



SYNTHESIS REVIEW SERIES: PAPER #1

LEARNING FROM PRACTICE:

# COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION FOR PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Lessons from civil society organisations funded by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women on prevention



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Cover Photo Description and Credit: Women participating in the project from Madre in Nicaragua working to end violence against indigenous women. Photo: Madre



## About the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) is the only global grant-making mechanism dedicated to eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls. Managed by UN Women on behalf of the United Nations system since its establishment in 1996 by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/166, the UN Trust Fund has awarded almost \$183 million to 572 initiatives in 140 countries and territories. In 2020, the UN Trust Fund managed a grants portfolio of 150 projects aimed at preventing and addressing violence against women and girls in 71 countries and territories across five regions, with grants totalling \$72.8 million. Grant recipients are primarily civil society organizations (CSOs). Since 2018 (cycle 20), the UN Trust Fund has been funding only CSO projects. The majority (58 per cent) of these CSOs are women's rights organizations.

## About the learning from practice series on prevention

In this series the UN Trust Fund has prioritised engagement with what has - to date - been a fairly neglected area within research on prevention of violence against women and girls, practice based insights from civil society organisations.

In 2020 it commissioned a synthesis of this knowledge emerging from 89 UN Trust Fund civil society organisation grants, implemented or closed during the period covered by its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. Findings were captured from two types of reports of these grantees' final progress reports (written by grantees) and final evaluation reports (written by external evaluators commissioned by grantees). The first step in the series was a synthesis review and identification of common approaches or thematic areas in prevention across the 89 projects, to determine the focus of knowledge to be extracted (Le Roux and Palm, 2020). Ten key thematic areas or "Pathways towards Prevention" (Box 1) were identified through an inductive process i.e. a desk review of reports and a series of consultations with grantees/practitioners

in English, French and Spanish. The UN Trust Fund aims to analyse and co-create knowledge under each pathway. Each pathway has been analysed and the corresponding synthesis co-created by a researcher/s and ten grantees per pathway whose work generated significant practice-based insights on the particular theme and who could offer contextual and embedded best practices, challenges and useful tools on the topic that emerged from iterative learning from practice.

### BOX 1: PATHWAYS TO PREVENTION IDENTIFIED

1. Community Mobilization
2. Engaging faith based and traditional actors
3. Exploring intersectional approaches
4. Mobilizing Women
5. Training for behaviour change
6. Adolescent-focused approaches
7. Resistance and backlash
8. Adaptive programming
9. Working together for a survivor-centered, multisectoral response
10. 10. Working together for law and policy implementation and reform

The intended audience for this brief is threefold: (i) practitioners (ii) donors and grant makers and (iii) researchers, all working in the area of EVAWG. The learning from practice series is intended to elevate practice-based insights from CSOs as highly valuable and important to planning, designing and funding interventions and research in EVAWG. Each longer synthesis review will be accompanied by a shorter, summary brief available on the UN Trust Fund website.

## Acknowledgements

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Community mobilization is recognized as a critical approach to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG). However, there is a need for more documentation of the processes of change and factors that facilitate effective community mobilization in distinct contexts. In particular, there has been limited retrospective analysis of how the changing dynamics of social contexts influence the implementation of community mobilization programmes, and how programmes adapt in response. This synthesis review emphasizes the voices and practice-based knowledge (PBK) of practitioners from 10 UN Trust Fund projects that implemented community mobilization to prevent VAWG. It makes an important contribution to the field by highlighting the processes and implementation of diverse forms of community mobilization to prevent VAWG across different social contexts.

## Methodology

PBK from annual reports and external evaluations of the 10 projects was analysed thematically. This inductive analysis was complemented by a brief literature review and two focus group discussions with representatives from the 10 projects. Key themes emerging from practice were organized according to a framework for community mobilization to prevent VAWG, highlighting how different social dimensions influence implementation of mobilization programmes. The findings are structured around these aspects, showing how the projects worked across different contextual levels:

- symbolic context, which includes a project's ability to work with and address social norms, cultural meanings and understandings associated with VAWG and prevention activities
- material context, which includes a project's ability to secure resource-based agency (resources needed to support women to live a life free from

violence, funding for mobilization interventions, compensation for prevention activities) and experience-based agency (opportunities for participants to put learned skills and knowledge into practice)

- relational context, which includes a project's ability to bond social capital (strong within-community support for project goals) and bridge social capital (supportive relationships between communities and individuals and agencies with the political or economic power to assist them in achieving their goals)
- institutional context, which includes a project's ability to hold institutional structures or frameworks accountable to prevent and respond to VAWG and promote gender equality

A final section details how the community mobilization projects adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in rapid shifts in the contexts in which the projects were operating.

## Conclusion and recommendations

Analysing PBK using this framework sheds light on the enormous task of community mobilization, which calls for comprehensive work across multiple levels of particular social contexts. The framework may help practitioners determine how community mobilization interventions may be affected by different aspects of the social environment and develop comprehensive strategies that work at different dimensions of specific contexts. PBK also provides important insights into how and why community mobilization programmes work to prevent VAWG.

Thirteen recommendations are provided for practitioners, donors and the ending VAWG research community. For practitioners, the recommendations are as follows: (1) know your community to know your response, (2) ensure that community volunteers and activists are not overburdened but are carefully

selected, trained and supported, (3) strive for reflexivity and accountability on behalf of organizations, (4) ensure sufficient time and intensity of interventions for community mobilization to have an impact, (5) work at the nexus of violence prevention and response, (6) foster adaptive programming and (7) include efforts to support an enabling environment. For donors, the recommendations are as follows: (1) support adaptive programming and flexible budgeting, (2) foster a culture of learning to encourage reflection on what works and what does not work and (3) fund and support women's rights organizations and civil society organizations to do community mobilization work. For the wider ending VAWG research community, the recommendations are as follows: (1) acknowledge how community mobilization plays out differently in different contexts, (2) promote the value of PBK and (3) areas that need more research.



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# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CBO</b>	community-based organization
<b>CCPC</b>	community child protection committee
<b>COVID-19</b>	coronavirus disease 2019
<b>CSO</b>	civil society organization
<b>FGD</b>	focus group discussion
<b>FGMC</b>	female genital mutilation or cutting
<b>GBV</b>	gender-based violence
<b>IIRR</b>	International Institute of Rural Reconstruction
<b>IPV</b>	intimate partner violence
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>PBK</b>	practice-based knowledge
<b>SBVAG</b>	sexual-based violence against girls
<b>SGBV</b>	sexual and gender-based violence
<b>SOAR</b>	Sexual Offences Awareness & Victims Rehabilitation Initiative
<b>UN Trust Fund</b>	United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women
<b>VAWG</b>	violence against women and girls
<b>WRO</b>	women's rights organization

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Community mobilization to prevent VAWG

**Community mobilization is recognized as a promising programme strategy to transform harmful attitudes, beliefs and norms underlying violence against women and girls (VAWG) and gender inequality (UN Women and WHO, 2020).** Experiences of implementing violence prevention programmes repeatedly show how the social environment can hinder the likelihood and sustainability of behaviour change. Community mobilization programmes are often regarded as state-of-the-art strategies for creating more enabling environments. These interventions typically engage volunteer “community activists” who live or work in communities and are trained and supported to engage communities in informal conversations and awareness-raising about violence (Maton, 2008). Community mobilization approaches also commonly involve working with key opinion leaders such as religious and traditional leaders, the police, and health and social services. Community mobilization can also include efforts to hold government and institutions accountable, with communities mobilizing to pressure change in or ensure responsiveness to policies and laws (Fox, 2015). Civil society organizations (CSOs) and women’s rights organizations (WROs) have a particular role to play in community mobilization efforts, with promising strategies revolving around grassroots campaigning, drawing on techniques such as community conversations, creative media and digital technology (DFID, 2012).

**The evidence on the effectiveness of community mobilization in reducing VAWG is mixed and there is limited understanding of how context impacts implementation.** Some randomized controlled trials have shown that community mobilization is effective in reducing VAWG (Abramsky et al., 2014; Kerr-Wilson et al., 2020); however, other evaluations have found no impact (Pettifor et al., 2018; Hatcher et al., 2019;

Chatterji et al., 2020), suggesting that implementation and context are crucial. Constructive and appropriate mobilization tactics and strategies vary widely from one setting to another (Campbell and Cornish, 2012). Indeed, “without a sophisticated understanding of the impact of social context on community interventions, there is a risk that the theoretically well-founded interest in community mobilization, among policymakers and programme implementers, will yield no fruits” (Campbell and Cornish, 2010, p. 1576). More analysis and documentation of the processes of change and the social and contextual factors that facilitate effective and sustainable community mobilization for VAWG prevention in different settings are therefore needed to adequately support communities and programming (Mannell and Dadswell, 2017).

**This synthesis review aims to fill this gap by highlighting the processes and implementation of diverse forms of community mobilization to prevent VAWG across different settings.** The findings are structured according to Campbell and Cornish’s (2010) conceptual framework for community mobilization, which argues that the success or failure of an intervention depends on how it interacts with *symbolic, material and relational dimensions* of the social environment (Table 1). Mannell and Dadswell (2017) expanded this framework to include institutional dimensions of the social environment, which recognizes that community mobilization should ideally allow communities to challenge broader social and institutional structures that can undermine collective efforts to prevent VAWG. Focusing on different aspects of the social environment is important given the recent paradigm shift taking place in VAWG scholarship, from an emphasis on women’s rights and structural inequalities to public health trials that increasingly emphasize individualistic programming and limit awareness of how the wider environment affects VAWG prevention programming. In this climate, social context is often regarded as a “nuisance variable” or operationalized in terms of discrete, statistical variables

that mask its complex impacts on opportunities for health (Khanna and Campbell, 2021). Applying this conceptual framework critically centres the experiences of context and explores the intersections between community mobilization programmes and different

environmental aspects in particular settings. Applying the framework to the findings retrospectively allows contextual examples and practitioner voices to add insights to the evidence base, further informing theory.

