This issue discusses building a GBV prevention movement in the region. It presents different perspectives from renowned activists and practitioners around feminist movement building and presents practical processes for organizations to start discussion and self-reflection among staff about building a violence against women prevention movement.

In the next issue, we will focus on reaching out to women of all economic backgrounds and ages. Do we partner with other movements e.g. people living with HIV&AIDS. LGBT?

The next issue will continue the discussion of movement building focusing on strengthening our analysis of GBV prevention work and the feminist values within our organizations. The issue will examine the differences between centralized power systems and alternate leadership and power systems. In addition, processes will be suggested for organizations interested in strengthening and democratizing their power and leadership structures. Interested in contributing an article or perspective? Contact us at info@preventgbvafrica.org.

A BY-LAW IN KAMPALA, CENTER FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION (CEDOVIP)

The engagement will include:

• a face to face meeting among the 10 organizations to build peer support, solidarity and further strategize on strengthening the GBV prevention movement;

• a separate, private space on the Network website for these 10 organizations to share and support each other and;

• additional tools and opportunities for movement building.

If your organization is interested in being a part of building a GBV prevention movement please write to info@preventgbvafrica.org for more information and support.
Building support for a GBV movement using intersectionality as its base enables us to define it as a political issue that requires political solutions. In defining the personal, as political, and the private as public, we are able to engage in collectives as well as individuals, organizing and building movements to prevent gender-based violence. By so doing, we are able to frame GBV as a violation of rights and fundamental accountability, and all to those violations. Using the rights framework enables us to appreciate the universality and indivisibility of rights and as a result we are able to affirm that everyone is equal before the law and has a right to be free from all forms of violence.

As GBV prevention activists, the foundation of our work is transforming power relations and recreate male supremacy and subordinate position compared with men.3

Movements then consist of large informal or formal groups of people and/or organizations. 

A GBV prevention movement would therefore be an organized set of individuals and organizations working to challenge and transform power relations between men and women in society, ultimately preventing GBV. A GBV prevention movement would be based on feminist ideals and ideologies of gender equality, social and economic equality, human rights based tolerance, inclusion, peace and non-violence.4

A clear political agenda based on an analysis of power and wealth distribution, oppression, and injustices among groups.

A clear analysis of violence and a sharing of common visions and goals.

In other words, a GBV prevention movement would require a shared analysis of the power imbalance between women and men and the root cause of the problem. Movements are usually composed of the individuals or groups who stand to benefit from change; the GBV prevention movement would therefore include mainly women, but partner with all who share the same value system and vision—male, female, young or old—to create momentum for change.

Movements have structure. Often, they use networks and organizations to push their goals. What structure will the GBV prevention movement need?

Movements have leaders. Usually, leadership develops among the membership. Which members will become leaders in the GBV prevention movement?

Movements organize collective, strategic activities over the long term. They work together to protest, lobby and advocate for change. How will we organize collective action?

Why do we need a GBV prevention movement? Quite simply, movements make things move. Movements create social change in a way that is far greater than the sum of their parts. One activist or organization could not have ended apartheid in South Africa—all it took was a movement. The power imbalance between men and women is a manifestation of gender-based violence against women is a violation of rights and as a result we are able to affirm that everyone is equal before the law and has a right to be free from all forms of violence.

A GBV prevention movement, the foundation of our work is transforming power relations between men and women in society, particularly between women and men. Every day, we challenge attitudes and practices that place one group of people above another. The way resources are controlled and distributed. We analyze systems of unequal power relations in our families, our neighborhoods and our country.

Building an

1. Feminism
2. Patriarchy
3. Movement
4. Activism
5. Politicization

1. Feminism is the belief that women should have equal political, social, sexual, intellectual, and economic rights to men.
2. Patriarchy is a system of structures and institutions created to sustain and recreate male supremacy and female subordination.
3. Movement is a large informal or formal group of people and or organizations focused on specific political or social issues, and working towards social change.
4. Activism is intentional action to bring about social change.
5. Politicization is a process individuals go through that brings them to a ‘critical consciousness’ (becoming an in-depth understanding of the world). It involves individual learning on all forms of domination including patriarchy. A critical analysis involves recognizing that what happens in our personal lives is deeply influenced by larger power structures.
FUTURE PRACTICES OF THE PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

Power relations change beliefs, change organizations and national discourses. When we understand the system, we understand that questions such as: What will it take to make our individual and organizational activism grow so engrained—the social change process is slow. Sometimes we even feel isolated in our challenge issues that are deeply embedded within our societies, and because they are the way resources are controlled and distributed. We analyze systems that promote particular beliefs, values and roles based in society, like groups of market women and savings clubs, and we understand that these are illuminated by that power imbalance between women and men.

