PERSPECTIVES ON PREVENTION

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THIS ISSUE’S THEME
COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

This issue, in connection with our 16 Days of Activism Campaign, looks at how we can strategically engage faith-based communities to prevent gender-based violence. The issue further discusses the opportunities and challenges of engaging faith-based communities. Finally, we conclude with a roundup of the Networks 2010 activities.

NEXT ISSUE’S THEME
INTERSECTIONALITY

In the next issue, we shall continue with the Network’s movement building theme and will focus on the last topic in the series: intersectionality reaching out beyond our usual allies and comfort zones, to find and work with activists outside the field of GBV prevention. The issue will explore working with other human rights and social justice organizations and movements. We welcome submissions! How are you reaching out to other movements? If you would like to contribute to this issue, contact us at info@preventgbvinafrica.org

NETWORK MEMBERS ENGAGE FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES

The GBV Prevention Network’s annual 16 Days of Activism Campaign is underway! Every year, from 25th November to 16th December, the GBV Prevention Network joins thousands of activists, groups and organizations around the world and in the region to emphasize that violence against women is a violation of women’s human rights.

4. Ideas for developing public displays to prevent violence against women which culminate in a community-wide A year release which explains how the prevention of violence against women is a tenet of all faiths and demands individual and community action.
5. A training series explaining how a variety of faith practices and religious texts support family harmony and non-violence.
6. A strategy for organizing faith-based communities to develop creative and innovative ways to find solutions to "uncommon" the 16 Days campaign for use in their own communities.
7. A strategy session guide for staff of collaborating organizations to develop creative and innovative ways to find solutions to "uncommon" the 16 Days campaign for use in their own communities.

The slogan for this year’s regional theme is “How are you living your faith? Every religion calls for non-violent relationships.”

The GBV Prevention Network Regional Campaign involves various activities, mobilizing communities of faith and religious institutions to prevent violence against women. Over 80 collaborating organizations from the Horn,


campaign a media blitz for screening in communities of faith. The guide offers suggestions for preparing for and facilitating a discussion after viewing the guide.

This year the campaign has grown further in strength and vigour! We are collaborating with over GBV organizations from 16 countries in the region to see how our faiths and faith-based communities can and should get involved in preventing violence against women. The slogan for this year’s regional theme is “How are you living your faith? Every religion calls for non-violent relationships.”

The regional theme was chosen in line with regional realities, stemming from recent research conducted by the New Forum on Religion and Women in Africa, that out of ten people in sub-Saharan Africa speak this region is very important in their lives. This means that faith-based communities have a significant influence on social norms and how we live our lives. This year’s regional campaign emphasizes the need for mutual respect and non-violence in our families.

The 2010 GBV Prevention Network Regional Campaign involves various activities, mobilizing communities of faith and religious institutions to prevent violence against women. Over 80 collaborating organizations from the Horn,

East and Southern Africa have received the Network’s Action and Advocacy Kit. Full of existing materials to facilitate their campaigns, including:

1. Full-color posters calling for commitment from everyone to live their faith and prevent violence against women.
2. “Prevent Violence against Women” posters that can be worn throughout the campaign and beyond drawing attention and instigating dialogue.
3. A copy of the 16 Days Film and an advocacy guide for screening in communities of faith. The guide offers suggestions for preparing for and facilitating a discussion after viewing the 16 Days film.

All these Members are engaging their communities using the Action and Advocacy Kit!

