Fostering Activism

Gender-based Violence Prevention Involves Long Term Programming to Change the Attitudes and Beliefs that Render Women as Inferior to Men.

To actually create sustainable change - of attitudes, beliefs and practices - in our communities we need to foster activism within ourselves, our organizations and our communities. Activists feel deeply connected to the injustice of inequality and consequently GBV. Activists understand the dynamics of violence, analyze it and feel compelled to take action against it. For activists, preventing violence is a personal mission, not a nine-to-five job.

Next Issue's Theme

Reaching Out

The next issue will focus on reaching out to like-minded organizations to strengthen the GBV prevention movement. We will explore how to foster effective partnerships, network and build solidarity with organizations that are also working to prevent GBV in the region. If you would like to contribute to this issue, contact us at info@preventiongbvn.org.

Member News!

Want to know what our colleagues in the region are doing? Which new programs and publications are hot off the press? Which new energized sisters and brothers have joined the GBV prevention effort? And what's going on new with our membership? Read this section and catch up with the current news!

Holding Leaders Accountable - Sonke Gender Justice Network, South Africa

Sonke launches a case of hate speech and harassment against ANC Youth League President Julius Malema. The Youth Leader's address at the South-West African (Cape) Peninsula University of Technology in January 2009 amounted to as how rape survivors should or should not behave after the crime. The Equality Court, however, ruled in favor of Sonke. Congratulations Sonke for taking a public stand against abuse speech!

Management of Sexual Violence Guidelines, Liverpool VCT, Kenya

Only one week ago, the Liverpool VCT guidelines were launched. The guidelines are the first publication of its kind in the region. A collaborative project between the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation in Kenya and Liverpool VCT, the guidelines will provide guidance on the management of sexual violence. The guidelines will be submitted to the World Health Organization for international validation.

'Soda's Haven' - SOS Femmes, Mauritius

SOS Femmes now owns its shelter which has a capacity of up to 60 women and children. The house was donated by a Mauritian woman living in the UK. Funds for renovation were donated by the European Union, the Rotary Club of Grand Baie, individuals, and corporate companies. The organization also launched its website http://sosfemmesinternational.net, a new book Femmes et Reproductions Culturales, and a new competition entitled Générations. Congratulations on these achievements!

Thursdays in Black Campaign Shortlisted - Diakonia Council of Churches, South Africa

The Campaign was short-listed for the Gender Justice and Local Government Awards to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Campaign promotes awareness about gender-based violence. For more information visit www.diakonia.org.za

Training for Data Collectors - Rwanda Men's Resource Center (RWAMREC)

In 2009, Rwanda Men's Resource Center (RWAMREC) conducted a training of data collectors for a study on the perceptions of masculinity in relation to GBV. The study was conducted at a national level in Rwanda and is an initiative of the Rwanda MenEngage Network funded by RWAMREC and funded by UNFPA Rwanda. Keep us updated RWAMREC.

INSAKA, Engaging Men and Boys for GBV Prevention - YWCA, Zambia

The Young Women Christian Association of Zambia started a program that aims to engage men as a preventive measure in the fight against GBV. The program is called YWCA Men's Network. It engages young men and boys in preventing GBV and HIV through monthly discussion called "INSAKA," the discussions address masculinity, HIV and GBV facilitated by young people. Congratulations YWCA!

REGIONAL PARTNERS IN THE GBV PENTAGON COUNCIL

1. Apartheid Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT) - South Africa
2. Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (COREWA) - Kenya
3. Kadiri Women's Rights Organization - Tanzania
4. Rwanda Men's Resource Center (RWAMREC) - Rwanda
5. White Ribbon Campaign - Namibia
6. Women's Legal Resources Centre - Malawi
7. YWCA - Zambia

2009 Regional 16 Days of Activism Campaign

In 2009 the Network launched the regional theme on the benefits of non-violent relationships and having happier and healthier families. The slogan and all associated materials were based on this concept. The theme 'Loving and Healthy Relationships Are Violence Free' was adopted.

The Action and Advocacy Kit contained nine exciting pieces including a press release, a campaign launch guide, a flyer, a training guide for developing benefits based perceptions on violence prevention, a drama sketch, tips for conducting effective and ethical, programs and the traditional prevent violence against women" purple ribbon. Materials were used by member organizations to create awareness by sparking dialogue, debate and reflection on an alternative life that is violence free.

Every year the campaign grows significantly and in 2009, the regional campaign had 40 organizations collaborating with the Network from 14 countries including Rwanda, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, South Africa, Southern Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Overall, the regional campaign served to draw attention to the issue of violence against women, by focusing not on the violence itself but on the benefits of non-violence - happier and healthier families. Read the full report at http://www.preventgbvn.org/content/16-days-activism-2009-regional-campaign

Do you want to collaborate with the Network in 2010’s regional campaign? Contribute ideas for the region. Please contact us at info@preventgbvn.org. Watch for the call for Statements of Intent which will appear in the bulletin in June. Start making plans and budgets for even more vibrant campaigns in 2010.

