NORC conducted an IE* of SOAR, a recipient of CARE-GBV Small Grants Programs, funded by USAID’s Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Hub (USAID/GenDev) to improve staff wellness and resilience to vicarious trauma from assisting GBV survivors.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

**What Worked?**

- **Monthly self-care and wellness meetings** were the most successful mechanisms utilized, according to staff.

- The management team believed the **wellness policy** would institutionalize self-care in their organization, leading to more sustainable practices to support staff well-being.

- **Continual feedback** was used throughout the activity to inform what aspects were working for staff.

- Curriculum was **specifically designed** to assist staff working with survivors of child and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to manage their work and wellbeing.

**What Did Not Work?**

- SOAR struggled to **maintain necessary staffing** to cover their operational needs. This was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased overall staff burnout.

- Monitoring was challenging due to **tight deliverable timelines**, which made tracking change, use of data, and institutionalizing monitoring and programmatic mechanisms difficult.

- SOAR struggled to **sustain** some components, such as monitoring, after the implementation period ended.

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*Data collection sources and methods included reviews of 15 activity documents, 6 KII respondents, and a survey of 24 staff and network members.*
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Invest in further self-care and wellness interventions for professionals supporting violence survivors.** Findings clearly indicated that attention to self-care was used, highly valued, and beneficial to care providers.

2. **Increase funding to support longer projects.** Funding strategies should be designed to enable grantees to complete all deliverables and activity components during the span of the project.

3. **Expand training topics to help GBV responders better serve survivors of child sexual abuse.** Survey respondents mentioned further topics could focus on the reintegration processes and other support for victims/survivors after receiving services; prevention of SGBV; and accessibility of psychosocial support and its sustainability for the survivors of SGBV.

4. **Encourage greater activities that bring GBV workers together.** Group activities, such as workshops, meetings, and focus groups, were highly valued by participants.

5. **Embed components to support monitoring and adaptations to self-care interventions, making them responsive to staff health and wellness needs.** Include sufficient funds and time for grantees to track the influence of the interventions, identify gaps in current needs, and respond to emerging stressors.

6. **Encourage knowledge and resource sharing across different agencies likely to experience vicarious trauma and burnout.** Based on lessons learned about implementing wellness programs and self-care by recipients, the next funding round could offer the opportunity for learning to be shared across more care sectors, making these resources more cost-effective and sustainable.

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