minute class discussion about the campus policy).
- o Group 5: policy read to class, facilitated discussion and emailed link to online video.
- **Impact:** In all groups, a pretest 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. Pretest and post-test data was matched for 1 798 students (58 % of the full sample). Results showed that the largest change in attitudes was seen in groups that received the information presented in a combination of two or more communication channels (i.e. Group 4 and Group 5). The majority of participants (over 70 %) in Group 2 and Group 5 reported that they did not watch the video that they were sent. The study suggests that, for web-based information to be effective, students may need reminders and incentives should be fitting the target audience. Furthermore, messages should be sent by influential members of the institution, such as social referents (Potter et al., 2015).

5. Pretesting the initiative

5.1. Benefits of pretesting

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. For instance, suppose that for a campaign on billboards informing potential victims of a toll-free number to call for help you hesitate between two spokespersons. Pretesting will allow an assessment of which of the two spokespersons will be the most effective in triggering the intended behaviour.

<div style="border:1px solid #2a5db0; padding:10px; text-align:center; max-width:400px; margin:auto;">

Success factor No 9.

Assess which message or which initiative is the most effective through pretesting

</div>

5.2. Qualitative pretesting

Ideally, the first phase of a pretest should use qualitative methods to get insights into the reactions of the intended target audience to the different messages (Van Bavel, 2016). 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 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 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.

5.3. 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 awareness-raising or education initiative.

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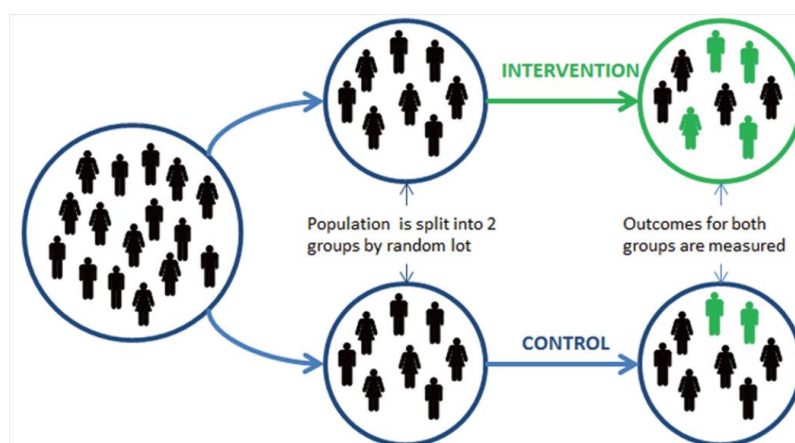

Figure 2: The basic design of a randomised controlled trial (adapted from Haynes, Service, Goldacre and Torgerson, 2012)

For instance, assume an awareness-raising initiative that includes the creation of a website to challenge stereotypes regarding women. One of the decisions that needs to be taken is the name of the website. Let us suppose that, after qualitative pretesting, two alternative website names were selected (for instance 'Stop Gender Stereotypes' and 'Enough with Gender Clichés'). An RCT would gather participants and randomly assign them to one of the following three groups.

(1) Initiative group No 1: a group that is exposed to the website with the first name.
(2) Initiative group No 2: a group exposed to the exact same website as group No 2, 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 pretest 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) were tested. Messages were included on a high-traffic webpage on GOV.UK that encouraged people to join the organ donor register. During the 5 weeks of the pretesting, over 1 million people viewed the 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 (based 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 contextual choice architecture 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 and Vehicle Licensing Agency (Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team, 2013).

Field vs laboratory experiments
The abovementioned RCT to pretest messages to encourage organ donation is an example of a field experiment, that is, an RCT run in a natural setting in which participants are not aware that they are taking 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. an offline lab experiment) or using their own 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. *demand characteristics bias* or *strategic bias*) (Orne, 1962). They may also 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 ([3]) — 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 television advert to raise awareness on violence against women should be included in a series of other unrelated adverts.

Measuring the outcome variable
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 the one decided in the objectives setting phase. For instance, if the action aims at reducing victim's fear of being stigmatised 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 conflicts are issues that are highly subject 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-administered 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) whereby, instead of directly voicing what their thoughts or feelings, individuals project them, for instance by selecting a picture from a given set (Van Bavel, 2016). In any case, these

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([3]) Ethics standards demand, however, that participants ought to be debriefed on the precise purpose of the experiment upon its completion, and they should have the possibility to have their data deleted if they so wish.

biases apply to both the control and the treatment groups and should not, therefore, affect the measured net 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).

