

Annual Report 2020

(4)



Acronyms

GPEVAC:	Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children
GST:	Good School Toolkit
MGLSD:	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MoES:	Ministry of Education and Sports
L&A:	Learning and Assessment
LSHTM:	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
R&R:	Rethink and Reenergize
RRPs:	Regional Resource Persons
VAC:	Violence Against Children
VAW:	Violence Against Women









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But everything changed in the first week of March. As the pandemic reached Uganda, all schools were closed, domestic and international travel abruptly halted, and we were even forced to close our office for a while. We had to rethink and reimagine how we were going to respond to the new reality. The initial shock gave way to two questions: How can we ensure that the staff and partners we work with remain safe and supported in this environment of heightened risk? How can we continue to prevent violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) in this new environment?

Our first response was to develop operational guidelines around how we would protect and support each other, honoring staff's anxieties and concerns while remaining a helpful partner in responding to the unique challenges COVID-19 was presenting. Once we found our footing, as an organization, we leaned into two core traits that have served us well: investing in adaptations and fostering resilience.

We increased the use of social media and online processes for our GBV Prevention Network events, transformed our SASA! Together in-person training processes into virtual learning and used telephone-based and online surveys for research. As schools faced closures, we channeled programmatic investments into a network of regional resource persons (RRPs) and VAC Prevention Centers to extend the reach of our work in the schools and communities that needed it most. Additionally, we shifted to new platforms for virtual learning that emphasized interactivity to help staff foster their connections with each other and partners. We also hosted regular online check-in meetings and converted our annual retreat into multiple smaller wellness events. We published a variety of thought pieces, guidance notes and tools in order to support partners organizationally and programmatically as they worked to adapt to the new reality and build resilience.

Although we had to pause our recruitment processes, we continued investing in our organizational strengthening efforts. We also continued investing in our systems strengthening work and developed six new funding relationships, as well as hosted networks and participated in the global discourse on how to respond to the pandemic while ensuring that women and children's priorities were given due weight in policy decisions.

For Raising Voices, as for most of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic created profound social, political and logistical challenges. We began 2020, the third year of our five-year strategy, with ambitious plans to build on our previous work on the strategy and to continue consolidating the achievements of our two-year organizational strengthening exercise.







It was not an easy year for Raising Voices or our partners, but it was an opportunity to express our values - of putting people first, of solidarity, of stewardship with humility. Together, we got through it and are stronger for it. In our reflections and throughout this report, we focus on three key areas of our work: practice - how we work directly to change social and cultural norms; learning - how we help build collective knowledge on VAW/VAC; and influencing - how our work creates change and impacts policymakers at the national, regional and global levels. Despite the constraints, we still made notable progress in all three areas.

In the **PRACTICE** area of our work, key highlights include:

- > We developed an alternative model of rolling out the *Good School Toolkit* (GST) in learning plan, providing ongoing mentoring and monitoring their work remotely.
- In collaboration with RRPs and our partners, Raising Voices reached its initial goal of implementing the GST in 1,000 schools – the culmination of more than 10 years of effort. The Good School team plans to strengthen implementation in those 1,000
- SASA! Together, the next generation of our flagship VAW prevention approach, launched in early 2020. SASA! Together incorporates more than a decade of practice-based learning and evidence and includes two entirely new strategies, a and guide.
- The VAW Practice and Influencing teams responded to COVID-19's impact on violence prevention organizations with five guidance notes on VAW programming care, and promoted safe and ethical VAW prevention programming during this time. We followed up with an online survey, an advocacy infographic and a set of ready-to-use materials for VAW prevention in the community.

- ► The Learning team supported nine formal research projects in 2020. These included

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In the **LEARNING** area of our work, key highlights include:

We strengthened monitoring systems and revised organizational tracking sheets and key







In the INFLUENCING area of our work, key highlights include:

- The Raising Voices VAC team developed two communications campaigns to more than one million Ugandans per month.
- > The GBV Prevention Network team hosted a series of six webinars to engage Network members on addressing VAW during COVID-19 and on skill-building egies and streamed many of its events on social media platforms. Renowned Live and Instagram Live sessions, Twitter chats, and commissioned blogs and creative writing.
- Raising Voices used its many invitations to participate and present at national, women and girls, the importance of local civil society and feminist organizasafe during these challenging times.



