

Raising Voices

Kampala, Uganda

Founded in 1999, Raising Voices works to prevent violence against women and children through programmes that emphasize primary prevention strategies. Through the regional office in Kampala, Raising Voices works in the Horn, East and Southern Africa to influence the nature of GBV prevention and strengthen capacity of organizations to implement creative and sustainable responses to GBV. Programmes include the provision of technical support, development of programmatic tools and advocacy for community-based violence prevention efforts.

Guiding Principles

Raising Voices aims to play a catalytic role in generating momentum within the region for longer-term programmes that facilitate individual and social change in communities. The work is based on the following guiding principles.

1. Prevention

In order to affect long-term, sustainable change, organizations need to adopt a proactive rather than a reactive stance. A primary prevention approach assumes it is not enough to provide services to women experiencing violence or to promote an end to violence without challenging communities to examine the assumptions that perpetuate it. Primary prevention involves addressing the root causes of violence against women by introducing a gender-based analysis of why domestic violence occurs. This means recognizing women's low status, the imbalance of power, and rigid gender roles as the root causes of domestic violence. Prevention work involves challenging the widely held belief that women are less valuable as human beings and therefore not worthy of possessing the same inherent rights and dignity as men. Efforts must expose this fundamental injustice and proactively challenge these assumptions.

2. Holistic

Preventing domestic violence requires commitment and engagement of the whole community. Ad hoc efforts that engage isolated groups or implement sporadic activities have limited impact. Efforts to prevent domestic violence need to be relevant and recognize the multifaceted and interconnected relationships of community members and institutions. This means it is important for organizations to acknowledge the complex history, culture, and relationships that shape a community and individual's lives within it. Efforts must creatively engage a cross section of community members, not just women or one sector (i.e. police or health care providers, etc.) in order to generate sufficient momentum for change. People live in community with others; thus, the whole community needs to be engaged for community wide change to occur.

3. A Process of Social Change

Changing community norms is a process, not a single event. Projects based on an understanding of how individuals naturally go through a process of change can be more effective than haphazard messages thrust into the community. Thus, efforts to try to influence social change must be approached systematically. Organizations that attempt this work can become skilled facilitators of individual and collective change by working with, guiding, facilitating, and supporting the community along a journey of change.

4. Repeated Exposure to Ideas

Community members need to be engaged with regular and mutually reinforcing messages from a variety of sources over a sustained period of time. This contributes to changing the climate in the community and building momentum for change. For example, in one week a man may hear a sermon about family unity in church, see a mural questioning domestic violence on his walk to work, hear a radio programme about human rights, and be invited by a neighbour to join a men's group to discuss parenting skills. Repeated exposure to ideas from a variety of sources can significantly influence perception and reinforce practice.

5. Human Rights Framework

A rights-based approach to preventing domestic violence is empowering to women and the community. It uses the broader framework of human rights to create a legitimate channel for discussing women's needs and priorities and holds the community accountable for treating women as valuable and equal human beings. It challenges community members to examine and assess their value system and empowers them to make meaningful and sustainable change. Without this foundation, projects tend to appeal to the goodwill or benevolence of others to keep women safe.

6. Community Ownership

Effective projects aimed at changing harmful beliefs and practices in a community must engage and be led by members of that community. Organizations can play an important facilitative and supportive role, yet the change must occur in the hearts and minds of the community members themselves. Organizations can work closely with individuals, groups, and institutions to strengthen their capacity to be agents of change in their community. In this way, their activism will live long after specific projects end.

GBV Prevention Programme Tool

After extensive field testing, Raising Voices published *Mobilising Communities to Prevent Domestic Violence: A Resource Guide for Organisations in East and Southern Africa* (Michau and Naker 2003). The *Resource Guide* is a programme tool created to assist organizations in designing and implementing a participatory community-based GBV prevention project. It describes a conceptual framework and provides extensive strategy and activity suggestions for NGOs interested in working systematically to affect social change within their communities.

