

# Diffusion of Policy to Address Violence Against Women: Implementation Evidence from Indonesia

## Study overview

Many countries globally have ratified transnational conventions and adopted national policy commitments to address domestic violence and abuse (DVA), but the implementation of these policies on a subnational level remains uneven. As most cases are reported to subnational bodies, this gap is a barrier to meaningfully addressing DVA. The study examined this issue by analysing the diffusion of policies to address violence against women, including DVA, in 509 cities/regencies in Indonesia from 2004 to 2022. The study suggests that the presence of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with connections to international advocacy networks and a higher number of women serving in local government are two factors likely to increase the diffusion of policy.

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## Background

Indonesia is the world's largest **Muslim-majority democracy** and has **decentralised governance**.

The Indonesian government has committed to transnational convention against DVA, including the **1979 UN Convention on the Elimination and All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** and the **1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW)**. It has also adopted national laws criminalising DVA and sexual violence.



Map of Indonesia divided by states.

Image attribution: [Indonesia PNGs by Vecteezy](#).

Despite this commitment on a national level, only **one-third** of cities/regencies have adopted regulations for implementing responses to DVA and other forms of violence against women on a local level.

According to the 2021 Indonesian National Women's Life Experience Survey, **26%** of women aged 15-64 have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse by a partner or non-partner.

## Key Findings

The study underlined four factors which contributed positively or negatively towards the diffusion of local policy against DVA on a subnational level:

### Point 1

#### **Advocacy networks involving women's NGOs**

**The presence of local NGOs connected to transnational DVA networks significantly contributes towards subnational implementation of policy.**

### Point 2

#### **Female political representation**

**Increased female representation in local legislative bodies increases the likelihood of DVA policy adoption within subnational governments.**

### Point 3

#### **Socialisation of new policy norms**

**Constraining norms, particularly those that reinforce religious and social conservatism or patriarchy, can act as barriers to implementing progressive policy.**

### Point 4

#### **Perceived compatibility between new policy norms and preexisting frameworks**

**Subnational governments are more likely to adopt regulations against DVA when they are perceived to align with the policy norms at the provincial level, and less likely when they are understood as dissonant.**

# Key Policy and Practice Implications

**1.**

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## Equal policy diffusion is contingent on various factors

Despite Indonesia's commitment to foundational DVA conventions, subnational implementation of national policy remains uneven due to various factors including advocacy networks, female legislative representation, social and cultural norms and perceived compatibility with provincial frameworks. This shows that adoption of international conventions on the national level does not guarantee meaningful local implementation.

**2.**

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## Advocacy matters

The study found that advocacy on a local level through NGOs and female legislative representation positively increased the likelihood of policy diffusion. This was particularly true in cases where local NGOs were connected to transnational networks through policy mechanisms such as CEDAW.

**3.**

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## Local norms influence policy implementation

The likelihood of progressive policy implementation is influenced by cultural and social norms as well as provincial policy norms. Conservative norms, for instance, are likely to constrain the chances of policy diffusion, while progressive ones may facilitate it. The study underlines the need for further qualitative research to examine this relationship.

### Further Reading

**Betts, A., and Orchard, P.** (2014) Introduction: The Normative Institutionalisation-Implementation Gap. In *Implementation and World Politics: How International Norms Change Practice*, eds. Alexander Betts and Phil Orchard, 1–26. New York: Oxford University Press.

**True, J., and Mintrom, M.** (2001) Transnational Networks and Policy Diffusion: The Case of Gender Mainstreaming. *International Studies Quarterly*.