Reflecting on this unprecedented journey, we enter 2021 with humility, gratitude and an open mind. We continue to foster a willingness to learn from and adapt to the unfolding reality. We expect the first two guarters of 2021 to look similar to 2020, as COVID-19 and the political uncertainty continue to affect our communities and the world. But we carry with us the lessons we learned in 2020 on how to navigate constraints, and strengthened by our experience, we remain hopeful and look forward to redoubling our efforts to push our ambitious agenda forward in 2021.







Practice



Through Practice, we implement, inspire and strengthen activism to prevent violence against women and children.

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In 2020, our primary preoccupation was adapting to the pandemic, figuring out what it takes and what it means to do violence prevention in this new context.







1) Strengthening Activism

Implementing the Good School Toolkit in 1,000 schools. While we had more than 1,000 schools in our database as partners as of 2019, we were not quite sure how many of those were engaging credibly with the GST's ideas. Thus, we collaborated with Ipsos Uganda in late 2019 to assess the level and quality of GST implementation in each of the schools in our database. We found that more than 600 schools scored at least 67% on our scorecard, indicating that they were credibly implementing the GST. In early 2020, with support from the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (GPEVAC), we developed a comprehensive plan to strengthen implementation in the underperforming 400 schools and consolidate the gains made in the other 600.

However, the COVID-19 restrictions disrupted this plan. After the initial uncertainty, we developed a new model for supporting the intervention in schools (see Box 1), signed memoranda with multiple districts, hosted online and socially distanced learning processes with local district officials and renewed funding partnerships with three VAC Prevention Centers. In late 2020, we reached our initial aim of meaningful GST implementation in 1,000 schools – the culmination of over 10 years of effort to reach this goal.

Furthering our VAC prevention practice, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), we developed and began to achieve the preliminary part of the plan to take the GST Agile, a simplified version of the GST, to 5,000 schools in 2021.

We also refined and validated our database containing more than 10,000 unique contacts of schools, headteachers, district officials, partner organizations and interested members of the public who have indicated they want to get involved in preventing VAC at schools. This infrastructure will form the basis for a focused activism campaign planned in 2021.

Additionally, in 2020 Raising Voices maintained regular remote contact with school personnel and strengthened local activism in surrounding communities through RRPs and community-based activist groups, who carried out household dialogues on preventing VAC with more than 4,000 community members (543 women, 422 men, 1,817 girls and 1,515 boys). Through these dialogues, we also reached 139 community leaders (72 female and 67 male) who now actively promote VAC prevention.

BOX I:

The Regional Resource Person (RRP) Model

In response to the constraints imposed by the pandemic, the *Good School* team developed the regional resource person (RRP) model, which now consists of a pool of 40 RRPs (26 female, 14 male) who work under *Good School* regional managers to support GST implementation and the education sector who support GST implementation on a part-time basis in specific schools located close to their home districts.

was introduced to 21 schools and district education offices to establish working relationships in order to facilitate continued GST implementation. The 40 RRPs support 840 schools in total, with five RRPs focusing specifically on supporting 105 secondary schools. Each RRP conducted kit for Secondary Schools (GST-S) and solidified contacts with existing primary schools, all while

Publishing SASA! Together. After two intense years of development and design, we published and launched SASA! Together in early 2020. The release of this updated community mobilization approach was much anticipated in the broader field of VAW prevention and an important milestone for the VAW Practice team. SASA! Together is an expression of our values, of our innovation and of our deep commitment to supporting impactful VAW prevention programming around the world.













Building on the experience of the original SASA! Activist Kit while incorporating substantive new ideas, SASA! Together brings together evidence, practice-based learning and Raising Voices' organizational values. It includes two entirely new strategies, a focus on sexual decision-making, an embedded couples' curriculum, brand-new activities on preventing VAW, a new L&A framework and a set-up guide.

In February 2020, more than 150 activists, practitioners, researchers and academics representing 18 countries participated in the SASA! Together launch. It was a milestone for the VAW Prevention and Practice team.