**TABLE 1.**  
**Contextual factors needed to support effective community mobilization for the prevention of intimate partner violence**

Definitions	Symbolic context	Material context	Relational context	Institutional context
	Social norms and cultural meaning associated with VAW/G and VAW/G prevention activities	-Economic resources to live healthy lives free from violence (i.e access to money, food, paid work) -Economic resources for community mobilisation interventions (i.e. compensation for tasks or responsibilities related to VAWG prevention)	Relationships between community members (bonding capital) and between communities and powerful allies (bridging capital)	Legal structures that support gender equality and gender relations that have been institutionalized in government policy, law, education, health services, etc.

Source: Adapted from Mannell and Dadswell (2017).

**This synthesis review aims to identify best practices, challenges and lessons learned from 10 United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) projects either that focused on community mobilization or in which community mobilization was a subcomponent of their wider programming.** A critical aspect of the current context is the COVID-19 pandemic and the “shadow pandemic” of VAWG (UN Women, 2020); the synthesis review also assesses how the community mobilization interventions were affected by and adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. It draws on practice-based knowledge (PBK) across the projects, which centres the concrete experiences of practitioners within specific contexts (Faris and Jayaserkara, 2019). This review is also guided by a comparative case study approach, which justifies the importance of examining processes of sensemaking, shared purposes or identities as they develop over time, in distinct settings,

regarding a similar phenomenon (Bartlett and Vavrus, 2017). This approach cautions against essentializing notions of culture or nationality and emphasizes the importance of comparisons across communities and states, which prioritizes a more nuanced consideration of context. Using monitoring and evaluation reports from the 10 projects, an inductive approach was used to document practitioners’ experiences of using community mobilization to prevent VAWG. This was complemented by a brief literature review and two focus group discussions (FGDs) with project representatives. Guiding questions for the FGDs were developed based on the findings of the literature review. Appendix B provides further details on the methodological approach and appendix C provides the FGD guides. Appendices are available on the UN Trust Fund website.

## 1.2 Case study selection

**At the heart of this synthesis review are practitioner insights from 10 CSOs and WROs working on VAWG prevention.** A meta-analysis of 30 UN Trust Fund projects carried out between 2015 and 2019 found that 90 per cent employed community mobilization as a strategy, demonstrating the popularity of this approach (UN Trust Fund, 2020). The 10 projects from the 2015–2020 strategic plan cycle included in this synthesis review were selected because their annual project and final evaluation reports contained insights into mobilizing communities for VAWG prevention. The projects have a broad scope, representing the breadth of work in the field of community mobilization, which allows for rich reflections on lessons learned across diverse contexts and programmes. More details on the 10 projects are provided in appendix A.

**The projects took place in a range of settings**, from marketplaces to schools and broader communities, with the target “communities” therefore conceptualized in different ways and a diversity of “**scale**” of mobilization being represented. For example, Equality for Growth aimed to support female traders across markets in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to have greater freedom from sexual, verbal, physical and political violence, and better protection and support in the event of violence; therefore, the urban informal marketplace and its diverse actors were treated as the project community. Paralegals and legal community supporters were recruited to raise awareness about VAWG and gender rights and implement a market legal aid model across several markets. In Wumba and Dutse, Nigeria, the Sexual Offences Awareness & Victims Rehabilitation Initiative (SOAR) mobilized rural communities and schools to prevent sexual-based violence against girls (SBVAG). A community child protection committee (CCPC) was established in each community comprising adult men and women, youth and key stakeholders, including local and religious leaders. The CCPC raised awareness of SBVAG and acted as a safe place for community members to discuss SBVAG and report abuse.

**The projects aimed to prevent and respond to different types of VAWG, depending on the communities involved.** For instance, the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in Kenya sought to reduce sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against girls, including early forced marriage, female genital mutilation or cutting (FGMC), beading<sup>1</sup> for sexual exploitation and early forced marriages. Breakthrough Trust in India focused on preventing sexual harassment and other forms of sexual and physical violence, including domestic violence, across 15 districts in six states and in the city of Delhi, with a focus on the safety and security of women in public spaces.

**A diversity of mobilization strategies was employed to engage community members**, including social media, film, songs, brochures, radio, community conversations and cultural events. In Papua New Guinea, Voice for Change employed a rapid surveying technique in which images of different forms of violence against women and girls were used as a basis for discussions with community members. Raising Voices supported organizations across several countries to use the SASA! model, which consists of four phases of community mobilization – Start, Awareness, Support and Action – that focus on changing power imbalances between men and women through community-based activities. Participatory processes were often employed to engage community members and disseminate messages. In Nicaragua, MADRE, in partnership with Wangki Tangni, mobilized communities to create community action plans using the participatory Bliss tool, whereby communities collectively identify key issues and priority actions for addressing VAWG.

**Many projects recruited men and women from intervention communities to work as community activists.** For instance, the Family Support Center in Solomon Islands supported and trained men and women who were nominated to be volunteers based on criteria such as their gender and social standing.

<sup>1</sup> Beading is a cultural practice whereby young Moran men (warrior men) provide girls with expensive beads that they wear around their necks as a sign that they are engaged for sex and not marriage.

The volunteers hosted community discussions to raise awareness of VAWG, laws against this and available services. A few projects equipped girls to be peer trainers or to mobilize youth in high schools. For instance, in Serbia, the Center for Girls created safe spaces where girls could share experiences of gender-based violence (GBV) and examine underlying patterns of norms, behaviours and attitudes. Some of the girls were trained to be peer educators and facilitated workshops and forum theatres across schools, followed by participatory discussions with boys and girls.

**The majority of the projects had a strong response component** and worked with informal and formal service providers, including national and provincial governments, education, health and justice sectors, and religious and traditional leaders. For instance, the

international foundation Kvinna till Kvinna aimed to improve the capacities and skills of two local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in refugee camps in Lebanon (Kafa (Enough) Violence & Exploitation and Association Najdeh) to enable them to provide consistent support to VAWG survivors.

The projects represent a diversity of **types of organizations**, from WROs to non-profit organizations, youth organizations and children's rights organizations. Some projects relied on partnerships between international organizations and local partners: MADRE, a network supporting grassroots women's groups, partnered with the indigenous women's organization Wangki Tangni, and Kvinna till Kvinna partnered with local NGOs Kafa and Association Najdeh.

**FIGURE 1:**

### The ten UN Trust Fund projects included in this synthesis review



## **2. KEY THEMATIC LESSONS EMERGING FROM PRACTICE**

This section provides an overview of each contextual dimension from the framework for community mobilization (Campbell and Cornish, 2010; Mannell and Dadswell, 2017) and relevant key literature; this is then complemented with PBK. This is followed by insights into

how the community mobilization programmes adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and concluding remarks, including a set of recommendations for practitioners, donors and the ending VAWG research field.

### **2.1 Symbolic Context: How do CSOs shift social norms and understandings of VAWG prevention?**

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The symbolic context refers to the cultural world: the meanings, ideologies and opinions in particular social settings, through which people understand themselves, others and activities they engage in (Campbell and Cornish, 2012). The symbolic context includes social norms, cultural meanings and understanding associated with VAWG and prevention activities, including how community members feel they should respond to VAWG and perceived pathways for its prevention (Mannell and Dadswell, 2017). Community mobilization is recognized as an important strategy to challenge social norms that condone VAWG or relegate it to the private sphere (Abramsky et al., 2012). According to social norms theory, individuals who display new behaviours can influence others' expectations of normative behaviours or beliefs, including those who are not part of an intervention. When a critical mass of people change their beliefs and behaviours, social norms can change, which can reinforce attitude and behaviour changes of individuals and families. Evaluations of community mobilization programmes to prevent VAWG and shift related norms have identified the need for programmes of sufficient length and intensity, and contextually appropriate activities (Jewkes et al., 2019; Kerr-Wilson et al., 2020).

The symbolic context focuses on who takes responsibility for and ownership of VAWG prevention, which can shape the longer-term success or failure of projects, especially

where strong gender stereotypes exist. Evaluations of community mobilization programmes have identified the importance of engaging staff and community-level activists who embrace intervention principles and skills for their own transformation and are supported throughout their work to do so (Gevers et al., 2018; Jewkes et al., 2019). The symbolic context also includes how different groups within a society are valued. For instance, within a patriarchal society, ideologies about gender can limit how women and men understand the potential of women to make significant decisions or take leadership roles (Campbell and Cornish, 2012). This is important as gender inequalities are a root cause of men's violence against women (Fleming et al., 2015). Thus, promoting *recognition* of an individual's or group's worth, dignity and legal rights can be critical for achieving change at the symbolic level.

**Understanding the symbolic context of particular communities is important for tailoring mobilization efforts to specific contexts.** Community mobilization programmes that consist of unidirectional or top-down educational components rather than participatory, grounded methodologies do not allow for critical engagement (Minckas et al., 2020). Furthermore, in many settings, violence is normalized and prescriptive messages can result in defensiveness, confusion and overall rejection of mobilization efforts (Michau, 2007; Minckas et al., 2020).

