COMMUNITY ACTIVISM FOR THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

This year's regional 16 Days of Activism Campaign focuses on working with communities to prevent sexual violence. Sexual violence is rooted in deep-seated community norms where women are considered to have less value than men. To effectively address sexual violence, we need to not only respond to it, but to prevent violence before it occurs – this means challenging assumptions about women's status and power. For effective primary prevention of sexual violence, it is important to work with communities who will themselves question the community norms that perpetuate sexual violence and instead create new norms that promote non-violence and equality.

This newsletter encourages us reflect on activating communities to respond to sexual violence and also features Network members’ sexual violence prevention programs that effectively engage communities on this issue.

We are also excited to offer you a ‘guided tour’ of the Network’s new website that will be launched on 25th November 2008.

TAKE ACTION! 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

We have embarked on our dynamic annual 16 Days of Activism Campaign this season. Every year, the GBV Prevention Network joins thousands of activists, groups and individuals to emphasize that violence against women is a violation of women's human rights.

The 16 Days of Activism is an international campaign that originated from the first Women’s Global Leadership Institute at the Center for Women’s Global Leadership in 1991 where participants proposed the dates 25th November to 10th December to call for an end to violence against women.

This period spans various symbolic dates, the 25th November is the International Day against Violence against Women, 29th November is the International Women Human Rights Defenders Day. 1st December is the World AIDS Day. 6th December marks the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre and 10th December is the International Human Rights Day.

Every year, the Center for Women's Global Leadership suggests a campaign theme in consultation with women's human rights advocates worldwide. Regionally the GBV Prevention Network, in consultation with members, creates a theme in line with the international theme yet specifically tailored to issues within the regional context.

There's still time to get involved – all materials are designed around these issues. The programme is currently running in both primary and secondary schools in the country. Stay tuned for updates.

You could do the following activities:
• discuss the existence of sexual violence in your community;
• discuss the root causes of sexual violence with small groups of opinion leaders, organized groups, and youth;
• challenge those around you who do not consider men and women as equal;
• post your materials, activities, photos and events on the Network website, and,
• share other ideas on www.preventgbvfrica.org!

Where is your strength? Find it! Share it! Keep us informed of your exciting campaigns.

Next Issue’s Theme
MOVEMENT BUILDING AROUND GBV PREVENTION

Movements stimulate social change. Movement building means moving away from thinking just about specific GBV prevention projects toward longer term social change with a wide activist base. As many of you know, there will be a GBV Prevention Network satellite meeting after this year’s AWID Forum in Cape Town with the theme of strengthening the regional GBV prevention movement. The next issue will explore movement building around GBV prevention. All members are encouraged to contribute their personal or organizational experiences regarding movement building to this newsletter – write to us by January 30th, 2009.

Member’s 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 with our membership? Read this section and catch up with the current news!

Ground Breaking Bride Price Ordinance Passed! – Mifumi Project, Uganda

The News of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development of the Government of the Republic of Uganda recently made a great stride in ending the practice of bride price through the passing of the marriage law. This has been welcomed by all groups that work on gender issues.

Ground Breaking Bride Price Ordinance Passed! – Mifumi Project, Uganda

This bill was passed on 17th September 2008 after the District Councilors had effectively consulted with their constituencies. This ordinance declares bride price in Tororo district a bridal gift that is non-refundable thereby mitigating the abuses of bride price. The Ordinance also states that burial cannot be prevented if bridal gifts have not been given to the parents of the bride. Congratulations Mifumi!
WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO PREVENT

WHERE IS OUR STRENGTH? Let’s find it and share it in line with this year’s 16 Days of Activism theme, we will reflect on community activism for the prevention of sexual violence. Why should we concentrate on the prevention of sexual violence? Why should we mobilize communities around the issue?

Sexual violence is a problem in all our communities. Various programs have been developed and implemented in different communities to prevent and respond to sexual violence. To understand sexual violence, many practitioners use the ecological model which explains influences at different levels that perpetuate sexual violence (CDC, 2004).

THE ECOLOGICAL MODEL

This model points out the interconnectedness of the various influences that lead to sexual violence and analyze how individual experiences, relationships, community norms and broader societal influences can lead to sexual violence. The model also helps us to understand the need for sexual violence prevention efforts that comprehensively address sexual violence at all levels. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2004) Sexual violence interventions can be broadly categorized as follows:

- Primary prevention: this involves activities conducted before the violence has occurred, e.g., community mobilization programs.
- Secondary prevention: this involves immediate response to sexual violence after it has occurred, e.g., the provision of post exposure prophylaxis to survivors.
- Tertiary prevention: this involves responses after sexual violence has occurred to deal with the long term consequences, e.g., legal reform programs.