In addition to the English version of SASA! Together, we also completed a full translation and cultural adaptation for Mexico and Latin America. This work, underway for 17 months, involved the support and leadership of 13 women's rights and Indigenous organization across Mexico and Latin America. This process brought energy and momentum to a larger vision of expanding our support and partnerships to organizations in this region. We hosted a variety of webinars for funders, feminist organizations and others to share possibilities on partnership for VAW prevention. This work will further expand in 2021.

Providing technical assistance. Throughout 2020, our VAW Practice team actively supported over 42 organizations using SASA! Together, SASA! and SASA! Faith across Asia, the Pacific, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. Due to the high demand for technical assistance on SASA!, we continued to use a cohort approach that groups like organizations so they can progress through the learning and implementation process together – exchanging ideas, resources and learning – and so Raising Voices can manage larger numbers of partners while maintaining quality technical assistance. In 2020, we established the Asia-Pacific Cohort for SASA! Together with 15 organizations and laid the groundwork for additional cohorts: Organizations Providing Technical Assistance and Activist Organizations (both to launch in 2021).



During the year, as partners struggled to adapt to VAW prevention programming realities during COVID, the VAW Prevention team spent considerable time on Skype, WhatsApp and the phone checking in, trying to understand their realities, helping brainstorm programming alternatives and being in solidarity. We listened, trying to learn and be useful to our partners. We held several webinars for partners to share experiences and exchange ideas, and we spent time encouraging and cheering partners on as their communities depended on them more than ever. We were inspired by their flexibility, by their commitment to communities and by their creativity. Many of our partnerships grew stronger and groups not normally in touch connected with each other.

2) Adapting to Change and Scale

Honing new models of intervention. Most of our work depended on direct contact with the communities with which we work. In response to the restricted movement and school closures, we realized that our interventions would have to change, too. We developed three new adaptations:

- a. Instead of VAC program staff traveling to multiple districts and visiting schools in person, we identified and built the capacity of 40 RRPs to lead activities in communities, in schools and with local officials (see Box 1). Initial indications are that this adaptation has proven effective, and we have planned a formal study to assess its efficacy in 2021.
- b. Instead of VAW team members traveling to support partners in multiple countries, we invested in online events, hosted webinars, produced learning materials and initiated online support to the cohort of partners implementing SASA! Together.
- c. We invested in high-bandwidth internet access for all senior staff, upgraded our office bandwidth and established a second station for video conferencing at our office. We also introduced liberal work policies that accommodated flexitime and working from home for those at heightened risk. We also conducted most of our internal meetings and ongoing organizational learning processes online.

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Developing vital program resources. Over the course of 2020, the Practice team developed multiple resources to support quality implementation. With an increasing number of organizations wanting to take SASA! Together to scale, Raising Voices produced a program brief to help funders, organizations and technical advisors think through the considerations necessary for ethical scaling and also to provide practical tools for program design and implementation.

Additionally, to support our partners in their work implementing VAW prevention interventions during COVID-19, we developed a series of program tools that includes an overview guide, six community conversations, three posters and two infosheets.

Digitizing content and communication. Although we could not host colleagues at the Violence Prevention Learning Center in Kampala, the demand for training remained ever-growing. To respond, we collaborated with colleagues and an instructional designer to transform our in-person trainings into online courses, including:

- The Set-Up and the Start Phase of SASA! Together (others to come in 2021), hosted on Moodle. The 18 sessions include videos, activities, knowledge checks, personal journaling and collective discussion groups.
- Eight scripts for video training modules on the GST and additional accompanying modules for inclusion in our forthcoming mobile app.
- Significant time invested by all program teams into shifting in-person trainings to Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Skype without compromising quality and encouraging active participation.

Transforming our highly interactive and experiential in-person training content was a significant shift that required agility and learning new skills. The learning curve is steep, and we feel excited about the opportunities that the transition to digital platforms have created. We will use them well beyond COVID-19 restrictions to enhance inclusiveness, reach and efficiency.





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Learning

Learning at Raising Voices involves nurturing and sustaining a culture of reflection, synthesis and action that generates practice-based knowledge and expands our understanding of how to prevent violence.