INFORMATION ON THE GBV PREVENTION NETWORK

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ISSUE NO. 13, APRIL 2010

This GBV Prevention Network's movement building initiative is on track. All movements in our initial processes will involve fostering a common alliance among all women's organizations. The movement includes training sessions and rulers that will be facilitated among NGO staff working on GBV in a phased process. The process will be done among staff of organizations addressing GBV fostering an identification and analysis of power imbalances, forms of GBV and its effects. The GBV Prevention Network has reached out to members interested in participating in the "Get Moving" process. Seven organizations from Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda and Zambia have partnered with the Network to conduct "Get Moving" sessions with their member organizations. The GBV Prevention Network will play a leadership role in strengthening the GBV prevention movement within the region.

The GBV Prevention Network has reached out to members interested in partnering in the "Get Moving" process. Seven organizations from Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda and Zambia have partnered with the Network to conduct "Get Moving" sessions with their member organizations. The GBV Prevention Network will play a leadership role in strengthening the GBV prevention movement within the region. The first step in the process is to understand the GBV prevention movement within the region, its dynamics, the challenges and the opportunities. This understanding will be followed by an exploration of the processes and outcomes of the GBV prevention movement within the region. Each organization has a set aside time to conduct day long processes each quarter with staff of the GBV Prevention Network and the partner.
"I really care about equality - it is an injustice for women to experience violence, something must change! Am going to do whatever is in my power to make a difference!"

**What is Activism?**

Activism simply means intentional action to bring about change. Activism for GBV prevention involves taking action to promote equality between women and men. Because activism is based on a vision, it is deeply connected to our beliefs and values. This is why GBV prevention, while important, usually are not considered activism. Instead, activism involves living our beliefs, which means that at all kinds of opportunities and situations in our professional and personal lives we take action with the ultimate vision of social change.

Activism for GBV prevention involves a deeper understanding of the root cause of GBV and a belief in equality and fair treatment of all human beings regardless of their sex, race, ethnicity, or religion. It involves a passion and commitment to social justice and a belief in an individual’s ability to create change. It involves an acceptance of personal responsibility to take actions reaching out to gain strength with others, and a life time of taking action, however seemingly small, to reject inequality and work towards women’s enjoyment of their right to live free of fear and violence.

- Consciously think about how personal experiences are linked to or are a result of larger injustice. Link personal experiences and thoughts to events, norms, structures and systems in the world.
- Get clarity on what you are passionate about - make a list of what issues are really important in your life and reflect on how you are living your beliefs.
- Allow yourself to feel outrage at injustice and find a creative and productive way to channel the outrage to achieve change.
  - Reflect on what small actions you can take to change injustice around you.
  - Reinvigorate your inner strength by turning inward and finding a place of quiet rest within yourself each day. Consider setting aside specific times to read, meditate, or pray each day - whatever feeds your spirit.
- Practice active thinking - think positive, and fill yourself with energy.
- Reach out, trust people, and build close relationships with other activists for support.
- Surround yourself with people who care about the same issues.

**ACTIVISM SIMPLY MEANS INTENTIONAL ACTION TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE.**
Activists recognize that although change takes a long time, it is possible. Activists emerge and inspire others around them to take action. They have a lifelong commitment to promoting equality that stretches beyond their professional lives. They are GBV prevention activists as a nine-to-five job but as part of actions required to create change in their own lives, their community and the world. Activism takes many forms, and it is not only about being radical or rebellious. It is not a one-off event. It involves constantly raising our voices and those of others to challenge and reject injustice in society.

**How does Activism Develop?**

Is someone born an activist? Go to school, and learn how to be an activist. Activism is more of a spirit that emerges in oneself. It is often sparked by a transformative moment or experience in one’s life. When growing from a personal experience, activism can emerge as a productive response to the outrage one feels about injustice or as a result of one’s reflection and response to injustice.

To illustrate this let’s take a look at Grace’s life. Grace is an activist working with an NGO that addresses violence against women. While she was growing up, Grace witnessed her mother experiencing violence and saw how it affected her mother, herself, and the rest of the family. She saw on a daily basis how the injustice and indignity of violence eroded her mother’s self-esteem, her opportunities, and her sense of self. She witnessed the suffering and was profoundly moved by it. Grace recognized that her mother’s personal experience was sanctioned by the community and continued because others felt this was an acceptable and normal way to treat a woman.

Thus, Grace made the connection between her personal experience and social injustice and saw all its linkages. Grace’s experience compelled her to be an activist. She has a fierce belief in the rights of women and now in her personal, professional, and professional lives. She is working toward this. Activism is triggered when we link our own personal experiences to broader injustice. We recognize that violence happens to women not because of what women as individuals do or do not do – but because collectively women are considered less as human beings than men. Therefore GBV prevention activists work to change attitudes as well as systems and structures that perpetuate inequality.