Using the “Moving Upstream” public health analogy of prevention, we see the importance of investing in prevention of sexual violence. Both prevention and response interventions to address sexual violence are essential. However, particularly in resource poor countries, the demand for services can be overwhelming and thus, an emphasis on stopping the violence before it starts may be particularly relevant in our settings.

THE PRINCIPLES OF PRIMARY PREVENTION

1. Mobilizing communities removes the responsibility of preventing sexual violence from survivors and ensures the whole community takes responsibility and action. Organizations can work with communities on sexual violence prevention building on already existing community strengths and abilities of a community to solve a problem and shift community norms (Raising Voices, 2008).

2. Involving communities in the prevention of sexual violence First it is important to recognize that changing societal norms does not happen in a short time, it occurs in small ways, involving very many people, over a long period of time. Recommendations for program implementation are at least three to four years of regularly and frequently conducted activities (USAID, 2006). Community members must be involved right from the identification sexual violence as a problem, creating massive awareness of why sexual violence happens, designing actions to address the problem, and creating positive social norms (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 2003).

3. Why is it Important to Involve Communities?

Sexual violence is rooted within the gendered dynamics of society, where women are perceived to have a lower status than men, which leads to power imbalances between men and women. When we involve community members in sexual violence prevention strategies, we help to change community norms regarding women and men’s use of violence, shifting the power dynamic to foster the acceptance of violence within communities (Raising Voices, 2008).

4. Preventing Violence: Interventions that are designed to help communities address the root cause of sexual violence, challenging power imbalances and creating positive community norms

5. Holistic: Recognition of the interconnectedness of communities, relationships, and institutions and the impact these have on an individual, thereby engaging a cross section of community members.

APFEMME (ACTION POUR LA PROMOTION DES FEMMES) - KIGOMA, TANZANIA

APFEMME’s GBY programme in Luogu, Kigoma, seeks to address both the immediate and long-term needs of survivors of GBV, as well as the concerns of vulnerable women and children. Among their areas of focus is advocacy for greater protection of refugees against sexual violence.

Their project incorporates emergency responses to reduce suffering, and enhance recovery interventions addressing the long-term needs of survivors of GBV. Their activities also work to improve the position of women and their participation in decision-making processes even in situations of conflict. APFEMME produces information, education and communication materials to raise awareness around sexual violence and human rights.

APFEMME involves displaced communities in planning, implementation and evaluation of its work. They select representatives in all their intervention communities and among local government leaders, who work closely with staff to implement activities.

The project has led to a marked increase in the active participation of community members and civil society as well as local government leaders in projects of sexual violence prevention activities and advocacy even in refugee camps. As a result, the program is being expanded to the Democratic Republic of Congo. APFEMME has learnt that it is necessary to involve all community members: women, girls, men and boys. For more information contact Saidia Biloto at: saidia.biloto@yahoo.fr

WOMEN AGAINST RAPE (WAR) – BOTSWANA

WAR’s prevention programs include educating young people through school programmes called Students Against Rape Clubs, and Girls and Boys Leading our World Clubs.

These clubs create awareness on the existence of abuse, the importance of reporting, and life skills to equip them with prestige. The young people are also stimulated to realize self worth, self respect as well as respect for one another.

In addition to this, research and advocacy activities are conducted among different groups. This has led to a national domestic violence bill draft and the protection of survivors in court by hearing of rape cases in private.

WAR works closely with communities for their interventions. They begin by conducting a process, whereby each ward nominates community members who are trained in how to prevent gender based abuse and basic counseling. The trainers then become the eyes, ears, and hands within their communities. Community leaders are often highly influential in facilitating entry into the community and greatly accept the community strengths and abilities of a community to solve a problem and shift community norms.

Sedruro believes involving communities in this way has yielded positive results. For example, they believe incidents of sexual violence have subsided among IDPs and the local community. In addition, results from a simple, internal study showed that 60 percent of the local community, including IDPs, have changed attitudes through the mobilization and training of community members.

From their work, SEDHURO has learned that community leaders are one key group to involve whether formal, traditional or religious leaders. As the gatekeepers in the community, their acceptance and endorsement of a project can facilitate entry into the community and greatly increase the level of community participation. Community leaders are often highly influential and can significantly influence beliefs and norms. They also act as first response to women and girls experiencing sexual violence.

For more information on SEDHURO’s work contact Farah Aden Barre at: sedhuro@yahoo.com

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Strategies employed and activities conducted for mobilizing communities to prevent sexual violence may differ according to varying community contexts. However, the following principles underlie community-based interventions for the prevention of sexual violence (Raising Voices, 2003).

1. Mobilizing communities removes the responsibility of preventing sexual violence from survivors and ensures the whole community takes responsibility and action. Organizations can work with communities on sexual violence prevention building on already existing community strengths and abilities of a community to solve a problem and shift community norms (Raising Voices, 2008).