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The interruptions and constraints in many areas of our practice required the discipline to adapt and learn. In partnership with external collaborators and with the help of our dedicated Learning team, we continued to learn through formal research collaborations, iterative learning and knowledge integration in 2020.







1) Learning Through Research Collaborations

We invested in nine new and ongoing formal research partnerships in 2020, which focused on the long-term impacts of our violence prevention work and on research into broader questions relevant to the field, such as the impact of COVID-19 on VAW and VAC and a review of VAC prevention programs in schools in the Global South.

We continued work on four key research collaborations initiated in previous years:

- a. Ipsos' evaluation of GST implementation completed data collection with 613 of 1,114 Good Schools (55%) in late 2019. The findings analyzed in early 2020 showed variation in completion of the six steps of the GST, with 42% of schools surveyed estimated to be close to full implementation (on Steps 5 or 6) and 17% still at initial Steps 1 or 2. Data indicated the need to provide ongoing support to schools, involve parents and communities, and gain greater support for the GST from school administration.
- b. The Good School Toolkit for Secondary Schools (GST-S) pilot study, in partnership with LSHTM, aimed to assess the acceptability and resonance of the GST ideas and materials originally designed for primary schools that have been adapted for secondary schools. While data collection halted in March due to COVID-19, the study nonetheless highlighted the differences in relationship-building in secondary versus primary schools and in engaging rural versus urban schools. With schools expected to reopen in 2021, we will restart data collection in 2021 to further understand implementation of GST-S in schools.
- c. The Busara Center for Behavioral Economics study on the impact of our communication campaigns wrapped up in early 2020 and included both qualitative and quantitative components, including 20 focus group discussions with adults and teenagers and phone surveys with 103 adult community members, 88 teachers and 68 school-going teenagers in Lira, Kabarole and Kampala. Findings suggested that increased frequency of campaign exposure was related both to higher recall of campaign messaging and to higher intent to intervene and respond to VAC. The majority of study participants expressed that the COVID-19 lockdown increased VAC, with girls perceived to be disproportionately affected.
- d. The Contexts of Violence in Adolescence Cohort Study (CoVAC), also known as the Footprints Study, is a longitudinal cohort study following the 3,431 adolescents and young adults first interviewed in 2014 in Luwero as part of the Good School study randomized control trial. Footprints explores how these young people are navigating life's challenges and whether the ideas they encountered at school influence their choices. The study is a collaboration between Raising Voices, LSHTM, Makerere University, University College London's Institute of Education and the Medical Research Council/Uganda Virus Research Institute. Learning team members worked

closely with partners to prepare for a qualitative study published in 2020 and Wave 3 phone surveys to be conducted in 2021, which will contain an additional element of assessing COVID-19's impacts on violence as experienced by the young men and women of Uganda.

2020 also saw the launch of five new formal research partnerships:

- to adapt and implement SASA! Together with quality and fidelity.
- amplify).
- phone survey to be conducted in early 2021.
- triangulated with routine L&A data collected by Raising Voices.



a. "Understanding SASA! Together Adaptations, Implementation and Technical Assistance" (with the Global Women's Institute at George Washington University). This multiyear partnership, launched in 2020, will follow the cohorts of organizations using SASA! Together to better understand the extent to which organizations are able

b. "Pathways for Agile Implementation: Identifying the Active Elements of the Good School Toolkit" (with IDinsight and The Evaluation Fund). Raising Voices is in the process of developing GST Agile in preparation for scaling the GST across Uganda. This modular, lighter version of the Toolkit aims to deliver the same effectiveness as the full GST at lower costs – but the right evidence is needed to make those editing decisions (which activities to eliminate, which to strengthen and which pathways to

c. "The Impacts of COVID-19 on Violence: Learning from the Experience of Young Men and Women in Uganda" (with LSHTM and the Medical Research Council). This study builds on the Footprints Study, adding a short set of questions to the Wave 3

d. "Evaluating the Regional Resource Person (RRP) Model" (with LSHTM). Using a mixed-methods approach, this study explores the feasibility and scalability of the RRP model. The Learning team and LSHTM jointly conceptualized this study in 2020, and it will include quantitative interviews from about 2,000 teachers in 100 schools, as well as qualitative interviews with 20 RRPs and 20 teacher protagonists; findings will be

e. "Scoping Review: Violence in Schools in the Global South" (with the University of Cape Town and the International Center for Research on Women). This scoping review on the state of the field is using a systematic approach to build on the global scan conducted by Raising Voices in 2019. The project began in August 2020 and focuses on more than 130 published articles that met the sampling criteria.