**Insights from the 10 projects reinforce the importance of understanding and working within particular symbolic contexts.** Many projects employed strategies to understand the causes, types and perceptions of violence in their settings to inform contextually appropriate activities and adaptations. For example, in India, Breakthrough Trust conducted online research with young people to assess their perceptions of sexual harassment online and in public spaces, to inform the development of youth e-platforms. In Kenya, baseline research by the IIRR found that the main proponents of anti-FGMC differ from one community to another and that anti-FGM messaging cannot take a uniform approach across project sites. The Family Support Center in Solomon Islands related how its awareness campaigns would have been more culturally relevant and appropriate if they had been based on formative research into the causes and types of violence and services available. The experience of adapting SASA! to multiple countries showed the challenges of tailoring a mobilization programme to different contexts, such as translating material into local languages so that it is easily understood and reflects the nuances of the SASA! concepts. Raising Voices and partners identified the importance of using a step-by-step process to test material and integrate community feedback, and co-creating adaptations with community members.

**Many projects identified the importance of mobilization programmes being owned and led by community members, enabling them to have resonance and be acceptable within specific settings.** The majority of projects recruited, trained and supported community members to carry out community mobilization activities. One FGD participant reflected on the value of a community-led approach:

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*It allows community members themselves who are known and trusted, facilitating these deep conversations, in a way that has texture and tone and language from the community they are living in (FGD, 22 January 2021).*

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Another participant highlighted the importance of tailoring community mobilization messages to particular contexts:

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*Having a very contextual analysis of where you want to take which message. You might know the message but in a different context it has a different theme. The same message might work in two geographies in different fashions. You need to be sure in which communities those messages work in (FGD, 15 February 2021).*

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**Another best practice identified was the importance of finding appropriate community entry points to raise awareness of VAWG.** For example, the Family Support Center in Solomon Islands found that men were initially reluctant to discuss women's rights but were more open when the conversation focused on women's contributions to providing food and children's education. The SASA! approach had resonance across adapted settings for using simple but provocative communication materials, encouraging questioning rather than messaging, and focusing on the benefits of change. However, one FGD participant reflected on challenges faced when using the language of gender-equitable household roles to engage communities:

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*Talking about sharing tasks 50/50 between husbands and wives caused a lot of backlash. This was not seen as acceptable in many different ways. We learned that starting with gender roles was a challenging place to start the conversation that would often trigger backlash and distancing from the programme. So instead, we shifted to a focus on relationship values, asking "what do you want in a good relationship with your partner?" Everyone wants to feel respected, valued, cared for. This language around relationship values resonated more and it was easier to get traction, compared to discussions about household roles. Household roles could be brought in later, but as an entry point it was hard (FGD, 22 January 2021).*

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In India, Breakthrough Trust carefully developed knowledge products that do not blame perpetrators of violence but rather enable them to understand how patriarchy operates and disadvantages men and women. It used principles of empathy to align with men and mitigate any backlash.

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**Practitioners across a number of projects identified how community mobilization can encourage community members to critically reflect on harmful social norms underlying violence and develop alternative, healthier norms.**

In Papua New Guinea, Voice for Change volunteers used a survey including images of common types of violence against women and girls as a prompt for community members to identify and reflect on the causes and consequences of violence and share their own experiences. Many men and women found this methodology to be transformative, enabling them to critically reflect on their norms, practices and values in a safe space and learn from and support each other. In India, Breakthrough Trust used the assumption that norms are shifted by addressing violence with multiple stakeholders to foster an environment where women and girls could speak up without fear of backlash. Its approach required open dialogue to construct alternative narratives rather than “confrontation-based activism” or sermonizing. As one FGD participant explained:

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*Community mobilization transforms the narratives in communities where we work. Norms change is an important part of what we are looking to achieve and, to create norm change, you need to have an alternative narrative, which would give people something else to look forward to. What the other world will look like (FGD, 22 January 2021).*

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The IIRR in Kenya found that, to construct alternative narratives, it was helpful for champions to introduce rites of passage other than FGMC to girls. For instance, it worked closely with circumcisers who had abandoned the practice, to engage with and encourage other circumcisers to also do so.

**Insights from the 10 projects emphasize that change at the symbolic level takes time and frequent and intensive engagement.** For example, in recognition of the process of longer-term change required to shift harmful social norms, the SASA! model moves from awareness-raising to action. An FGD participant explained the importance of ongoing and frequent mobilization efforts to challenge harmful norms:

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We are talking about norms related to VAWG that have been around for a long time and discussions can provoke backlash if seen as coming in from outside the community. Intensive dialogue facilitated by community activists themselves has been an essential part of the programme, engaging where they are in their everyday lives, whether they are going to the store, bus stop, salon (FGD, 22 January 2021).

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Another FGD participant also discussed the need for frequent and intensive community mobilization:

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*If you do it once a year, it's not effective honestly! Each time you organize something in a community, you want to do something on an ongoing basis. Every quarter, once a quarter, something like that. That frequency challenge is something we realized, after a year of work. Once or twice a year is not working. It has to be more intensive (FGD, 22 January 2021).*

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**Practitioners identified that, depending on the project scope and budget, a targeted approach should be applied to ensure sufficient relevance or intensity.** For instance, the Center for Girls in Serbia found that working with a smaller number of participants but at a higher intensity was more effective and sustainable. Equality for Growth in Tanzania focused on the most pertinent issues facing female market traders, which was theorized to be a major reason why the project results were so relevant to their needs. An FGD participant commented on the importance of organizations having a physical presence in communities for programming to be sufficiently intensive:

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*I think the type of organization makes a difference, depending on their physical presence in the community in terms of locally identified and trained resource persons, volunteers and community influencers. The types that just go in for a one-off training and then leave cannot use community mobilization effectively (FGD, written response).*

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Another FGD participant similarly emphasized how local organizations are particularly well placed to ensure relevant programming, which can influence the symbolic context:

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*We strongly believe that local, grassroots, trusted organizations understand the context, issues and can better address root causes of violence that the community faces. In our partnership with local groups, we have seen the power of locals organizing with support for resources, capacity building and co-developing a programme that can change realities in the community (FGD, written response).*

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**Many of the projects' violence prevention programmes aimed to promote the recognition and empowerment of women and girls.** For example, SOAR's campaigns and training programmes in Nigeria were designed to increase knowledge and change attitudes and behaviours around how girls see and value themselves and how they are valued and treated by others at individual, family, school and community levels. Female mentors empowered girls to protect themselves and speak out in the event of sexual abuse. In Nicaragua, art, theatre, music, dance and other key aspects of indigenous culture were used to promote the respectful and positive treatment of women and girls, which provided opportunities for women to participate in previously male-dominated activities (such as playing the guitar or taking part in community dance and theatre performances). MADRE and Wangki Tangni used an intersectional approach to VAWG prevention, inclusive of the self-determination of indigenous women and girls over their bodies and in relation to their lands and territories. For SASA!, framing the issue of violence against women within the concept of power imbalances helped community members identify violence as the community's problem rather

than an individual problem, and recognize their own power and how to use it positively to prevent VAWG.

**Some practitioners identified the importance of organizations, key stakeholders and activists aligning with projects' values and beliefs and ensuring space for introspection and personal transformation before carrying out mobilization work.** For instance, in Solomon Islands, some Family Support Center staff and volunteers did not identify with a "zero tolerance" attitude towards violence, and the project noted the importance of assessing the capacity and commitment of volunteers more thoroughly in advance of their engagement. An FGD participant discussed the importance of assessing the commitment of local leaders who act as community activists not to use violence in their personal lives:

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*We would love to involve local leaders so that they are the ones who also talk about the issue, but we have to be varied as to what their background is, and background checks become important because if they themselves have been accused of a crime against women, they cannot be seen as being involved in a process like this (FGD, 22 January 2021).*

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The adaptation of SASA! to several contexts by Raising Voices highlighted the importance of training programmes to support personal changes among staff and to enable them to have space to re-examine their values and beliefs about power and violence against women. The "Start" aspect of SASA! emphasizes self-reflection by staff and activists and the importance of "starting from within", which was a powerful focus across several projects.

#### **KEY TAKE-AWAYS**

- Many practitioners shared the importance of “knowing your community to know your response”, whereby mobilization programmes are targeted at particular communities to be culturally relevant, appropriate and tailored to priorities and needs.
- Some projects identified that finding appropriate community entry points, including appropriate language and values, was critical to gain trust and avoid a backlash against or distancing from VAWG prevention programmes.
- Practitioners related how changing attitudes, beliefs and norms around VAW takes time and intensive engagement; it is important to reflect on the benefits of non-violence rather than simply the consequences, identify alternative narratives to undo harmful norms and values, and promote critical reflection and safe spaces for discussion.
- For many projects, meaningful symbolic change requires promoting recognition, with an emphasis on empowering women and girls, given how strongly gender inequalities underlie violence.
- Practitioners identified the importance of supporting organizations and activists “walking the walk” in terms of their own commitment to community mobilization programme values and messages, and ensuring the appropriate selection of champions and activists.