2. Involving communities in the prevention of sexual violence First it is important to recognize that changing societal norms does not happen in a short time, it occurs in small ways, involving very many people, over a long period of time. Recommendations for program implementation are at least three to four years of regularly and frequently conducted activities (USAID, 2006). Community members must be involved right from the identification sexual violence as a problem, creating massive awareness of why sexual violence happens, designing actions to address the problem, and creating positive social norms (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 2003).

3. Why is it Important to Involve Communities?

Sexual violence is rooted within the gendered dynamics of society, where women are perceived to have a lower status than men, which leads to power imbalances between men and women. When we involve community members in sexual violence prevention strategies, we help to change community norms regarding women and men’s use of violence, shifting the power dynamic to foster the acceptance of violence within communities (Raising Voices, 2008).

4. Preventing Violence: Interventions that are designed to help communities address the root cause of sexual violence, challenging power imbalances and creating positive community norms

5. Holistic: Recognition of the interconnectedness of communities, relationships, and institutions and the impact these have on an individual, thereby engaging a cross section of community members.

APFEMME (ACTION POUR LA PROMOTION DES FEMMES) - KIGOMA, TANZANIA

APFEMME’s GBY programme in Luogu, Kigoma, seeks to address both the immediate and long-term needs of survivors of GBV, as well as the concerns of vulnerable women and children. Among their areas of focus is advocacy for greater protection of refugees against sexual violence.

Their project incorporates emergency responses to reduce suffering, and enhance recovery interventions addressing the long-term needs of survivors of GBV. Their activities also work to improve the position of women and their participation in decision-making processes even in situations of conflict. APFEMME produces information, education and communication materials to raise awareness around sexual violence and human rights.

APFEMME involves displaced communities in planning, implementation and evaluation of its work. They select representatives in all their intervention communities and among local government leaders, who work closely with staff to implement activities.

The project has led to a marked increase in the active participation of community members and civil society as well as local government leaders in projects of sexual violence prevention activities and advocacy even in refugee camps. As a result, the program is being expanded to the Democratic Republic of Congo. APFEMME has learnt that it is necessary to involve all community members: women, girls, men and boys. For more information contact Saidia Biloto at: saidia.biloto@yahoo.fr
Everyone has a right to live free of violence!

A process of social change:
Recognition that existing community norms can not be changed by one event but by using a systematic, sustained approach that scales up the stages of individual change to the community level

Repeated exposure to ideas:
Mobilizing change agents to engage their community with regular and mutually reinforcing ideas from different sources over a long period of time e.g., on the radio, posters, murals, community dialogue and sermons in places of worship, etc.

Human rights framework:
Using the human rights and justice framework to hold communities accountable for treating women as valuable and equal human beings

Community ownership:
Strengthening the capacity of groups and individuals in a community, to ensure interventions are led by members of that community, while NGOs act as facilitators of change members of that community, while NGOs act as facilitators of change.

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Family Violence Prevention Fund suggests the following useful tips for involving communities in the prevention of sexual violence (FPVF 2003):

- Facilitating processes that enable communities to see sexual violence as unacceptable with serious consequences
- Guide local activists, community volunteers and the general community to address sexual violence in ways that do not lay blame on survivors or perpetrators
- Have an all-inclusive approach that involves men but does not make men feel defensive and blamed
- Find out and work in the context of each particular community
- With community members, devise strategies of accountability for men who use violence that are not heavily reliant on state institutions
- Build skills of key individuals to support survivors of sexual violence and hold perpetrators accountable
- Work with local residents, because "people listen to those they trust"—Become proactive in addressing sexual violence within your community—during the 16 Days of Activism and beyond! Share how you prevent sexual violence with Network members at www.preventgbvcafrica.org.

DARACO’s sexual violence programs include training primary school teachers as trainers on sexual violence prevention. So far they have trained 250 teachers in 53 schools. Among their activities is sexual violence prevention education. They also provide training in self protection skills for girls within and outside schools. In order to create impact of their programs, local leaders are engaged from the beginning. Leaders are sensitized on the content of the trainings and asked to organize at local level. The local leaders then organize schools for visits and sometimes contribute venues for community visits.

From responses they receive in the community DARACO feels the results of this project have been important. They have learnt that sexual violence incidents can be prevented through sensitization of the community, and empowerment of women, and girls. Police and legal actions in most cases, come in after damage has already happened which cannot be reversed. DARACO notes the need to network in order to learn from each other and strengthen existing interventions and the importance of engaging the community—especially the leadership.