Box 12: Pretesting an initiative to deter criminal activity

- **Target group**: Juvenile delinquents or pre-delinquents.
- **Target behaviour:** Deterring criminal activity.
- **Behavioural cause and lever:** (Raising) knowledge of consequences of criminal activity (i.e. incarceration).
- **Initiative:** In 2013 the Campbell Collaboration carried out and published an analysis of nine relevant trials aiming at deterring juvenile (pre-)delinquents from criminal activity 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 initiative to be ineffective or even counterproductive. 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 and Lavenberg, 2013).

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6. Evaluating the impact of the initiative

The impact of an initiative 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 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; finally a brief overview on the evaluation of communications is presented.

Success factor No 10.

Evaluate the actual impact of the initiative *ex-post* by using robust evidence and valid counterfactuals

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6.1. Evaluation methods

After-only designs
In this type of design measurement occurs only after the initiative. 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 confounding variables. For instance, the effect of an anti-violence campaign could be evaluated using an after-only survey while statistically controlling for predictors of violence and/or exposure to media. 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, 2002).

Comparing participants and non-participants (or treatment and control sites)
In this type of design, which admittedly is not very relevant for awareness campaigns, those who were exposed to the initiative are compared with those who were eligible to receive it but chose not to participate (i.e. the 'counterfactual') (Bondonio, Biagi and Stancik, 2015). However, the use of this simple design also imposes a serious limitation, i.e. that participants in the two groups (initiative vs control) will likely differ on observable and/or unobservable dimensions. Let us consider the example of the psychotherapeutic programme for perpetrators of violence against women. Perpetrators who refuse to participate might differ from those who agree to take part in the initiative (i.e. the treatment group) on dimensions such as age, number of crimes, etc., but also on other 'unobservable' and harder to isolate variables, such as intrinsic motivation to avoid recidivism. This imposes a serious confounding variable, 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, could partly help to overcome this limitation. However, doing so is highly complex as, for instance, it is difficult 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 initiative, 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 initiative. To more clearly see the limitations of this type of design, let us consider an example. Imagine that an awareness-raising campaign was run in Germany in 2006 with the aim of decreasing stereotypes regarding women's leadership abilities. Assessing the success of the campaign by comparing survey responses regarding gender stereotypes in 2006 with those in 2005 would likely be meaningless, since the country elected its first female chancellor in the meantime. In other words, before-after designs open the possibility that observed effects are due to potential confounding variables. 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. 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, 2002) (J-pal Europe, 2011).

A good example of before-after design is a mass-media campaign run by SunSmart (Melbourne, Australia) that aimed at raising awareness about the benefits of using sunscreen and hats and at encouraging preventive behaviour. The campaign was designed in such a way as to present this 'SunSmart' behaviour as fashionable, especially among young people. Using a pre-post design the campaign a showed a decrease in dangerous sun exposure and sunburn. Additionally, researchers showed that beliefs related to the risk of sun tanning and the positive values of suntans shifted 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).

Randomised controlled trials
As detailed in the section on pretesting above, two features of RCTs make them the most robust type of evaluation design, for two reasons. First, they introduce a control group, which allows a comparable baseline. Second, RCTs randomly assign participants between the initiative group and the control group, thereby minimising the risk that observed changes are due to external factors (e.g. selection bias) rather than to the initiative itself. RCTs allow identifying a cause–effect relationship between a specific feature (e.g. a new initiative) 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 initiative in different subgroups (e.g. age cohorts, education levels). This represents valuable information for optimising the eligibility criteria before scaling up the initiative (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 maximised, biases are minimised and robust results are achieved.

Field experiments (entailing randomised controlled trials or not)
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 contingent on the assumptions that the two cities under comparison would be equivalent at the start and would have changed at the same rate. The design can be rendered more robust by selecting several 'equivalent' city pairs, and by randomly assigning each of the cities in the pair to either the initiative ('treatment') or to the 'no initiative' condition ('control') (Hornik, 2002).

6.2. Determining which evaluation method to use

Determining which evaluation method to use is a trade-off between the time and financial cost of experimentation and the cost of scaling up an ineffective initiative 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 benefit greatly from being evaluated through an RCT. By contrast, RCTs would be less relevant to evaluate the impact of a cheap, not particularly innovative initiative (i.e. an initiative for which there is good evidence of success from previous studies). In other words, the cost of scaling up the initiative and the degree of uncertainty about the effectiveness of an initiative 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 initiative is effective, facilitate decisions about scaling up and are more likely to gain support from stakeholders.

For a useful list of resources on impact evaluation and further details on the methods described above, a recommended read is *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).