## **2.2 Material Context: How do CSOs leverage resources and experiences for VAW/G prevention?**

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The material context considers both resource-based and experienced-based aspects of agency. Resource-based agency refers to the extent to which individuals have access to resources needed to live healthy lives free from violence, including money, food and paid work, which can also bolster recognition and esteem (Mannell and Dadswell, 2017). Experienced-based agency refers to concrete opportunities for project beneficiaries to put their skills or agency into practice (Campbell and Cornish, 2012). Small-scale successes can provide a material and experiential basis for more ambitious future action. For instance, in settings where women lack opportunities to exercise agency, projects may provide these by facilitating their successful engagement in project activities (Campbell and Cornish, 2012). This can produce benefits not only for these women but also for other women in the community through social norm change (Gram et al., 2021).

Assessing the material context helps interrogate whether an intervention is able to mitigate the economic barriers to VAWG prevention, such as women’s financial dependence on their husbands, or provide financial support to women experiencing violence (Mannell and Dadswell, 2017). The material context includes funding for community

mobilization interventions and compensation for community tasks or responsibilities related to VAWG prevention. This encompasses the potential burden on activists of voluntary work and constraints on the sustainability of community activities, such as time and transport costs (Mannell and Dadswell, 2017). Lack of institutional support for staff and volunteers (Hatcher et al., 2019) and economic pressures on activists can have negative impacts on mobilization interventions (Hargreaves et al., 2010); however, activists may be de-legitimized by community members if they are perceived as being paid for their work, and this may limit their sustainability or commitment. While promoting and integrating volunteerism has been found to yield promising results for activism (Gevers et al., 2018; Minckas et al., 2020), there is limited understanding of the best ways to integrate volunteerism into mobilization efforts (Michau, 2012). Economic support for activists may be needed to sustain VAWG prevention activities, especially in low-income settings (Mannell and Dadswell, 2017). Overall, various concerns and trade-offs around the compensation of activists should be considered and contextual differences taken into account.



### 2.2.1 Resource-based agency

**A few projects identified the challenges of working in deprived socio-economic settings, which can be a risk factor for VAWG and hinder the comprehensive empowerment of women and girls.** Equality for Growth in Tanzania identified a lack of financial means as one of the main reasons that women do not leave abusive relationships. Practitioners reflected that the project's success may have been improved by offering economic empowerment activities to the market traders, who had little capital and whose businesses were suffering. In Nicaragua, MADRE supported efforts to give seeds to local female farmers, which provided greater food security. This had a ripple effect of increasing women's economic independence and decision-making abilities. Practitioners reflected that the project could be further improved by including a stronger economic empowerment component to leverage indigenous women's leadership within their communities and challenge discrimination and stigma.

**A few projects noted the importance of meeting certain economic needs of community members and taking this budgeting into account**

**in programme planning.** In Papua New Guinea, the Family Support Center provided referrals and supported survivors to engage with existing services by accompanying them to register complaints at the village court or with the police or giving them money to cover transport costs. In Kenya, SOAR practitioners identified a lack of money to hire lawyers as a major barrier to survivors pursuing VAWG cases in court, but they had not planned to cover these costs through their project activities.

**Several projects identified the challenges of engaging activists as volunteers, without any financial compensation.** In Nigeria, some CCPC volunteers expected financial benefits despite SOAR staff explaining that these were voluntary positions; some individuals subsequently left the committees. An FGD participant further explained:

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*We work in communities where poverty is a real issue. You find that when they perceive an organization comes to do any form of work with them, they feel you have come out with money to give out to them. Without financial incentives, they are not interested, and we had to sustain their involvement to see things work (FGD, 22 January 2021).*

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SOAR learned that visible branding of materials and activities and the provision of incentives or refreshments should be avoided during community entry and initial engagement, to avoid communicating a message of affluence or financial gain to community members. An FGD participant identified a similar challenge when recruiting SASA! activists, especially in a refugee camp setting, where financial incentives have been established as a norm for intervention involvement:

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*Supporting community mobilisers who are from the community and leading the work because they are activists, rather than to get incentives, can be tricky. Some of the UN Trust Fund work was in a refugee setting and there are a lot of INGOs in that space, and a lot of incentives in the ways INGOs are working with the community. Trying to work without direct payment to activists is a persistent challenge (FGD, 22 January 2021).*

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Whenever possible, SASA! encourages all stakeholders to discover the “activist within” and consider it a personal mission to prevent violence, rather than a job or volunteer opportunity, and tries to engage activists and community members as equals.

**However, a few projects identified important material needs of activists.** For example, in Nicaragua, activists were regularly asked for identification, including by the police. Over 100 identification badges and lanyards were distributed by MADRE in response, to provide them with greater security, legitimacy and access. Solar lanterns were also provided for use in communities without streetlights or electricity. Activists were also provided with travel support to reach remote communities, some of which are accessible only by boat. In Solomon Islands, the Family Support Center found that volunteers’ monthly funding was insufficient to cover their transport costs (such as to conduct outreach work or respond to violence), especially in rural areas. Ensuring the longer-term financial sustainability of activists was identified as a priority across a few projects. For example, in India, many of the young activists were supported by referring them

to other CSOs for employment opportunities. The IIRR in Kenya initiated conversations with reformed female circumcisers about other livelihood options and linked them with other partners and government authorities.

## 2.2.2 Experience-based agency

**Regarding experience-based agency, many practitioners identified the importance of training and ongoing support for activists and staff to give them confidence to take part in project activities.**

For example, in Nigeria, SOAR staff trained female mentors, school counsellors and teachers, and CCPC members on the sexual abuse of children, children’s rights and protection, and raising awareness about VAWG and girls’ safety. However, the majority of school staff and CCPC members indicated that they needed further training to fulfil their project roles. In Papua New Guinea, community activists met on a quarterly basis throughout the project for training, debriefing and monitoring purposes. Similarly, an important part of the SASA! model is the monthly planning sessions, where activists meet with staff in a safe space to plan, share challenges, practise activities and review reports. Some SASA! adaptations developed a mentoring model in which effective activists mentored other activists to increase their understanding, skills and motivation. Such “small wins” can have meaningful impacts on the empowerment of activists. For instance, in Solomon Islands, community volunteers gained recognition and status because of their role and were asked to assist in safety procedures and be part of national consultations, which bolstered their confidence to articulate issues and contribute to finding solutions. This was emphasized by the following FGD participant:

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*Locally bred community mobilizers and resource persons should have their capacity built and be motivated to take up community activities by their own initiative. This may be done through recognition certificates and special mention during project events (FGD, written response).*

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**Practitioners also highlighted the importance of enhancing the experience-based agency of participants by supporting them to apply lessons**

**and skills learned.** For instance, in Tanzania, female traders involved in Equality for Growth became more assertive of their rights; some ran for leadership positions and sought legal redress if their rights were violated. For some projects, especially those that engaged youth, it was important to identify and engage “gatekeepers”, who could hinder or facilitate engagement with project activities. For example, the Center for Girls in Serbia planned to work mainly with high school girls but decided to extend the intervention to girls’ environments by engaging school staff and their parents. This helped ensure access for girls and supported changes in school environments, such as the use of project materials in classes. In Lebanon, some husbands assumed that their wives were participating in project activities to plan a revolution against them. To address these challenges, Kvinna till Kvinna, Kafa and Association Najdeh held a series of awareness sessions with men and boys on the risks and consequences of violence, and provided safe spaces for them to discuss any issues and ask questions.

#### KEY TAKE-AWAYS:

- Some projects realized the importance of including economic empowerment activities, as economic deprivation can be a risk factor for VAWG or prevent engagement with programming.
- Practitioners identified the need to find a balance between promoting volunteer activism and sustainability and ensuring that activists’ material needs are met and they are not financially burdened.
- Several projects acknowledged that training and ongoing support and mentoring of activists is needed to allow them to put their knowledge and skills into action.
- Some projects emphasized the importance of enhancing the experience-based agency of participants, which can include identifying and working with key gatekeepers; for engaged activists and participants, small wins can represent important forms of empowerment.



The Breakthrough video van working in India putting on a street theater performance.  
Photo: Breakthrough/Sunil Arav

## 2.3 Relational Context: How do CSOs build networks for VAW/G prevention?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The relational context considers the role that connections play in effective and sustainable VAWG prevention activities (Mannell and Dadswell, 2017). Such connections include the ability to mobilize and build *bonding social capital* (strong within-community support for project goals) and *bridging social capital* (supportive relationships between communities and agencies with the political or economic power to assist them in achieving their goals) (Campbell and Cornish, 2012). The unequal distribution of social capital, defined by Bourdieu (1986) as people's access to networks of socially advantageous intergroup relationships, is a key driver of poverty and gender inequalities and hence ill health.

An important way to build bonding social capital is through shared learning and trust among organizations, activists and target communities, with all parties meaningfully engaged in planning and implementation (Campbell, 2014). Fostering quality relationships between community members and implementing organizations is key to respecting and meeting community members where they are (Michau and Namy, 2021). Another important component of bonding social capital is to apply an intersectional lens in order to leave no one behind. While focusing on commonality can be effective for mobilization, universalist messages can obscure differences and further exclude already marginalized groups (Irvine et al., 2019),

demonstrating the importance of inclusive mobilization efforts. For example, a review of the engagement of people with disabilities in intimate partner violence (IPV) prevention programmes demonstrated the importance of targeted inclusion, including recruiting people with disabilities into activist roles and designing communication materials in collaboration with people with disabilities (Stern et al., 2019).