BOX 2:

Becoming Better Learners

- **Learning from partners.** The Learning team and research partner IDinsight coordinated
- **Furthering learning partnerships.** Following an early 2020 study on media messaging
- **Exploring how research collaborations can intersect with practice.** As a result of increased incidence of VAC during the pandemic, several adolescents participating in



2) Iterative Learning: Promoting Adaptive & Agile Programming

With COVID-related school closures and lockdown, all school- and community-level learning activities abruptly halted. While some of our formal studies faced delays, the Learning team redirected its energies toward revising organizational tracking sheets and key learning tools for the GST and SASA! Together. Adapting to the needs of the hour, we also strengthened our capacity through exploring new modes of digital and remote data collection.

- - improved programming.
- uptake of new L&A ideas.
- will inform the framing of our future campaigns.
- models.



a. Developing a new L&A framework for SASA! Together. The Learning team at Raising Voices is committed to supporting activist organizations to be skilled learners; rather than relegating monitoring and evaluation to a dedicated officer, we believe all staff can play an important role in learning from programming. The new L&A guide for SASA! Together incorporates learning from SASA! to create a new, strengthened and more accessible framework for L&A based on a know/feel/do model of outcomes. The new tools will support better tracking, analysis and application of learning for

b. Providing technical assistance for SASA! Together learning. To support partners, staff and our cadre of technical assistance providers, the Learning team conducted four internal technical assistance sessions on SASA! Together L&A and developed seven supplementary training tools to support autonomy, applied learning and smooth

c. Measuring national-level attitudes to guide future work. As part of our work on the communication campaign, we collaborated with a research firm to gather current data on attitudes on VAC to guide future learning and advocacy efforts in Uganda. The findings from this nationally representative audience of 2,000 telephone respondents

d. Revising the GST scorecard and other monitoring tools. Based on feedback from the Ipsos survey and from practice-based knowledge from our VAC Prevention team, we revised our outcome-tracking GST scorecard to better align with the six steps of the GST and also revised eight other monitoring tools to reflect new delivery

e. Using KoBoToolbox and other digital platforms for data collection. As the world shifts increasingly to digital spaces, we worked in 2020 to digitize GST tools using KoBoToolbox, a suite of tools for field data collection. This allows RRPs to enter data from their routine monitoring in schools directly into the KoBo application installed on the tablets provided to them. We also trained our 40 RRPs and three VAC





Prevention Centers on using KoBoToolbox, and we are currently exploring systems such as Power BI to create dashboards for data visualization. These processes have enriched Raising Voices' collective knowledge on data collection and visualization, and they represent a major step toward scaling up and eventually shifting to our own VAC mobile app, which we began initial development on in the final weeks of 2020.

f. Understanding ourselves and our RRPs. We collected psychometric data from our RRPs, using standardized scales to assess personality strengths and weaknesses. We plan to build on this data in 2021 and assess how different personality types are linked with GST implementation. Inspired by this activity, the Learning team invited Raising Voices staff to fill in a questionnaire to assess their learning styles.

3) Knowledge Integration

The Learning team continued to guide and structure our organizational learning by investing in reflection processes that foster analysis and synthesis. We have established a dashboard visualizing monitoring data that speaks to key indicators we are tracking in our work. This monitoring system gave rise to three key processes in 2020.