We worked with and are allied to, and in the movement to change things – a whole range of strategies need to fit our contexts, and we need leadership, authority and decision making among movement members, and we need bottom-up processes to set our agenda.

As the GBV Prevention Network, we owe it to our members and communities of other members. In addition to policy and leadership and power structures from the patriarchal systems, we need to use them. We can share power, leadership, authority and decision making among movement members, and use bottom-up processes to set our agenda.

Create change at the formal and informal level. We need to create change at policy and legislative levels as well as within our communities and the communities of other members. In addition to policy and legislative change, the movement should also create changes in attitudes and practices at the household and community level regarding inequality and power relations between men and women.

Create shared models of leadership authority and decision making. We need to use the alternative vision of power we are seeking. The GBV prevention movement should strive to build different forms of leadership and power structures from the patriarchal systems. In the work we do, we can change power, leadership, authority and decision making among movement members, and use bottom-up processes to set our agenda.

Why is being politicized essential to sustain a movement for the prevention of GBV?

Being politicized means that one has become aware of power—socially, economically, and in other ways. It is essential for us as individuals to be politicized because the issues we are dealing with are political. One of the famous foreign lies in Uganda is always heard saying that “the personal is political.” Women’s civil, political, socio-economic and cultural rights are not just individual matters, nor are they political issues. It includes the right to safety. The right to choose. Women’s power in decision making, freedom of expression, and other issues. These are political issues, and for one to make meaningful contributions, one must be political.

A politicized person unequivocally challenges the current status of things. By asking questions, by why things are the way they are and what would happen if they were done differently. A politicized individual is empowered to confront forces that disagree with what society thinks is the norm. Women’s issues like homosexuality, abortion, prostitution etc. Personally, I know that it is because of my being politicized that I am able to challenge different sections of society: political, religious, and cultural, on issues like democratic violence, abortion, cohabitation and people’s sexuality. I find myself doing this without fear or favor. An individual who is politicized can never have double standards because we are struggling against injustice.

Two critical questions: What is it that makes things move? Movements make social change in a way that is greater than the sum of their parts. The activist or organization could not have ended apartheid in South Africa, it took a movement to do it.

We need to be united, have a shared political agenda and take personal and collective action to raise self-awareness, deepen the knowledge around human rights, and call for re-socialization that affirms women’s individuality, while calling for positive masculinities and male responsibility.

GBV prevention calls for understanding the intersectionality of violence with other issues such as HIV and AIDS, disability, class, livelihoods and age. It calls also for safe and inclusive spaces in which women and girls can access information especially around sexuality and rights, in full confidence.

Conflict prevention demands a constant engagement with the public institutions such as governments, local authorities and multilateral institutions to have comprehensive policies and laws that promote prevention and with sufficient allocation of resources and political will, and leadership that will ensure implementation. Lastly, personalizing commitment also means investing in community interventions which impact individuals at household levels.

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Is it viable and relevant to invest in long term social change today? Do we have the time and energy it takes to work towards long term change with all the goals and activities that we already have in our organizations? Can there be a VAW prevention movement in the Eastern, Southern and the Horn of Africa? What would it take to build one? These are some questions I have been pondering about in my reflections about our work on VAW in this region.