1. Action for Development (ACDID), Uganda
2. Action for the Promotion of the Women, Delémont, Switzerland
3. Action Aid International, Kenya
4. Adult Rape Clinic, Zimbabwe
5. African Family Health, Kenya
6. Agiaungian Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT), South Africa
7. AIDS Community Development Programme, Kenya
8. American Refugee Committee (ARC), Southern Sudan
10. Care International, Burundi
11. Care International, Uganda
12. Care International, Uganda
13. Caritas, Zimbabwe
14. Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Uganda
15. Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CDEPV), Uganda
16. Centre for International and Eastern Mediterranean Studies (CIME), Mozambique
17. Centre for Rights Education & Awareness (CREA), Kenya
18. Child and Family Welfare Bethlem, South Africa
19. Children Forum Network (CFN), Liberia
20. Church of Uganda, Kampala Diocese, Uganda
21. Coast Women in Development, Kenya
22. Community Health Plan, Uganda
23. Creative Centre for Communication and Development (CCCD), Zimbabwe
24. Diakonia Council of Churches South Africa
26. Fansa Partnership, South Africa
27. Federation of Women Lawyers (FEMWA), Uganda
28. Gender Equity Support Project (GESP), Malawi
29. Groupeement de Promotion Intégrale (GPI), DR Congo
30. Hope After Rape, Uganda
31. Human Rights Institute of South Africa
32. Icon Women and Young People Leaders Academy, Uganda
33. IMAGE Project - MTSI Health Consortium, South Africa
34. Integrated Community Education and Development Association (ICEDA), Ethiopia
35. Jikukuri Uganda Ltd, Uganda
36. Joint Refugee Council of Uganda
37. Institute for Promotion Of Civil Society (ICOS), Southern Sudan
38. Kagango Society Women's Shelter Project, Botswana
39. Khayelitsha Community Awareness Project (KCAP), South Africa
40. Korean Women's Advisory Organization (KOFAWO), Kenya
41. Khuluma Women's Rights Organization, Tanzania
42. KWEDCO Tanzania
43. Last Women's Association, Southern Sudan
44. Legal Assistance Centre, Namibia
45. LGBTI Support Group, Zimbabwe
46. LGBTI Support Group, Zimbabwe
47. Men's Resource Centre (MRC), Uganda
48. Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, GBV Reference Group, South Africa
49. Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, GBV Reference Group, South Africa
50. Ministry Project, Zimbabwe
51. Namibian Voice for Development, Namibia
52. National Council of Churches of Zimbabwe
53. National Faith-Building Council of Zimbabwe
54. New Hope Foundation, Zimbabwe
55. Our Lady of Lourdes, Kenya
56. Pace Women's Justice Network, Zimbabwe
57. Pahimaha Foundation/MEN's Forum on Gender, Zimbabwe
58. PAM, African Women's Liberation Organization (PAMWOD), Uganda
59. Pax Christi, Western Region, South Africa
60. RECONCILE, Kenya
61. Religious Memorial, Trust, Zimbabwe
62. REPOZA, Women's Resource Centre, Uganda
63. South Africa
64. South African HIV-AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAIDS) Foundation, South Africa
65. South African HIV-AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAIDS) Foundation, South Africa
66. The National Women's Forum of Zambia, Zambia
67. The Coalition On Violence against Women (CDOVW), Kenya
68. The Coalition On Violence against Women (CDOVW), Kenya
69. Techoro, Tanzania
70. Uganda Multi-Cluster Action for Women and Development, Uganda
71. UBRC, Mozambique
72. UNICEF, Mozambique
73. UN Women, Mauritius
74. White Ribbon Campaign, Namibia
75. Women against Rape, Botswana
76. Women Empowerment Group, Zimbabwe
77. Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), Kenya
78. Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), Tanzania
79. Women in Politics Support Unit, Zimbabwe
80. Women's Legal Resources Centre, Malawi
81. Women's Support Network, South Africa
82. WISH-ODA, Southern Sudan
83. Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Zambia
84. Youth Net and Counseling (YNECO), Malawi
85. Zambia Association for Research and Development CAREZ, Zambia

TAKING ACTION!
As activists we are constantly trying to reach people, convincing, organizing, planning, and persuading women and men to believe and act on women’s rights to live free of violence. What if we were to explore new ways of working with faith-based communities and offer some practical suggestions for connecting faith and violence prevention.

Is religion important in our region?

Research recently conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life notes that sub-Saharan Africa is one of the most religious places in the world.1 In fact, 90% of people in the region say religion is very important in their lives. This means nine out of ten people are going to religious institutions or using their faith as a strength in their lives. What does that mean for us as a network of organizations working to prevent VAW? How can reaching out to religious communities increase our activism and move us closer to our goal of preventing violence against women?

People who state religion is very important to them typically make decisions and behave in ways that are in line with their faith. Now imagine that religious leaders, faith-based organizations, and individuals are avidly talking about violence against women prevention. If we look through the lens of religion we can see our vision is so intertwined with religious ideas of peace, love, and nonviolence. What potential this holds for our activism!

Think about it: if 9 out of 10 people living in sub-Saharan Africa heard from their respected religious leaders that VAW is not acceptable to them, it could change lives. People could change for the better! If religious leaders were to talk to their congregations, community leaders, and even religious organizations about the importance of preventing violence against women, what could happen? What potential could this hold for our activism?

Could we, should we, work with communities of faith?

This year’s 16 Days of Activism Campaign focuses on engaging faith-based communities. We encourage all members to consider the potential in working with communities of faith to further our shared goal of preventing violence against women. Can we involve religious leaders, organizations and communities in our efforts and help harness their power to lead their communities toward violence-free relationships?

Let’s be realistic. There are opportunities and challenges in working together. Thinking through these and deciding what they mean for your organization and how you might capitalize on the opportunities and work through the challenges is important thinking to do before beginning efforts to engage faith-based communities.