6.3. Important aspects to consider when setting up an evaluation

As detailed in Box 13 below, several factors contribute to making the evaluation design stronger ((Hornik, 2002); J-pal Europe, 2011).

Box 13: Making your evaluation design stronger — important elements to keep in mind

- Conduct a **thorough literature search**. This is crucial to identify similar work done within the area and its corresponding impact, and also to avoid pitfalls;
- Be explicit from the start about the **key elements of the initiative** (target group, objectives, direction and size of the expected effect, the expected 'timing' for the effect, the possible logic chain of explanation or a mechanism of the 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 initiative is expected to have an impact.
- Use appropriate **control groups** and, where possible, use **RCTs**. Random assignment of participants to the control and treatment groups maximises the likelihood that potential effects are due to the initiative, rather than to differences between groups.
- Use **large enough samples** to detect the expected effects. 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.).
- **Measure the effects at several points in time** (both pre- and post-initiative). Also, consider measuring at several points in time after the initiative, as changes in behaviours and causes (e.g. social norms) may take time to appear (Hornik, 2002).
- **Triangulate evidence** (i.e. using more than one approach to show the effects of the initiative).
- Beware of **attrition rates** (i.e. drop-out rate from the initiative).

A few of the aspects above are worth further elaboration. 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 initiative is compatible with these. For instance, if an initiative 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 initiative and the corresponding evaluation (J-pal Europe, 2011).

Second, **targeting** is key. In the context of impact assessment, mistargeting will result in lower average impact as the initiative 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 initiative 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).

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

Fourth, it is important to consider how long after the initiative the effects are likely to be observed. In other words, if a change in behaviour is not expected immediately (e.g. the initiative 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, 2002).

Finally, beware of **attrition rates** (i.e. drop-out rate from the initiative). 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).

6.4. 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: (1) set SMART objectives ahead of the evaluation; (2) take the target audience into consideration when selecting metrics; (3) adopt an integrated channel approach; (4) collect baselines and benchmarks, if possible; (5) use a mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence; (6) review performance frequently; (7) Use new insights to continuously improve and to inform future planning; and (8) make the link between the activity and its impact with the organisational objectives (UK GCS, 2016; see also UK GCS, n.d.).
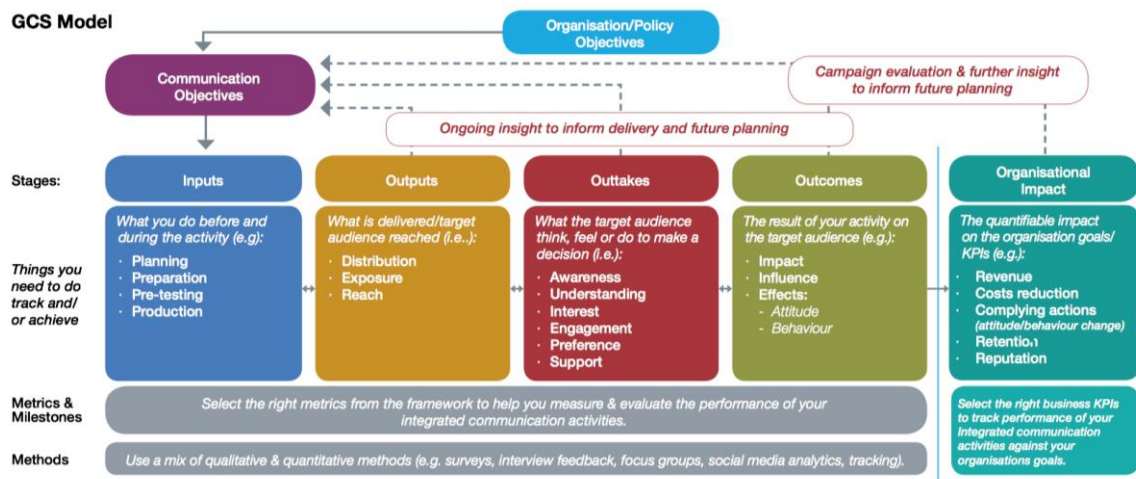
Figure 3: UK GCS evaluation framework