In terms of bridging social capital, establishing links between communities and powerful stakeholders, such as the police, government authorities and legal structures, can help hold perpetrators accountable for violence, deter VAWG-related behaviours and provide support for women experiencing violence (Mannell and Dadswell, 2017). Mobilization programmes that collaborate with multiple sectors have been shown to contribute to the effective prevention of IPV (Global Women's Institute and World Bank Group, 2016). Moreover, when issues of power and violence are made more public in communities, more women experiencing violence may reach out for support. This speaks to the ethical imperative of mobilization programmes having mechanisms of support and ensuring referral pathways for survivors of violence (DFID, 2012; Michau, 2012; Dills et al., 2019; Jewkes et al., 2020). Reviews of effective mobilization efforts have also identified the need to equip religious, traditional and local leaders to support VAWG survivors and promote actions to address VAWG (Jewkes et al., 2019).

### 2.3.1.Bonding social capital

**There was strong consensus on the importance of meaningful community involvement and ownership in the design and implementation of mobilization projects, to ensure relevance, trust and sustainability.** In Nicaragua, local action plans involved identifying within each community which key actors should be engaged to implement project activities, how to engage them and how to ensure that action plans include the voices of all community members. This led to greater prioritization of women's and girls' needs. In Nigeria, SOAR encouraged all community members (including men, women, traditional and religious leaders, service providers and teachers) to nominate members of CCPCs, which

helped foster openness and buy-in. However, an FGD participant reflected on the challenges of trying to establish CCPCs too quickly:

We realized having gone back that we were too hasty in trying to set up the committees. We did not take enough time to bond with the community and get them to discuss and understand the issues to set up the committees. They did not have enough information and did not identify community members that had enough commitment required to do the work. Because of these factors, a few months or a year after the first committees were formed, a lot of them dropped off (FGD, 22 January 2021).

**In a few projects, practitioners reflected on the time needed to build relationships and trust with community members as a fundamental basis for programming, including to recruit activists.** For example, in Nicaragua, volunteers learned that it takes time for women in the community to feel comfortable discussing VAWG. Voice for Change in Papua New Guinea had a strong organizational reputation and existing trusting relationships in communities it worked in, and practitioners reflected how this supported active community engagement. An FGD participant commented on the importance of strong relationships with communities as a foundation for mobilization work. They noted that the current pressure to scale up VAWG prevention programming could undermine the importance of relationship-building:

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*Community mobilization is so different from programming we do and it does come down to trust, mutual respect, the ability of activists or facilitators to come to this critical thinking and sustained engagement. Taking the time to build relationships which requires understanding why you are doing it in the first place, what the context is like, how messages resonate. That often gets short-changed, especially as work starts to get scaled and there is more pressure to do more quicker, to get further, hit however many thousands of community members, that we lose the foundational stuff. I don't know any example of transformative grounded work without those relationship pieces (FGD, 15 February 2021).*

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**Practitioners reflected on the importance of not treating communities as homogeneous but recognizing intersectionalities.** For example, in Solomon Islands, women's abilities to raise issues and concerns about family and domestic violence were hindered by the presence of men and children in community discussions, which reinforced the value of creating separate spaces for men and women. In India, youth groups and parents hosted intergenerational discussions to share perceptions and constraints around gender inequality and sexual harassment. However, many of the young girls refrained from sharing their experiences of harassment with their parents for fear that their mobility would be curbed or that they

would be asked to drop out of school or college, which highlights the need for youth-led safe spaces.

**Some practitioners across the projects reflected on the challenges of bonding social capital given the marginalization of certain groups.** A few projects noted how mobilization efforts were not accessible or did not purposively include people with disabilities, or did not monitor the impact of their programmes among people with disabilities. For instance, practitioners in Tanzania reflected on how their awareness-raising campaigns were not hearing-impaired friendly. In Serbia, the Center for Girls noted the importance of raising awareness of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer rights and that, in rural areas and among ethnic minorities, participants were less prone to report changes as a result of the project. Practitioners identified that there was more conservatism in rural areas, with less awareness among community members of what constitutes VAWG. An FGD participant shared how participatory techniques, such as theatre of the oppressed, can support more inclusive community engagement:

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*We try to use mobilization as a way to break boundaries and see how they can have a joint conversation on some difficult issues. We use theatre of the oppressed and this format helps people open up and share their thoughts without feeling fear or guilt. One of the learnings from development of messaging and campaigning has been to be inclusive as violence gets aggravated for individuals with different identities (FGD, 22 January 2021).*

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Another FGD participant identified the importance of engaging community members as activists, as they are more likely to be aware of local injustices and inequalities and can help ensure that no one gets left behind:

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*Because activists live and work and go to school and have jobs in the community, they are able to see these injustices where they are happening and take them up within structures in their community. They are in the best position to advocate to leave no one behind, and the community mobilization helps them to advocate, gives them confidence and skills (FGD, 22 January 2021).*

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### 2.3.2 Bridging social capital

**Regarding bridging social capital, many projects identified the importance of collaborating with stakeholders with more power and influence.** One FGD participant emphasized:

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*Strong leadership and political will is important in community mobilization, thus different local leaders must be engaged meaningfully, and wholly for them to share the organizations' vision with the community and establish community ownership (FGD, written response).*

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In particular, practitioners identified the importance of building connections with local and religious leaders to help mitigate community resistance and tension, given their influence on attitudes and norms related to violence (and that they themselves might hold or reinforce patriarchal norms). This is also important as they may be a first point of contact for survivors of violence. The value of engaging such leaders is also identified in the *Engaging Faith and Traditional Leaders* synthesis review. In Solomon Islands, the Family Support Center employed a holistic community engagement approach by targeting survivors of VAWG, service providers, representatives of the education, justice, legal and health sectors, gender ministries, chiefs, church leaders and community leaders. However, the engagement of stakeholders was somewhat ad hoc and could have been more participatory. Practitioners identified that involving chiefs and church leaders more closely in the project may have helped women access VAWG services as families experiencing domestic violence often report to these stakeholders. In Nigeria, SOAR staff met with Christian and Muslim community leaders and village chiefs to get buy-in for the project, and chiefs were elected as chairpersons of CCPCs, which enhanced the ownership and sustainability of these structures. In Kenya, the engagement of paralegals helped legitimize project messages aimed at increasing awareness of existing laws and policies. Religious and traditional leaders formed a task force and acted as influential change agents, identifying alternative rites of passage to FGMC for girls and interpreting scripture to unlink

FGMC from religion. As communities became more open about VAWG, it was identified that clan leaders were terminating VAWG cases at the community level, denying survivors justice and protecting perpetrators of VAWG. As a result, the IIRR worked with clan leaders on how to handle VAWG cases.

**Practitioners identified the need to engage different community members in different ways and strike a balance between a holistic approach and a more targeted approach to stakeholders, depending on, for example, influence, opportunities to engage and project scope.** Some practitioners identified the challenges of collaborating with formal government representatives. For example, Voice for Change in Papua New Guinea intended to engage government and provincial political leaders; however, the inability of local governments to agree on provincial election results meant they could not be engaged as envisaged. The project adapted to focus on training and engaging civil society, religious leaders, police and community members. In India, Breakthrough Trust developed strategic linkages with women's advocacy groups and networks to develop shared agendas on domestic violence and sexual harassment and worked with district-level administrations to ensure that existing schemes, services and policy information reached project participants. However, it experienced challenges working with government authorities as they were frequently undergoing changes at state and district levels. In Tanzania, Equality for Growth devised a legal aid model that acted as a bridge between market leaders, government authorities, traders and other stakeholders, including police, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs), and helped ensure that VAWG cases were heard. Trained paralegals and legal supporters intended to remain in the markets after the project ended, but some noted that they required more training and ongoing support, including from local ward councillors, whose participation was difficult given their other commitments and responsibilities . Practitioners in Solomon Islands reflected that the Family Support Center project activities could have been better targeted to specific audiences. They reflected that scoping of formal services (i.e. health and police) and more consultations with provincial government should have been conducted and noted the importance of

regularly sharing project information and jointly planning implementation to better support this partnership.

**Another important component of bridging social capital was fostering links and referrals between VAWG prevention activities and response services for survivors of VAWG.** FGD participants commented on the ethical importance of including response services as part of community mobilization. One participant noted that strengthening response services in itself can build rapport and trust between communities and organizations. Another participant related the importance of strong partnerships for ensuring a response to VAWG, particularly if this is not an organization's area of specialization:

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*Community mobilization is not in isolation, it's part of a larger picture. It provides a certain pathway to community members to not just know about issues but also what can they do about it and where to go for support. We talk about services people can access or skills or laws in case of need. So we have been trying to build bridges not just with government but also with networks and alliances to provide that support, look for partnerships across the board because we ourselves do not provide those services.*

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In Kenya, the IIRR brought together community members, including community and religious leaders, schoolgirls, teachers, police, paralegals, health-care workers and circumcisers, to support a reporting and referral system between communities and service providers. However, ensuring adequate and accessible VAWG services was challenging because of women having to travel long distances, limited availability of female security personnel and fear of stigmatization. Practitioners identified the need for communities to support VAWG survivors to reduce stigmatization. Facing a similar challenge, Breakthrough Trust in India was able to raise awareness among participants about sexual harassment and domestic violence. However, this did not necessarily translate into action because of stigmatizing responses of service providers and fear. This shows the importance of not only ensuring referrals but also improving services, as discussed in "Institutional context".

