

Innovation in prevention of and responses to violence against women

We agree with the Comment by Rachel Jewkes and Elizabeth Dartnall,¹ which states that digital technologies must be adapted to the context, acceptable to survivors, and adhere to established ethical guidelines. However, interventions supported through the What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls global programme are not the only way to engage meaningfully with survivors and achieve behaviour change. As researchers and clinicians working directly with survivors, we know that women have agency and express the wish to self-assess what is happening in their relationships so that they can reflect anonymously and privately, without the fear of judgment often experienced when disclosing violence to health-care providers. Women safely use technology to make informed decisions about the risk of danger in their relationships and priorities for safety, and benefit from a safety action plan tailored to their situation, rather than encouragement to stay or leave a relationship.²⁻⁷

Traditional interventions often require survivors to attend group sessions over multiple weeks with skilled facilitators, thus limiting the access and reach of such programmes. Violence prevention interventions, even those in the What Works portfolio, have not consistently shown behaviour changes or reductions in violence against women.⁴ Traditional interventions have all the challenges associated with digital technologies—adaptation to context, acceptability to survivors, and adherence to ethical guidelines.

Digital technologies should not be feared; they are not replacements for traditional interventions, but rather a tool or resource that can be integrated with other effective programmes and that women can use anonymously, 24/7, without feeling judged. We are not simply developing webpages or mobile device applications, but evidence-based interventions codesigned with survivors in local languages, with extensive safety features that are delivered through appropriate technology.⁵

We might have been trying to do too much in the I-DECIDE trial,⁵ as evidenced by the null finding. However, engaging with innovation to expand our reach and potential to serve diverse women globally is crucial.

We declare no competing interests.

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