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 thinks, feels or does 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 change in the behaviour of interest (e.g. adopting a service). For a concrete example focusing on media communication see Figure 4 below.
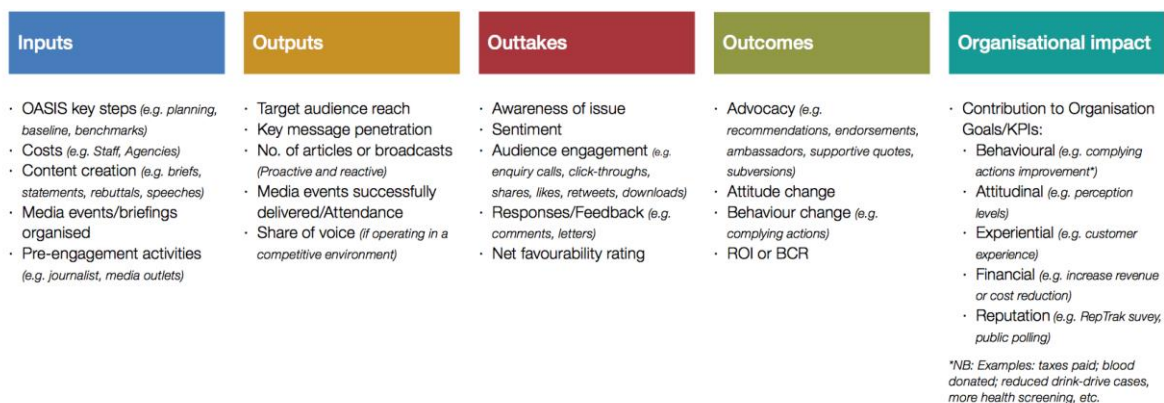

Figure 4: UK GCS evaluation framework in the context of media communication

Source: Government Communication Services, 2015.

Finally, the AMEC integrated evaluation framework constitutes another useful resource (AMEC, 2016).

7. Concluding remarks

Violence against women is a prevailing issue that requires multiple approaches to prevent and combat it. Initiatives carried out by public authorities, such as awareness-raising and education activities, constitute one of the tools to this end. This report gave account of the learnings from behavioural sciences that can contribute to the identification of the causes of this type of violence, the design of initiatives to tackle it and the pretesting and evaluation of their impact on behaviours.

One of the key learnings from behavioural sciences applied to policy is that there are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Therefore, initiatives aiming to prevent and combat violence against women 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. The previous sections of this report gave account of different possible behavioural causes (i.e. 'behavioural elements') of violence against women and other related issues 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. This report also focused on the pretesting of the initiatives and the measurement of their real impact. As stressed throughout this literature review, pretesting and piloting initiatives before deploying them, along with systematically evaluating their impact, is crucial in order to implement initiatives that work, while pulling the plug on initiatives that are ineffective or even counterproductive. 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 initiatives.

First, targeting is key. Initiatives should be purposely designed to encourage a specific target group to perform a specific behaviour, or to discourage them from doing so. At the same time, as broadly recognised today, no single factor is sufficient to explain violence against women. Rather, multiple factors are systematically at play (e.g. attitudes, subjective norms, demographics, culture, etc.). Thus it would be unrealistic for a given initiative to try and tackle all factors at once. Instead initiatives should focus on tackling a limited number of the identified behavioural causes ('behavioural elements') that hold particular relevance for the problem and target group 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 the 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) that 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 greatly influence its perception and its effect. 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 programme 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.

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

Fourth, in order to ensure that the designed initiative has the intended effects on the target group 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 the most robust method to pretest an initiative since they introduce a control group(s) and use randomisation (thus minimising 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 initiative) and its impact.

Fifth, evaluate your initiative! This literature review revealed that the evaluation of initiatives was often suboptimal: initiatives were seldom (explicitly) accompanied by an evaluation of their actual impact, or evaluation was carried out using available, ad hoc, but not robust data. 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 the real impact of the initiative to be determined. Doing so can also contribute to improving 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-through, well carried out and properly evaluated initiative that yielded no impact can be as relevant for improving future initiatives as initiatives that worked (e.g. 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 of initiatives deployed with no explicitly demonstrated benefit. Furthermore, evaluation methods that return robust results, convincingly showing the extent to which an initiative 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 initiative because a faulty evaluation design showed positive results.

Finally, and more generally, the setting up of an initiative has to be aligned with on-the-ground resources. 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 counterproductive effects.

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Annex — Applying behavioural insights to specific issues of violence against women: results from a hands-on session with national authorities

Issue A: Increasing calls to a domestic violence hotline

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

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

Increase the number of valid calls to the domestic violence hotline by 5 %, 3 months after the campaign.

Increase the number of (relevant) cases that get referred to a service by 50 %, 3 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 well-being and the perception that information and support is available, 6 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 (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 group

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

3. Analyse the context and the possible behavioural causes (i.e. behavioural elements) at stake

In terms of **behavioural causes** deterring victims and bystanders from calling helplines, a number of these were identified, as listed below.