First, let’s look at the opportunities in engaging with faith-based communities.

Faith-based communities...

- Have great reach within society. The infrastructure of religious institutions is extensive and well organized with congregations, groups, committees, and associations found in communities throughout the world from national to village levels. This means there is pre-existing infrastructure to work through for VAW prevention activism.
- Have a long history of respected and trusted leadership and community involvement.
- Have religious leaders who are responsible for fostering love, peace and harmony – particularly in families. Their influence to promote nonviolence in relationships is essential.
- Can provide valuable insight and intervention into the daily lives of people

Here are some ideas for communities to promote nonviolence.

First, look at yourself:

- Become aware of your own values and religious beliefs.
- Critically examine how your own faith does or does not parallel your values for power balance between women and men, and violence in relationships.
- Use your own actions and decisions as an example to prevent VAW in your religious community.
- Commit never to use violence in your own relationship.
- Work toward a balance of power in your intimate relationship.
- Teach your children to develop stereotypes of gender roles, teach children to share responsibilities. Give opportunities in all areas of life to both boys and girls.
- Provide support for those who have experienced violence by listening instead of criticizing, and connecting them to needed services (health, psychological, financial, etc.)

Engage Religious communities:

- Critically look at your own practices and policies and identify ways to change.
- Be mindful of how they experience violence, abuse, and prepare policies and procedures to prevent it.
- Learn about different forms of violence between men.
- Lead the community in the fight against violence.
- Educate the community about human rights.
because of their closeness to people. Whether they are formal, religious leaders they live in and are known in their communities, often providing both informal and formal support to its members.

- By their nature and history are cultural change-agents in societies. They are ready-made activists!
- Have a captive audience for example: Christians attend church every Sunday, and Muslims attend Mosque every Friday.
- Are grounded in values of respect, dignity and peace.

The reach of VAW prevention if we were to engage faith-based communities, on a continent where so many people value religion in their lives, could greatly change, strengthen and enrich the VAW prevention movement. If all religious leaders of Islam and Christianity addressed VAW prevention in their churches and mosques throughout Africa, it could possibly reach 90% of the population.

Religious tradition and teachings speak of respect for religious leaders and often religious leaders are known to have a connection with the divine, which makes their voices as leaders even more important to religious communities. How can we tap into this power so that religious leaders lead the connection between our values and theirs? How can we tap into this power so that religious leaders lead the connection between our values and theirs? Non-violence, respect, peace, a focus on families, are all values we both hold. Religious Leaders could begin talking about VAW prevention and thereby influencing the stereotypes and prejudices that put women at risk of violence. In addition, as respected leaders in the community, they can create a safe space for men and women to talk about violence against women and also provide support for women who are experiencing violence.

Religious Leaders, with guidance of their religious tradition and teachings, can provide support through counseling or community support groups for couples, who are struggling with violence in their relationship and by doing so, demonstrate their faith's commitment on preventing violence against women.

However, there are some legitimate challenges to working with faith-based communities that as human rights organizations, we should consider and work through before starting our engagement. For example, faith-based communities...

- Typically install men, not women, in roles of leadership. There may be resistance from religious institutions to talk about gender equality as well as a discomfort in working with women on these issues.
- For feminists who are trying to change the imbalance in power relationships between men and women, how can we remain sensitive to the protocol and leadership structures within religious institutions while still promoting equality and justice?
- Rely on religious texts that often reinforce men in dominant roles. This seemingly puts our agenda of equality and women's rights at fundamental odds with Christianity or Islam, yet there are many areas of shared values. How can we capitalize on shared values and be strategic about which issues to bring into the discussion?
- Feel reluctant or fearful to work with human rights organizations. Often there is not a legacy of trust and mutual collaboration. What are some confidence building measures we can take to begin to repair damaged relationships?

Hold dear to tradition, not original religious teachings that often keep women in submissive roles. As VAW prevention organizations engaging religious institutions could we seek awareness on these cultural traditions (e.g. wearing of veils, FGM, etc.) and encourage analysis of leadership and congregations to separate tradition from the religious teaching?

There are legitimate concerns and tensions in working with some communities of faith as feminists and human rights activists. Yet, can we overcome these issues by acknowledging our own fears and biases and recognizing that we do not have to be in complete ideological agreement to collaborate.

Give it a try!