Facilitating Individual and Social Change

Preventing domestic violence in homes and communities requires individuals to identify the problem of domestic violence, consider its importance, evaluate their own behaviour, and then begin making changes in their lives. Behaviour is a result of individual experiences, attitudes, and beliefs, and thus it is deeply linked to the prevailing belief system in the community. The attitudes and actions of neighbors, friends, co-workers, religious leaders, police, health care providers, etc. greatly influence an individual's behaviour choices and collectively create the climate in the community.

Although each individual is unique and will come to the issue of domestic violence differently, the process of how individuals change often follows a similar pattern. The process of change described in the *Resource Guide* is based on the Stages of Change Theory developed by psychologists in 1982 and further refined in 1992 (Prochaska et al. 1992). While there are many different theories of how people change, we have found this one to be intuitive, simple, and generally cross-cultural. The Stages of Change Theory provides a way of understanding the process of how individuals can change their behaviour.

Stage 1 Pre-contemplation: an individual is unaware of the issue/problem and its consequences for her/his life.

Stage 2 Contemplation: an individual begins to wonder if the issue/problem relates to her/his life.

Stage 3 Preparation for Action: an individual gets more information and develops an intention to act.

Stage 4 Action: an individual begins to try new and different ways of thinking and behaving.

Stage 5 Maintenance: an individual recognizes the benefits of the behaviour change and maintains it.

Process of Social Change

The *Resource Guide* adapts this theory of individual behaviour change and scales it up to the community level. It proposes that a community also goes through a process of change before any given value system is adopted, and suggests that projects which recognize this process and operate in harmony with it are more likely to facilitate enduring change.

The process described in the *Resource Guide* suggests five phases for affecting social change. These five phases are based on the stages of individual behaviour change as described above, yet the phases are amplified to work at a broader community level. Recognizing what individuals and communities typically experience when changing behaviour, the *Resource Guide* suggests appropriate activities and materials to facilitate each stage of that process. The phases described below can provide structure and general guidelines for your organization when designing and implementing a project to prevent domestic violence.

Phase 1 Community Assessment: a time to gather information on attitudes and beliefs about domestic violence and to start building relationships with community members. This phase corresponds to *pre-contemplation* in individual behaviour change.

Phase 2 Raising Awareness: a time to increase awareness about domestic violence within the general community and various professional sectors (e.g., social and health services, law enforcement, local government, religious communities, etc.). Awareness can be raised on various aspects of domestic violence including why it happens and its negative consequences for women, men, families, and the community. This phase corresponds to *contemplation* in individual behaviour change.

Phase 3 Building Networks: a time for encouraging and supporting general community members and various professional sectors to begin considering action and changes that uphold women's right to safety. Community members can come together to strengthen individual and group efforts to prevent domestic violence. This phase corresponds to *preparation for action* in individual behaviour change.

Phase 4 Integrating Action: a time to make actions against domestic violence part of everyday life and institutions' policies and practices. This phase corresponds to *action* in individual behaviour change.

Phase 5 Consolidating Efforts: a time to strengthen actions and activities for the prevention of domestic violence to ensure their sustainability, continued growth, and progress. This phase corresponds to *maintenance* in individual behaviour change.

Strategies and Activities

Each phase of the Project suggests five main strategies for organizing and conducting activities. These strategies were designed to help organizations reach a wide variety of people. Each strategy

engages different groups in the community and thus builds momentum, increases community ownership, and improves the sustainability of positive change. Groups within your community include religious leaders, health care providers, general community members, shopkeepers, women's groups, other NGOs, governmental and community leaders, police officers, local court officials, etc.

For each strategy there are a variety of activity ideas listed and described within the *Resource Guide*. The activities are diverse and participatory and are designed to maximise the impact of the project and correspond to the phases of community social change. All activities are suggestions and will require adaptation and modification depending on the capacity of your organization and the context of the community. The activities are designed to help groups reach a critical mass of individuals and groups within the community to build momentum for change.

While all the activities in the Guide are meant to be adapted and contextualised, ideally, the sequence of the five phases of community social change, use of diverse strategies, and outreach to various groups would be maintained. These are the practical expression of the six guiding principles upon which community mobilisation to prevent domestic violence is based.



The approach is being used by NGOs throughout the region and was field-tested at the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention and Kivulini Women's Rights Organization.