**For a few projects, it was important to improve the skills of staff or activists (including soft skills such as empathy and listening skills) to enable them to respond to community members facing violence.**

For instance, in Lebanon, a case management guide was developed for staff to use when dealing with VAWG cases, covering, for example, privacy and safety and empowering women to make their own decisions. In Solomon Islands, many community members approached volunteers to provide counselling or assist with legal and police referrals. Family Support Center staff reflected that volunteers were not sufficiently prepared to counsel children, facilitate referrals, accompany child victims or provide trauma and stress counselling to parents of child victims. Moreover, the volunteers did not always have a private and safe space to receive clients and offer services.

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#### KEY TAKE-AWAYS:

- Many projects related how meaningfully engaging communities in design and implementation requires building relationships, which takes time, trust and mutual respect.
- A critical part of bonding social capital identified by some projects is ensuring that no one gets left behind; participatory processes, adaptive programming and targeting different stakeholders with different approaches can help ensure this.
- Although it can be challenging, practitioners identified how bridging social capital with stakeholders who hold more power and influence, including religious, traditional leaders and governments, is necessary to foster an enabling environment.
- Many projects stressed that an ethical imperative of community mobilization is providing VAWG response services, such as establishing referrals, especially as this raises awareness of VAWG.
- Many women initially seek informal support, showing that it is important to equip staff, activists and community leaders to respond to survivors.

## **2.4 Institutional Context: How do CSOs influence institutional change and structural inequalities for VAW/G prevention?**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**The institutional context refers to the broader structural inequalities that can influence the success of community mobilization efforts and hence VAWG prevention.** For instance, gender inequalities can be reinforced by formal institutional structures, such as government policy, laws, and education and health services (Mannell and Dadswell, 2017). For successful community mobilization initiatives, it is arguably not enough to provide local volunteers or activists with skills to run an intervention; it is also necessary to mobilize political will to provide supportive conditions for community action at local and national levels (Campbell and Cornish 2010).

**Significant attention has been given to the importance of the policy and legal environment for the success of gender-transformative interventions, although often not as an integral component of community mobilization interventions.** Policy plays an essential role in supporting gender-equitable norms and women's empowerment and agency (King and Mason, 2001) and ensuring the success of public health interventions (Gibbs et al., 2012). Heise's (2011) ecological framework positions policies and legal frameworks as one of many factors that influence VAWG. However, many community mobilization programmes do not provide sufficient space for community members to develop collective agency to challenge contextual and structural drivers of violence (Minckas et al., 2020). Interventions that address laws and policies are often separate from those that address the community level, with different intervention models used for different purposes (Ellsberg et al., 2015; Mannell and Dadswell, 2017).

**Some practitioners identified the importance of working at the institutional level to hold government and institutions accountable for commitments made through laws and policies on preventing and responding to VAWG.** For example, in Kenya, law enforcement structures and police officers were engaged to improve implementation of

VAWG-related laws and policies. This raised awareness of laws and policies among community members and police and built trust and confidence around reporting violence. IIRR staff and activists further advocated that VAWG be handled within mainstream judicial systems rather than traditional courts, to prevent issues such as community members bribing local authorities to escape justice. In Nicaragua, MADRE and Wangki Tangni conducted advocacy work with the police, municipal judges and local government to increase their commitment to administer justice for women and girls in accordance with the law. An annual indigenous women's forum brought women and girls, government officials and civil society members together to address key concerns and find solutions, bolstering collaboration between the customary and statutory legal systems. An FGD participant shared the following positive example of community-based dialogue from the Breakthrough Trust project :

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*One of the efforts in our project was the community-based dialogue process, which is like a local hearing. We brought people from the village, the leaders and some district officials, and we took up the issue of domestic violence and there was one ask related to the whole event which was to get a protection officer instated in that district, who was not currently there. Because of that effort, someone was given that duty to look into matters of domestic violence. This was under the protocol set up by the government for domestic violence (FGD, 15 February 2021).*

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This participant commented further on the importance of such advocacy efforts being bottom-up and owned by communities:

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*We have established an advocacy strategy that looks at trying to influence policies and how to improve investment when it comes to schemes, laws and services for violence prevention and supporting survivors. Community partnership is very critical where they take ownership and take the lead and we provide the back support. We can act as a facilitator but not as the people who are asking for it (FGD, 15 February 2021).*

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**A few projects identified gaps in the quality or capacity of survivor services, and worked to improve such services.** For instance, SASA! worked directly with service providers, including police, social workers and health-care providers, to strengthen their analysis of power imbalances as a core driver of violence against women and train them to provide high-quality services to survivors. In Tanzania, Equality for Growth trained legal professionals on guaranteeing confidentiality for VAWG survivors. In Papua New Guinea, Voice for Change responded to a surge in demand for VAWG response services as a result of community awareness activities by advocating for improvements to services, including the opening of a police unit for family and sexual violence.

**Some practitioners reflected on the challenges of working with patriarchal or unresponsive institutions.** For example, in Papua New Guinea, Voice for Change practitioners highlighted how decision-making by enforcing agencies and justice mechanisms is dominated by men, who can lack understanding of gender, human rights and laws intended to protect women. One of the main project strategies was to work with communities to translate national laws and global standards into local by-laws to prevent VAWG and promote gender equality. Training was also provided to improve the capacity of service providers to advocate and implement these by-laws.

**Some practitioners reflected on the importance of linking mobilization efforts to local or national policies or plans, to enhance sustainability and credibility.** For example, in Solomon Islands, the Family Support Center's project outcomes were aligned with provincial government plans as a mechanism for advocacy and to improve the likelihood of future funding. SASA! partners gained the respect of key stakeholders in their communities and countries, including national and local governments, which created leverage for influencing the development of national policies. Practitioners in Tanzania related how more linkages with national policy frameworks would have strengthened the advocacy component of the project.

**Overall, there was less evidence from the data of work at the institutional level, which may be partly**

**explained by the challenges of working at this level.** One FGD participant related the development of SASA! Together, which built on SASA! by including specific content around institutional strengthening:

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*SASA! focuses in the community, and was not going far enough in tapping into that institutional level. For instance, legal advocacy where laws were missing, or accountability to existing gender-equitable frameworks and policies – we weren't always getting to that through SASA! A lot of learning from Adaptation Project (supported by UN Trust Fund) informed the revision of SASA! So in SASA! Together, we decide to create a specific institutional strengthening strategy, with the aim of better engaging the macro level environment through intensive programming with one or two institutions (FGD, 15 February 2021).*

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SASA! Together recognizes that it is best to focus on one or two institutions at most, to allow for feasible and targeted engagement.

**The limited insights and experience at this level may also reflect the small size of some of the organizations or focused scope of the projects.** One FGD participant asserted that not all organizations can do everything – smaller organizations are well placed for mobilizing communities but may require partnerships with other organizations to support institutional-level change:

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*Partners that are feminist, more grounded in communities, able to build relationships and meet people where they are and being seen as part of communities rather than outsiders, those are the organizations that excel at mobilization work. Intuitively that makes sense and has been reflected back over and over. Can those same organizations be best placed to do national or international level advocacy? Maybe there is a different role to link those more grounded local experiences to national advocacy platforms. But no one organization can do it all. Partnerships are important for the prevention and response side and to change social norms at deeply local level up to policy, national change, it might be hard for one organization to do all of that (FGD, 15 February 2021)*

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#### KEY TAKE-AWAYS:

- Practitioners identified the importance of holding governments and institutions accountable for establishing and implementing policies and laws on VAWG and gender equality; linking community mobilization efforts to relevant government plans and policies can also be helpful for credibility, advocacy and sustainability.
- Practitioners identified the importance of improving services for VAWG survivors before or while carrying out community mobilization activities.

- Some projects noted how work at this level should be driven by community demands and needs; it is also helpful to create spaces to identify gaps and priorities and bring community members and institutional representatives together.
- There were challenges at this level, especially for smaller organizations or projects with a narrow scope and local focus; focusing on a few institutions or establishing partnerships with other organizations may be helpful.



## 2.5 Adapting community mobilization to the COVID-19 pandemic

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The pandemic has exacerbated key risk factors for VAWG and there has been a huge increase in reports of multiple forms of VAWG, especially physical, psychological, sexual and economic forms of domestic violence (Wood and Majumdar, 2020). In response to the pandemic, governments issued emergency directives such as social distancing and lockdown orders that have limited opportunities for community mobilizing (Raising Voices, 2020a). In many settings, activities have been suspended or substantially adapted, including to smaller group sizes and by shifting content to virtual platforms. However, moving interventions online has been difficult for those that thrive on face-to-face interaction and community trust or for organizations that lack access to digital tools and spaces or operate in remote, rural communities with no internet access or electricity (Wood and Majumdar, 2020). Community members, activists and leaders have also faced additional responsibilities and stress, limiting the time and emotional space available to engage (Raising Voices, 2020a). At the same time, survivors of violence require services more than ever and the ongoing prevention of violence is increasingly important.

**The pandemic has magnified the importance of ensuring space and opportunities for self-care to build the well-being and resilience of front-line responders.** CSOs, WROs and women's rights defenders have experienced stress, anxiety and vicarious trauma as they navigate the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and increased need for their services, while continuing to operate in an uncertain environment (Wood and Majumdar, 2020). It is important to use positive, aspirational materials, provide information about referrals and support services, and avoid highly sensitive or provocative content, as women and men may have limited support to process difficult topics during the pandemic (Raising Voices, 2020b).