Preventing violence against women takes everyone in the community: women and men, boys and girls, local leaders, cultural leaders, health care providers, police and religious leaders. In order to affect social change, all kinds of people – those with different traditions, customs, languages, and religious beliefs – need to get engaged. As activists working on violence prevention we are challenged to reach out to different groups, different communities and people with differing perspectives to see our vision of a life free of violence for women become reality. The work on violence prevention can unify people who might not naturally feel in solidarity with each other through the universal principle, everyone has a right to live without violence or the threat of violence. So be it Muslim, Christian, Bahai, Hindu, Jewish, or secular: we all can (and must) put our energies and talents toward preventing violence against women.

Share with the Network!

Have you begun to work with faith-based communities? What lessons have you learned that will help GBV members to face the challenges ahead? Share the discussion today with other members in your area, and share your lessons with us on the GBV Prevention Network website.

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WANT TO BEGIN ENGAGING FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES? SOME PRACTICAL ORGANIZING IDEAS:

- Are people in your community religious?
- What religions do they belong to?
- Where do they meet to discuss their faith and worship?
- What are the main religious institutions in your community?
- Do these religious communities work together? If so, how?
- Who do they look to as leaders in their religious community?
- What networks do people belong to within their religion?
- How are these religious communities already addressing violence against women?

For how you could engage faith-based communities to promote non-violent relationships:

Religious Leaders in your community to:

- Engage faith-based communities to respect and honor their communities religious beliefs and how they act to promote non-violent relationships.
- Demonstrate how power as leaders in the community in their daily lives, actions.
- Demonstrate that leadership in the God and the Bible, that promote respect, equality, and non-violence.
- Emphasize that faith and that promotes non-violent relationships.
- Explain that non-violence is acceptable and it is against women's

Engage Faith-based Communities to:

- Become aware of the violence women are experiencing in the own community and consider how they can help others become aware.
- Encourage positive attitudes toward and inclusion of women in all programs, services, and discussion.
- Provide safe spaces for women experiencing violence in their relationships and offer support (counseling, or links to services).
- Help couples to learn communication skills.
- Encourage members of the community to create supportive networks for women experiencing violence.
- Work from a rights-based perspective: treat women experiencing violence as someone with rights rather than someone who needs charity.
- Provide safe spaces for men and women to talk about gender equality and violence.
- Provide safe spaces for women to seek help from violent relationships.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: UGANDA’S CATHOLIC CHURCH TAKES A STAND!

This year there has been much organizing, strategizing and action within the Catholic Church of Uganda. With Leadership from Trocaire, an Irish Catholic funding agency committed to promoting women’s human rights and dignity, the Catholic Church of Uganda, has launched a nationwide campaign calling on all Catholics to end domestic violence.

The unique initiative is an excellent example of how strategic collaborations with faith-based communities can meaningfully move issues forward and result in significant action. Trocaire initiated discussion with the church hierarchy in 2008. A trusted partner, Trocaire understood the hierarchy and the sensitivities within the Catholic Church. They also worked hard to garner the support of key allies within the Church Leadership and together, they influenced the Bishops’ Conference to take up the issue of domestic violence. Then, a year-long planning process began with key representatives from the Ugandan Catholic Church, Trocaire, Irish Aid and Raising Voices. Each group contributed their particular skill set and resources to the initiative. The end result:

- A national campaign launched on 28th November 2008, which includes statements from the Bishops Council on the imperatives of the Church and its members to prevent domestic violence.
- 25,000 color posters and 25,000 Holly Notes that went out to every Catholic Church in Uganda to help priests address domestic violence from the pulpit.
- Nine million Prayer Cards printed in 9 Languages to be distributed to every Catholic at the parish level in Uganda.

The campaign is linked to the Catholic Church’s season of Advent, uses relevant scripture, the preeminence of Church leadership, and the existing grassroots infrastructure of the Church to send a powerful message domestic violence goes against the Catholic Faith.

Encouragingly, the level of commitment to the issue is high among the Church and all partners and each has committed to work together to further activism within the Catholic Church to prevent violence against women in Uganda. See website for more details at www.preventgbvafrica.org.

Get Moving! Booklets
This year we produced 3 phases of the Get Moving! process. Phase 3 Living Out Our Beliefs focuses on lived values and voice based leadership. Phase 4 Building Communities guides staff within organizations to personally reflect on their own beliefs about activism, social change and justice and Phase 5 Reaching Out focuses on effectively reaching out to like-minded individuals and organizations to build and strengthen solidarity and partnerships for GBV prevention within the region.

We look ahead to 2011 with much hope and anticipation, together we can strengthen GBV prevention in the region.

Norad

The Gender-Based Violence Prevention Network
Plot 36, Tufaili Drive, Karnechaya, P.O. Box 6770, Kampala, Uganda
Phone: +256 414331266 Fax: +256 414331267
Email: info@preventgbvafrica.org www.preventgbvafrica.org

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