For organizations whose operations are guided by strategic plans that are based on short term programs, suggestions toward long term movement building may be a huge challenge and perhaps even a burden. Coupled with this is the fact that there are limited spaces for organizations to meet and think about progressive social change. There is also the tendency for staff within some organizations to rely on themselves as technicians rather than actively investing more time and energies on short term organizational activities as opposed movement mobilization work. It is critical, to return to critical quick fix approaches so that staff of organizations can recognize the importance of meaningful, social change and integrate it into their work. Facilitating the process by which activists evolve analysis from the personal to become political is important to create the confidence for us to demand rights and resources and question the prejudice and taboos that prevent women living free of violence. This is a journey we may need to walk in building a VAW prevention movement and the network can be our partner in the process.

Movements are affected by both internal and external dynamics like repressive regimes, conflicts, religious fundamentalism and now the global fi nancial crisis. They create closed spaces for organizing, freedom of expression and fundraising. With 260 members in 16 African countries operating in different socio-political contexts there may be huge challenges in taking the movement building process across the region as block and a backlash of fragmentation if focus is put on only the relatively “safer” countries. These differences may also be at the organizational and individual levels where there are varying levels of knowledge, skills, commitment, and even resources. As individuals we are at varying levels of analyzing our experiences, the engagement in different groups. Recognizing that we are all at different places in our journey of becoming politicized, the Network could provide opportunities and processes that respect this diversity but bring us all, together to cross fertilize, grow and learn from each other. Such a process is resource intensive and will require commitment from both the members and the network to be successful.

The discussion on a VAW prevention movement in the region is one way of creating a wave of activism that tackles VAW from its root. It is a process that is worth our efforts considering the magnitude of VAW. It would draw focus on the primary cause of VAW and consolidate prevention efforts. In building a VAW prevention movement we will create a critical mass of people to question the unequal status between men and women in society and how it is a cause of suffering for more than 50 percent of our population. We however should be open to the challenge that lies ahead of us. A challenge that may involve confronting our belief systems, questioning and changing our organizations and developing new goals and strategies of working, whatever it takes, it’s worth it!

For more information contact, evelynrasingvoices.org

This article is based on a presentation made by Evelyn Letiyo, Senior Program Officer, Raising Voices at the Network’s meeting in November 2008. It was adapted with permission from Srilatha Batiwala, Civil Society Research Institute, Action Aid for Women’s Rights. In her paper she contributed the part on the transformative agenda. The Research and M&E Thematic Working Group of the GBV Prevention Network. Dr. Kilonzo is the Director of Liverpool VCT, Care & Treatment Thematic Working Group of the GBV Prevention Network. Dr. Kilonzo is an accomplished practitioner and researcher and the group will benefit from her vast experience.

FURTHERING CAPACITY FOR RESEARCH IN PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Research and M&E Thematic Working Group of the GBV Prevention Network. Dr. Kilonzo is the Director of Liverpool VCT, Care & Treatment Thematic Working Group of the GBV Prevention Network. This initiative will last for three years, and will provide financial, resources and technical assistance to member organizations who would like to carry out some form of research that has practical relevance for the work of the organizations and to further advocacy.

The GBV Prevention Network can be our partner in the process.

We are glad to announce Dr. Nduku Kilonzo as the leader of the Research and M&E Thematic Working Group of the GBV Prevention Network. Dr. Kilonzo is the Director of Liverpool VCT, Care & Treatment Thematic Working Group of the GBV Prevention Network. Dr. Kilonzo is an accomplished practitioner and researcher and the group will benefit from her vast experience.

RECENT ADDITIONS TO WWW.PREVENTGBVAFRICA.ORG

Our Strength is the Solution 36 Days of Activism Regional. 2008 Campaign. A report detailing the dynamic and exciting regional campaign and the support experienced from the Network members.

Network’s 2008 Exchange Program. A report compiling experiences and lessons from three Network members who visited three organizations of their choice in November and December.

Researching Violence against Women. A training man, for developing skills in conducting scientific research on violence against women.


END NOTES

Perspectives on Prevention is a newsletter for activists and practitioners committed to preventing gender based violence in the Horn, East and Southern Africa. It is the newsletter of the GBV Prevention Network. The GBV Prevention Network was established in 2004 as a network of organizations working to build solidarity between organizations working on violence, strengthen capacity of members on critical issues and methodologies, and advocate for increased interest and investment for preventing gender-based violence prevention on the regions. The network is currently coordinated by Raising Voices and supported by HRVS.