- **a. Conducting Reflect and Act sessions.** We held biannual "Reflect and Act" sessions for each team to gather feedback on our tracking system. We used this learning to refine our tracking sheets and make them easier for staff to use and to inform programmatic decisions.
- **b.** Learning from research. When new findings became available through our research collaborations (e.g., Ipsos and Busara), we helped the team to critically engage on the implications, assess the credibility of the conclusions presented and synthesize final recommendations. In 2021, we are planning further capacity-building focused on research uptake and integration alongside processes initiated by external partners, such as The Evaluation Fund.
- **c. Unpacking ethical considerations.** Alongside our research collaborations and internal learning processes, the Learning and VAW Prevention teams partnered with the Sexual Violence Research Initiative to produce *Learning Together: A Guide for Feminist Practice in Violence Against Women and Girls Research Collaborations.* The brief was launched in partnership with the African Women's Development Fund and Centre for Rights Education and Awareness during a webinar with over 85 participants and was translated into French and Spanish. With this publication, Raising Voices and the Sexual Violence Research Initiative have encouraged more equitable partnerships between research institutes and activist organizations that support quality processes and outcomes for VAW research.





Influencing

Influencing leverages our practice and learning to shape and promote effective, politicized violence prevention efforts at the national, regional and global levels.

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In 2020, with rising rates of violence against both women and children during COVID-19, voices across the Global South advocated for the prioritization of effective violence prevention work.





1) National Advocacy

a. Engaging key line ministries on VAC. Our national influencing strategy with the Government of Uganda - including MoES, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) and others - to secure their endorsement of the GST moved forward dramatically in 2020. Several opportunities to engage these high-level stakeholders through our six-month communications campaign – along with additional trainings and presentations and our movement toward signing formal memoranda of understanding with the MoES and the National Curriculum Development Centre have further cemented our place as thought and practice leaders in VAC prevention in Uganda.

Our Influencing team coordinated six presentations to departments at MoES, MGLSD and the National Curriculum Development Centre in 2020, as well as three one-on-one briefings about the GST with commissioners, eight one-on-one consultative meetings with technical officials from line ministries, four meeting with officials from the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) and MoES, and two formal presentations of the GST to MoES officials.

b. Conducting a communications campaign on VAC. The VAC team carried out a communications campaign between December 2019 and March 2021 that engaged diverse members of the public (including teachers, parents and children), as well as government officials from MoES, MGLSD and the Ministry of Health. Topics of discussion included sexual, emotional, intergenerational, physical and economic VAC, while exploring challenges posed by COVID-19.



The campaign has been broadcast on 15 radio and three TV stations, publishing diverse content that includes live talk shows (102), prerecorded programs on VAC-related themes (16 on TV and 25 on radio), scripted radio dramas (16), three info spots on radio and TV broadcast over 1,000 times and several amplifier spots on TV.

c. Articulating our position on reopening schools. The

VAC Prevention team actively participated in the debate on when and how to reopen schools, promoting a child-centric analysis drawing on lessons learned from the global experience. We published this position and shared it widely with national partners to offer analysis and language they could use to further this debate.

2) Regional Organizing

- topics.



a. Leveraging social media. We held four dynamic campaigns in 2020: COVID and VAW, body politics, solidarity, and women's safety and well-being. These lively and active spaces brought renowned feminists and experts from across sub-Saharan Africa together for Facebook Live and Instagram Live sessions, Twitter chats and blogs. Particularly in a year that was so challenging, this inclusive and diverse space brought members together for meaningful, inclusive discussions on critical feminist

b. Conducting webinars. During unprecedented times of physical distancing and restrictions, the GBV Prevention Network launched a members' webinar series as a new strategy to engage with members. The team hosted six webinars in 2020, the first three focusing on how to address VAW during COVID-19 and the final three focused on the key principles of VAW prevention. The webinars reached over 200 activists from eight countries and demonstrated the strong desire for members to connect with each other and also increase their knowledge and skills on VAW prevention.





- c. Coordinating events. The Peer Learning Network, situated within our VAC Prevention team, led collaborative commemorations for the International Day of the African Child, International Day of the Girl Child and World Teacher's Day, as well as additional engagements to mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign - all using digital platforms to connect participants from around East Africa and across the globe.
- d. Providing action and advocacy kits. In 2020, we received more than five times as many requests for the 16 Days of Activism Action and Advocacy Kit compared to the previous year (380 requests from organizations, up from 71 in 2019). After carefully assessing applications, we provided hard copies of the kit to 154 organizations from 15 countries

where they were able to continue in-person activism; nearly 350 visits were also made to the online version of the kit. We also shared a link to the Padlet board, where over 55 GBV Prevention Network members shared more about their work and campaign activities.

e. Continuing regional VAW prevention and self- and collective-care work. We engaged 195 Network members in Rethink & Reenergize sessions (R&Rs) in Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. 2020's R&Rs unpacked body politics to understand our bodies from a political angle and discuss how women's appearance, beauty, and sexual and reproductive roles have been used as tools to oppress women. R&Rs also explored VAW prevention concepts, evidence and programming approaches. The R&Rs, done in person and remotely, allowed participants to have intimate conversations on body politics and were infused with self-care activities, such as yoga, meditation and breathing (see Box 3).