**Who can be an Activist for GBV Prevention?**

You and I – and everyone can and should be an activist. Activism does not require specialist knowledge or skills. It only requires the courage and commitment to become aware and take action. Activism is in our hearts and comes in many forms. We all have the potential, and power to be activists in our own way, in our own lives – every day.

We can be GBV prevention activists whether or not we work professionally on the issue of GBV. We can challenge injustice in and bring an activist spirit to our families, places of work, and communities.

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**ISM for PREVENTION**

*Activism for GBV Prevention involves a deeper understanding of the root cause of GBV and a belief in equality and fair treatment of all human beings.*

**Create regular and consistent spaces for personal and organizational reflection on power, justice, and equality.**

Lead by example - demonstrate your commitment and passion for equality between women and men every day.

Foster mentoring programs so that all staff are supported in their personal, professional, and processes of change.

Hold your organization to high standards - ensure that principles of justice, non-violence, and equality are lived in day-to-day operations by all staff.

Provide opportunities for self-reflection, making sure the work is meaningful to staff and is a productive outlet for their outrage at injustice.

• Discover the potential within your organization to grow as an activist organization. Join the Network’s ‘Get Active’ process find details at www.preventgbvafrica.org/movementbuilding

**In Communities**

• Create awareness of injustice and consequences of inequality between women and men.

• Have dialogues that help people to link their personal experiences with the broader analysis of injustice.

• Encourage communities to question social norms that perpetuate violence, injustice, and inequality.

• Create supportive environments that can foster and inspire activists within the community.

• Recognize that change comes about when women and men in communities see the benefits of change and help them see these benefits.

• Focus on the strengths of a community and believe in community member’s ability to be activists themselves - not just recipients of your activism.

• Live the principles of solidarity, justice and respect in all your interactions with communities.
HOT OFF THE PRESS -

Get Moving!

PHASE 4

The fourth phase of the Get Moving process is now rolling in. The team of researchers and readers is excited to engage you in this phase to reflect on our commitment to power, equality, and gender justice.


WEKENDO

PEACE MAKING

Lobby

DO YOU IDENTIFY AS AN ACTIVIST?

I believe in gender equality between women and men. I believe that men and women have the same capacity to achieve their potential in life. I started my human rights advocacy work as a young student in secondary school in the late 1980s. I was inspired by the challenges of single parents having to witness my mother struggle to sell tomatoes in a little stand to raise funds for her school fees after her divorce. I felt women were special and should be treated in a dignified manner. It was then that I decided to make a contribution to join the gender equality movement and fight gender violence. Fighting GBV has become part of my identity. Men of our generation must stand up and denounce gender violence. In every woman, I see the face of my mother and I will not condone GBV in my life. My hand will never be used for violence against women. Yes, I am a GBV prevention activist.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF BEING AN ACTIVIST?

As an activist, for children’s and women’s rights, I must certainly feel a deep connection to the issue of GBV. We know that our goal as activists is to try to bring about social, economic, and political change - so while we loudly advocate for equality and better services in public spaces, and while we bring women and express disagreement at cultural stereotypes and practices that are harmful to children and women, the issue of GBV and how it affects our lives is not just about women or men. We have to face the end of each day, after all, the real concepts and narratives have been written to government, recommending possible ways to better the service, when I am at home safe and warm in bed, glad that my children are safe and loved - it’s that, little voice that always asks: Am I safe, am I doing enough?

WHAT DOES BEING AN ACTIVIST MEAN TO YOU?

As an activist - I am deeply concerned about the issue of gender based violence, and want to see the problem wiped out of the universe. I have committed myself to creating a better world where no one will be subjected to gender based violence. I try to lead by example through respecting people’s dignity and demonstrating non-violent behavior. I engage family members and friends and to reconcile the current situation and help them understand the beliefs and practices and seek out and join like-minded people to tackle the issue on a bigger scale. This is what being an activist means to me.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST DIFFICULT MOMENT AS AN ACTIVIST?

Being an activist has put me in the spotlight. Being a public figure can be challenging because media can easily use your name to make headlines stories or to push for their own agenda. Sometimes this agenda might be contradictory to the values one stands for. One of my most difficult moments as an activist was when one of the leading daily newspapers decided to misrepresent a peaceful march for children’s rights and ending child sexual abuse that I was involved in, as a march in support of the draconian and homosexuality bill. In Uganda, it had nothing to do with homosexuality. This was painful because it misrepresented my values and beliefs as a human rights activist. I passionately believe that human rights are indivisible for everyone, irrespective of their age, age, sexual orientation or race. What gives me strength as an activist is the support of like-minded people, who believe in the same values that I believe in and are there to stand with me amidst such challenges.