### Practitioners have adapted their community mobilization projects to respond to the pandemic.

The majority of the projects had concluded their programming before the outbreak of the pandemic, although some continued with alternative funding. The projects in Lebanon and Serbia had funding into 2020 and adjusted their programming in response to the pandemic. The FGDs explored practitioners' experiences of community mobilization during the pandemic or insights on how earlier programming could be adapted to the pandemic situation. These suggested a need for more action-oriented studies – those that begin to pinpoint "what works" to effectively prevent or respond to violence amidst the pandemic (Peterman and O'Donnell, 2020).

**The importance of violence prevention programming meeting the material needs of community members has been pronounced in the face of the pandemic** (Wood and Majumdar, 2020). This can foster resource-based agency. One FGD participant related how community mobilization work in Nicaragua adapted to protect community members from the virus:

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*Our project continues after UN Trust Fund because it is a community-led programme and some of the resources come from other sources to MADRE. Adaptation of the programme came from the community to mobilize some of the resources they had, like re-distribution of soap, some do not have water, but programming did not stop (FGD, 22 January 2021).*

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**Many practitioners highlighted how they radically adapted their programmes because of COVID-19-related restrictions.** One FGD participant noted how the Breakthrough Trust adapted its campaigns to virtual spaces, smaller group sizes and supporting local youth activism:

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*When the lockdown started a lot of things moved to the virtual space. We tried to do some events, storytelling workshops and things like that. But mobilizing per se reduced a lot. Some people during the lockdown period tried to reach out to community members using WhatsApp calls, video*

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conferencing methods, and some push was if there could be mobilization by community members themselves. The young people we had trained over the last few years, we saw them take leadership and bring their own version of community campaigns in a hyper local manner to address some of immediate issues arising in their communities. It was easy for them to get together in their own villages, as we could not reach them. And they did their own mobilization there. Mostly sticking posters, or wall paintings which did not require too much of a crowd but ensuring that the activism messaging gets out. After the lockdown was removed, we started gathering people but being mindful of how many people we could have and having safety protocols in place and ensuring social distancing (FGD, 15 February 2021).

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Some FGD participants related the challenges of moving community mobilization activities online, such as the lack of two-way dialogue, which is fundamental to processes of change:

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Community radio was very helpful during COVID times with some outreach messages. It would be more broadcast rather than engagement, which was a challenge we found difficult to crack. When you say mobilization there is meant to be a chance of dialogue, having communication with the other. Sadly, a lot of mobilization that happened last year was more broadcasting, giving out messages from one space (FGD, 15 February 2021).

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Another FGD participant stressed the need to be creative to allow opportunities for dialogue and interaction through virtual spaces, such as through WhatsApp discussion groups.

**Being responsive to community priorities and needs meant incorporating protective measures against COVID-19 or raising awareness of the links between the pandemic and VAWG.** One FGD participant shared how SASA! developed content around the intersections between violence and COVID-19 and focused on benefits-based messaging:

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We created SASA! style posters or community conversations and info sheets that work at the intersection of COVID and violence. These focus on aspirational values and relationships – “How can you support your partner during a stressful time?” – rather than asking how power is being balanced in the household. We tried to steer away from more sensitive topics which could be more risky for women given the context of isolation and lockdown (FGD, 15 February 2021).

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In Serbia, the Center for Girls conducted a social media campaign to raise awareness of the increase in VAWG during the pandemic. Wangki Tangni in Nicaragua used its indigenous women-led radio station to reach rural communities and share updates and protective measures against COVID-19, raise awareness about VAWG and identify referral options.

**Some FGD participants emphasized the important role of mobilization efforts in supporting leaders and service providers to better prevent and respond to VAWG during the pandemic:**

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We engaged front-line workers and village heads. They were struggling how to provide support in COVID times to their communities. Getting them to have access to information and what protocols they can follow and in case of violence how they support survivors, was one thing we provided them, including during the lockdown period, through WhatsApp or conference calls (FGD, 15 February 2021).

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**There was consensus that, although ongoing VAWG prevention is critical, community mobilization can play an important role in responding to the surge in violence, in order to keep women and girls safer.** For instance, one FGD participant noted the value of local (albeit adapted) mobilization in responding to the urgent needs of VAWG survivors:

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Even though community mobilization must look a lot different, there is a lot you can do because we are grounded in the communities where we work and we know which women are more at risk of violence, who might be in need of urgent

*support. There was a surge in violence against women during the lockdown. So we worked with these connections, going door to door if safe, if not conducting outreach through phone or WhatsApp. Also public displays of solidarity: one partner started a campaign to hang a piece of cloth to show solidarity and raise awareness of increased risk of violence (FGD, 15 February 2021).*

In Lebanon, Kvinna till Kvinna, Kafa and Association Najdeh communicated remotely with VAWG survivors to assist them during the initial lockdown. The project had faced difficulties identifying safe shelters for women whose lives were at risk; this was further exacerbated by the pandemic and women were housed in foyers until shelters were able to take them in. In Serbia, the Center for Girls continued to provide helpline services and used mobile phones to contact organizational staff as needed.

**Several FGD participants stressed how the pandemic has shed light on the importance of promoting organizational care and well-being:**

*We have learned the importance of well-being and the collective care and support for program staff and activists and anyone on the front lines given that everyone will have their own stressors and personal challenges during COVID, and this is multiplied by what is happening at the community level (FGD, 15 February 2021).*

Kvinna till Kvinna employed staff care activities and provided Kafa and Association Najdeh staff with knowledge, skills and tools for self-preservation and stress management. This improved well-being and time management practices, which in turn improved service delivery and dynamics and harmony between staff.

#### **KEY TAKE-AWAYS:**

- Projects shared important lessons from the pandemic, including the importance of benefits-based messaging, raising awareness of the intersections between VAWG and COVID-19, supporting more localized community mobilization efforts and meeting basic needs of community members to help protect them from the virus.
- Some practitioners noted the challenges of adapting mobilization efforts to the pandemic; moving programmes online can limit interactions, but efforts should be made to allow for more participatory engagement (e.g. use of WhatsApp groups).
- It was important for some projects to pivot towards a stronger focus on responding to VAWG during the pandemic, including providing referral information and working with local leaders and service providers.
- Some practitioners noted how the pandemic has highlighted earlier calls to better support the well-being and resilience of staff, activists and others leading efforts to prevent VAWG.



Men participating in a project from Raising Voices in Uganda.  
Photo: Raising Voices

# **3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section provides overarching concluding insights that emerged from the comparative case study of PBK across the diverse projects. It focuses on key lessons learned from practice and offers the unique and rich contributions of these community mobilization programmes to the broader field. The framework for community mobilization (Campbell and Cornish, 2010; Mannell and Dadswell, 2017) was extremely pertinent for synthesizing and analysing PBK across different contexts (symbolic, material, relational and institutional) and linking insights to the broader evidence. This framework may help practitioners consider how the effectiveness and sustainability of community mobilization interventions may be affected by different aspects of the social environment, and develop comprehensive strategies that work at different dimensions of specific contexts.

**Regarding the symbolic context, key lessons learned include the importance of meeting communities where they are; this includes being contextually relevant, using appropriate community entry points and language, and being responsive to key needs and priorities to prevent VAWG.** Engaging and equipping community members to carry out mobilization activities was important to ensure that programmes are owned and led by communities. Changing attitudes, beliefs and norms related to violence and gender takes time, intensity, participatory approaches and safe spaces for critical reflection. Given that VAWG is driven by gendered inequalities, it is critical to promote the recognition and empowerment of women and girls. Finally, organizations, stakeholders and activists should be recruited and supported to align with projects' values and beliefs, so that they have credibility in their communities to "walk the walk".

**Key lessons learned with regard to the material context include the importance of finding a**

balance between engaging activists as committed volunteers and ensuring that they are not financially burdened, which is important for sustainability. Integrating economic empowerment activities for project participants may be important where limited resources are a key driver of VAWG or hinder participants' engagement in programming. Experience-based agency should be promoted to enable activists and participants to apply learned skills and knowledge; this includes providing training and ongoing support to activists, acknowledging their contributions, and identifying gatekeepers who can hinder or facilitate engagement with project activities. The significant and empowering impacts on women, girls and activists of being involved with programming should not be undervalued.

**Many of the practitioner-based insights address the relational context.** Key lessons learned regarding bonding social capital include taking time to build relationships and foster trust and mutual respect, establishing safe spaces to allow for openness, and ensuring inclusive engagement so no one is left behind. For bridging social capital, although challenging because of competing priorities and patriarchy, it was particularly important to engage with faith and traditional leaders, government and justice personnel to promote an enabling environment, given their credibility and influence. It is important for mobilization efforts to consider prevention and response, by establishing referral links to VAWG response services and ensuring that activists, staff and leaders have the skills and abilities to effectively respond to VAWG survivors.

**Key lessons learned with regard to the institutional context include the importance of holding government and institutions accountable for establishing or implementing laws and policies on preventing and responding to VAWG or**

**promoting gender equality.** Such advocacy efforts should be bottom-up and driven by local priorities. Linking mobilization efforts to local or national policies or plans was valuable for enhancing the credibility and sustainability of projects. Community mobilization also plays an important role in advocating for and training providers to improve services for VAWG survivors. Supporting changes at the institutional level was identified as particularly challenging because of the small size of some organizations or focused scope of the projects; this may require strategic partnerships with other organizations, dedicated funding or capacity-building.