- 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. Victims may also be unsure whether they could be identified with their phone number. 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, along with 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 that are victims 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 on 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 initiatives/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 counterproductive 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 No 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 possible **behavioural levers** were identified, as mentioned below.

- On risk aversion, the campaign could focus on it being a 24/7 hotline and that, as such, 'help would always be there for you'. Moreover, it could promote the fact 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, 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 pretested 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) 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 proving 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 same population); or (b) the use of a 'control city' (matched with the 'treatment city' in key factors, such as number of habitants, size, stats on physical domestic abuse, etc.). The city that would be the control and the one that would be the treatment would be determined at random. If the 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 randomised 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: Ensuring fair judicial treatment of cases of violence against women

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

The preliminary design of this initiative was collectively proposed by five 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 Justice and Consumers 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, for several reasons, most complaints are not fully dealt with. For example, in some countries there are rigid requirements in place for victims to have access to subsidised 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 2 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 group

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

3. Analyse the context and the possible behavioural causes (i.e. 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 judged.
- Judges might be **overconfident** in the way they deal with this type of case 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 No 3)

For **judges**, the following initiatives would tackle the behavioural causes mentioned in No 3.

- A **training module** targeted at judges at the start of and throughout 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

With regard to evaluation, the training module could be implemented through a **randomised control trial**. Using randomisation 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. For example, 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 into the court ruling.

Issue C: Breaking gender stereotypes at an early stage

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

The preliminary design of this initiative was collectively proposed by five participants, supported by a behavioural expert from the JRC, during a hands-on session that took place at a workshop hosted by DG Justice and Consumers 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 consult Figure 1 in Section 3.2).
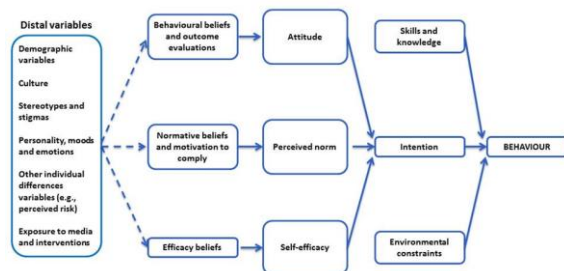
Indeed, the group argued that it is necessary to combat gender violence by going to the source of our (mis)beliefs, and 'breaking stereotypes at an early age.' In order to change the ultimate behaviour, the group proposed to tackle the distal variables (on the left-hand side of the diagram above) from 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 combating 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 group

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 causes (i.e. 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 No 3)

For children, the proposal entails challenging young children's received ideas about gender through **play at schools**.
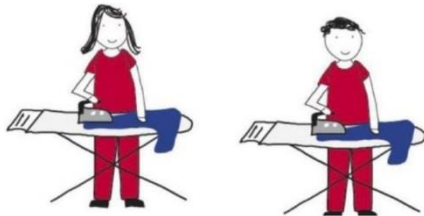
The 'Game of respect' comprises a number of initiatives, including a memory game that contains gender-neutral images with different adult occupations, such as male homemakers and female plumbers (see above). Such a recreational approach is thought to be effective in combating gender stereotypes.

For teachers, the initiative would require **training**, along the lines of what was implemented in Trieste, in the 45 schools that first embraced the idea. Also, the game could be a starting point for revisiting fairy tales from a gender-neutral perspective. Indeed, fairy tales are the source of several stereotypes where the male is often associated with strength, action, self-esteem and 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 remove any potential impression '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 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, constituting 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 combating gender stereotypes, on the other hand, should be the subject of the randomised controlled trial itself.

Outcomes to be observed are both qualitative and qualitative and could be collected and analysed through a mix of focus groups, interviews and surveys. For example, one could show children 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?
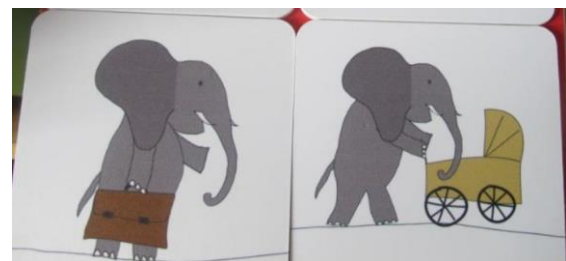
In a complementary way, one could collect information as to the extent to which professional ambitions of young children are gender neutral.

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.

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Figure 2: The basic design of a randomised controlled trial (adapted from Haynes, Service, Goldacre and Torgerson, 2012)

Figure 3: UK GCS evaluation framework

Figure 4: UK GCS evaluation framework in the context of media communication

Table 1: Potential groups, subgroups and behaviours to be targeted by initiatives

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