For more information on DARACO’s work contact Duncan Oundo Ochieno Papa at: dolphin2002ke@yahoo.com
Network News

Network's Exchange Visit

The Network is providing member organizations an opportunity to reach out across national borders and visit a member organization of their choice, share and learn from them and meet other organizations in the same city. Through a very competitive process, three Network members were selected by the Leadership Committee. Selected candidates are:

- Hedwick Afandi from Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW) in Kenya who will visit Forum for Activists Against Torture (FACT) in Rwanda.
- Josia Ellias Helmut from White Ribbon Campaign in Namibia who will visit Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa.
- Peter Lwanga from Center for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP) who will visit Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW) in Kenya.

After the visit, they will share their experiences via the GBV Prevention Network website.

In response to member requests to make the Network’s website a comprehensive, ‘one-stop shop’ for GBV prevention information in the region and a space where members can connect and share experiences and information, the GBV Prevention Network website (www.preventgbvafrica.org) has been revamped!

The website has been recreated and redesigned by an India-based group, Feminist Approach to Technology. There are various, exiting new features on the website that will make it easier for us to connect share, create solidarity and feel like over 230 individuals and organizations are sitting in the same room!

This new site is for YOU – use it to reach out and share with other like-minded practitioners and on what it means to have a politicized approach to violence against women work, and how we can build a strong GBV prevention movement in the region. In addition, thematic working groups will engage in issues of interest to them and draw discussions on topical issues of their choice across various geographical regions, and comment on issues on the agenda within the region.

Starting 25th November, members will benefit from the following features on the new site:

- A WHAT’S NEW SECTION: Stay in touch and up-to-date with all the happenings and news from the Network right on the home page.

Network Members Participate in Sexual Violence Conference in Nairobi

Recently, a conference was concluded in Nairobi, Kenya, discussing the status of women’s rights in East Africa. Brenda Kugonza from Center for Domestic Violence Prevention in Uganda and Anna Kulaaya of Women in Law and Development in Africa, Tanzania represented the Network in this panel. Details will be posted on the website.

Movement Building after AWID

On November 18th and 19th the GBV Prevention Network will hold a Satellite Meeting in Cape Town that will build on synergies generated at the AWID Forum. Participants will share and reflect on what it means to have a politicized approach to violence against women work, and how we can build a strong GBV prevention movement in the region. In addition, thematic working groups will engage in issues of interest to them and draw plans for 2009. The groups that are scheduled to meet are, Research and M&E, Communication Materials and Working with Men for Gender Equality.

A GBV LIBRARY: Members can access the most current GBV information from the region sorted by themes including community mobilization, conflict, domestic violence, girls and youth, HIV/AIDS, policy advocacy, sexual violence, other harmful practices and working with men. Resources include articles, campaign materials, evaluations, research, guidelines and protocols, training materials, program tools and reports.

ONLINE MEMBER REGISTRATION: Individuals or organizations can fill a form and join the network creating their own webpage profiles.

MEMBER PAGES: Existing members can log in and create a unique page with their most relevant information, experiences and contacts. Whether or not you have an existing website, this page is yours to create, change and expand as you wish.

A DISCUSSION FORUM: Members will be able to hold discussions on topical issues of their choice across various geographical regions, and comment on issues on the agenda within the region.

EVENTS CALENDAR: With this feature members can publicize their upcoming events and activities directly onto the website, sharing your events with the rest of the world.

FLICKR PHOTO PROXY: Share your images! Members will be able to load their photo albums of events and any other photos depicting the benefits of non-violence for the whole world to see.

MONTHLY E-BULLETIN: This feature will enable anyone interested to sign up for our monthly electronic news updates.

We are very excited to launch the new website on the 25th November which is the International Day Against Violence against Women. Visit the website and stay informed about the most current research, evaluations, program approaches, advocacy initiatives, community mobilization efforts, legal reform initiatives and communication materials.

You can also use the website to share your experiences with individuals and organizations far beyond your geographical borders and build solidarity for GBV prevention in the region. So on 25th November 2008, at the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism, make it a point to log on to www.preventgbvafrica.org.

NEW GBV PREVENTION NETWORK WEBSITE!

Recent Additions to www.preventgbvafrica.org

- Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW): The status of women and girls in Kenya.
- Gender Based Violence Prevention Network and ACORD: Unpacking Compensation and Protection for Survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence: A Regional Consultation Report.

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 aims to provide member organizations with relevant information about and access to resources on violence prevention; 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 in the regions. The network is currently coordinated by Raising Voices and supported by HIVOS.

The Gender-based Violence Prevention Network
Plot 16 Tufnell Dr., Kamwokya, P.O. Box 6770, Kampala, Uganda
Phone: (+256) 414 531186 Fax: (+256) 414 531249
Email: info@preventgbvafrica.org
www.preventgbvafrica.org