**Key lessons learned during the pandemic include the importance of responding to the immediate needs of VAWG survivors, such as providing shelter and referral services.** However, with the rising number of VAWG cases triggered by the pandemic, the importance of maintaining a focus on violence prevention was identified. Strategies to adapt mobilization programming include using virtual spaces, supporting activists with extremely local engagement and raising awareness of the intersections between violence and COVID-19. It is important that programmes find ways to promote interaction when using virtual spaces. The pandemic has also revealed the importance of organizations promoting the collective care and well-being of their staff and activists.

**Analysing PBK using this framework reveals the enormous task of community mobilization, requiring comprehensive work across multiple levels of particular social contexts.** The findings highlight the difficulties of supporting local community activities while simultaneously enabling wider structural change, but also the important local impacts that can be achieved by engaged activists and participants. The *Mobilizing Women from Beneficiaries to Actors* synthesis review also acknowledges the empowering impacts of engaging and mobilizing women as project actors and facilitators. This synthesis review applies the concept of distributed agency to understand impacts on women, which recognizes how agency is complex, dynamic, incremental and non-linear (Campbell and Mannell, 2016). Social change is also not a linear process whereby activists or mobilization activities

can be regarded as inputs with identifiable causal links to specific outcomes (Khanna and Campbell, 2021). As Solnit (2017) asserts, “to be hopeful, we need not only to embrace uncertainty but to be willing to know that the consequences [of activism] may be immeasurable, may still be unfolding”.

**In summary, this synthesis review reinforces the value of PBK, which is particularly suited to better understanding complex causal systems and environments (Faris and Jayaserkara, 2019), including community mobilization for VAWG prevention.** By drawing on PBK, knowledge is not separated from its specific context and producers, which helps to decolonize entrenched knowledge hierarchies and enable participation by often excluded and left behind voices (Weber et al., 2014). This synthesis review highlights the importance of elevating, analysing, sharing and applying PBK to contribute to the wider evidence base on what works to prevent VAWG.

The practitioner insights from the 10 projects informed 13 recommendations on community mobilization to prevent VAWG. The recommendations target practitioners, donors and the wider ending VAWG research community.

### 3.1 Recommendations for practitioners

**Know your community to know your response.** The appropriateness and relevance of community mobilization strategies and messages can vary widely from one setting to another. Knowing one's community may require formative research or participatory planning to identify the prevalent types and causes of violence, availability and quality of services, and attitudes, beliefs and norms related to violence. It is critical to build relationships, trust and mutual respect between organizations and target communities, and ensure safe spaces for sharing community needs and priorities. It is also important to find appropriate entry points, especially given the sensitivity and potential stigma of or resistance to VAWG programming. Knowing one's community requires engaging with key stakeholders or gatekeepers and ensuring inclusivity of marginalized

groups. Communities are not homogeneous groups of people with similar interests but are multi-layered and fragmented. Programmes need to specifically plan for different hierarchies within communities and reach different groups in different ways.

**Ensure that community volunteers and activists are not overburdened but are carefully selected, trained and supported.** Applying Campbell and Cornish's (2010) framework illustrated the importance of supporting both resource-based and experience-based agency of activists. Careful selection of committed volunteers and activists with gender-equitable and non-violent attitudes and behaviours is critical for intervention success. However, some financial support may be necessary to ensure that volunteers are not excluded from engagement because of lack of financial means. Other essential support includes initial training to foster alignment with programme values and learn necessary skills and ongoing mentoring. Activists' capacity needs should also be identified and responded to.

**Strive for reflexivity and accountability on behalf of organizations.** Community mobilization should start from within, with staff encouraged to connect on a personal level with issues of power and VAWG. Staff training should include opportunities for self-reflection and creating change (e.g. see the *Get Moving: Facilitators' Guide* by the GBV Prevention Network (2012)). Steps should also be taken to support the resilience, well-being and self-care of organizations. Organizations should reflect on their relationships and mitigate inequitable power dynamics with community members, and guard against instrumental use of participation with communities.

**Ensure sufficient length and intensity of interventions for community mobilization to have an impact.** It takes time to address harmful and embedded norms, attitudes and beliefs and build understanding and collaboration among organizations and communities. It may be appropriate to focus more intensively within communities (e.g. Center for Girls focused on schools in Serbia, and Equality for Growth focused on marketplaces in Tanzania), to ensure sufficient reach and engagement, rather than attempting to scale up to large geographical areas.

Local organizations can be especially well placed to build trusting relationships with community members, which has become even more apparent during the pandemic given the travel restrictions and social distancing requirements.

**Work at the nexus of violence prevention and response.** It is critical for community mobilization programmes to ensure support for survivors by establishing referral links or partnerships and helping to improve services. This is important ethically and to 'do no harm' as raising awareness of VAWG can lead to more survivors reporting violence. Mobilizing communities to address harmful norms related to stigma of survivors can also support VAWG survivors to disclose violence and seek help. Projects should also provide resources, if possible, to support women and girls to access services, such as help with transport costs.

**Foster adaptive programming.** Community mobilization programmes should be demand driven, respond and adapt to community priorities and ideally be co-created with communities. The escalating rates of violence and health needs during the COVID-19 pandemic have illustrated the importance of being adaptable. Adaptive programming keeps the work safer, more relevant and meaningful and helps foster trust and respect within communities (the crux of mobilization work).

**Include efforts to support an enabling environment.** This includes identifying and collaborating with key opinion leaders and gatekeepers, holding governments and institutions accountable for commitments made through laws and policies on preventing and responding to VAWG and promoting gender equality, and linking mobilization efforts to local or national policies or plans. Partnerships, dedicated funding or capacity-building may be needed, which can also facilitate and reinforce individual and community-level changes. It is important to balance working with too few versus too many partners and ensure realistic and feasible engagement. It is recommended that smaller organizations, especially, focus on one or two institutions (i.e. from the health, justice, education and government sectors).

## 3.2 Recommendations for donors

**Support adaptive programming and flexible budgeting.** Donors should ensure longer-term, flexible funding cycles to accommodate adaptive programming. It takes time and intensity for community mobilization to shift attitudes, beliefs and norms underlying violence and this warrants funding for at least 3–5 years. A critical foundation of community mobilization programming is the inception period, when organizations build relationships with communities, ensure that programmes will meet communities' needs and priorities, recruit and train staff and activists, and map key stakeholders. Contingency budgets enable programmes to respond to crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and address barriers to action, which is especially important for projects working with marginalized groups.

**Foster a culture of learning to encourage reflection on what works and what does not work.** This is especially important as community mobilization is complex and challenging and its impacts can be hard to measure. Donors need to appreciate and encourage grantees to account for this complexity, rather than trying to simplify the process. Strongly hierarchical relationships undermine community mobilization and donor–programming relationships also need to be mutually respectful.

**Fund and support WROs and CSOs to do community mobilization work.** These organizations are well placed to build trusting relationships with community members and be grounded in communities to ensure relevant, appropriate and accessible programming. WROs and local CSOs have demonstrated the value of community embeddedness, local relationships and being able to adapt to meet changing realities during the pandemic. Donors should provide funds for organizational self-care and well-being to ensure organizations' resilience and survival, and simply bureaucratic processes as much as possible to ensure that funds reach organizations. It is important to have realistic expectations of WROs and CSOs and consider how to build their capacities or leverage partnerships, while continuing to focus on funding and support.

## 3.3 Recommendations for the broader ending VAWG research field

**Acknowledge how community mobilization plays out differently in different contexts.** The diverse experiences of community mobilization across specific contexts and communities should be acknowledged in research. This includes the symbolic, material, relational and institutional dimensions of context. This is critically important given the current climate promoting the adaptation of evidence-based mobilization programming from one setting to another. Research should identify what works and what does not work in particular settings to inform ethical and best practices. More retrospective research, such as this study, is needed to centre practice-based experiences of community mobilization interventions within their social contexts.

**Promote the value of PBK.** Researchers should acknowledge and document the lessons learned through PBK, with a focus on processes of implementation as well as outcomes. Partnerships between practitioners and researchers should be based on mutual trust and acknowledgement of different forms of expertise and knowledge, and critically reflect on hierarchies of knowledge in terms of what is considered robust and good evidence. The combination of PBK and research can elicit meaningful knowledge exchange and enhance VAWG programming and evaluation, including grounding research in experience and ethical practice (Raising Voices and Sexual Violence Research initiative, 2020). In drawing on PBK as part of their evaluations, such as observing project activities and having opportunities for practitioners to validate research insights, researchers can help to build the knowledge-generation capacity of practitioners.

**Areas that need more research.** This synthesis review has revealed a number of areas that require more research. First, there is a need to better understand the enablers and challenges underlying resource- and experience-based agency among activists in community mobilization programmes, how best to integrate volunteerism among activists, and what role this has in achieving and sustaining results. More research is also needed on when financially

compensating activists is appropriate and conducive to project goals and when this may be a hindrance. Second, research is needed to understand how community mobilization can be inclusive and ensure that no one is left behind, including understanding how organizations can ensure reflexivity and accountability of community members and engaged activists. Third, there is a need for more documentation of the role of

local community mobilization in bringing about wider structural change, including legal and policy reform or implementation. Fourth, lessons learned, best practices and PBK around the adaptation of community mobilization programmes to the COVID-19 pandemic should be documented, including what this means for the recovery period and future preparedness for other crises.



Participants in Equality for Growth's project working to make markets safer for women in Tanzania.  
Photo: UN Trust Fund

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