Out of the R&R processes also grew a commitment for more coordinated nationallevel advocacy on VAW prevention. As a result, the Network engaged consultants in the four

Box 3:

R&R Impact

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being participating in the R&Rs reported:

- ▶ R&Rs offered them a safe space, with an average rating of 4.5.
- ▶ R&Rs contributed to members' self-care, with the average rating for members making time for self-care shifting from 2.8 before the sessions to 3.7 after participating.
- ► An increased average rating for body acceptance, from 3.9 before the sessions to 4.3 after

countries (Malawi, Zambia, Uganda and Tanzania) to conduct a policy environment scan that built on and reinforced what emerged from the R&R sessions. Four country-specific advocacy briefs were drafted and will be peer reviewed by R&R members in 2021 with an aim to consolidate key advocacy asks in each country. The briefs will support members to engage decision- and policymakers in 2021.





3) Global Influencing

2020 provided opportunities to continue extending our voice into the global discourse around violence prevention.

a. Laying the groundwork for a global influencing group on ending VAC in schools.

In December 2019, Raising Voices assembled practitioners from seven countries across the Global South committed to ending VAC in schools to discuss ideas for collaborating on a global influencing group. This group, which has been named the "Coalition on Good Schools: Voices from the Global South," started 2020 by committing to align resources and setting an agenda for collaboration that would ensure key voices from the Global South are contributing to the global dialogue around how to effectively address VAC in schools. While COVID-19 disrupted progress, the latter half of the year provided ample space for discussion through a series of online meetings on how this group would begin engaging in global spaces in early 2021.

b. Providing thought leadership on VAW prevention during COVID-19. The onset of COVID-19 increased women's risk of experiencing violence while at the same time hindering violence prevention and response, with most organizations forced to either suspend or scale down their programming. This challenge called for novel thinking on how VAW prevention organizations and programs could adapt during COVID-19. The VAW Influencing team developed a series of five guidance notes on VAW prevention programming during the pandemic. These highlighted the pandemic's impact on women, made recommendations for organizational adaptations, encouraged self and collective care, and promoted safe and ethical VAW prevention programming (including SASA! Together) during this time. They were welcomed







by partners and funders alike, with groups translating them and our technical assistance providers using them to support safe programming.

Following the guidance notes, we conducted an online survey to learn more about how organizations were managing COVID-19's effects on them and the women they serve. We also created an infographic to illustrate how 111 activist organizations across the Global South were speaking out, stepping up and calling for action to prevent VAW during this time.

We also produced a series of community activities for VAW prevention (see the Practice section) that we launched with partners in Ethiopia, Timor-Leste and Cambodia in a global webinar on VAW prevention during COVID-19. All our work around COVID-19 and VAW prevention in 2020 sought to support and elevate activist organizations in the Global South. These organizations, closest to affected communities, adapted quickly and worked with such commitment, truly supporting women and girls during this difficult time.

c. Conducting global engagement. The VAW Prevention team continued to play an active role in the global discourse. We remain co-conveners with Salamander Trust of the Community for Understanding Scale Up (CUSP), which is gaining traction in the literature and practice around scale. We published a blog post on scaling up genderbased violence prevention on the Align Platform and did a deep dive into the topic of feminist scale over the year. This group continues to be a place of solidarity, critical thinking and collective advocacy for safe and ethical scaling.

Raising Voices also participated in a variety of advisory groups and processes, such as the Coalition of Feminists for Social Change, the Leadership Council at the Global Women's Institute, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and the Global Health Council, among others. We used these processes and requests for reviews of strategic documents and publications to center women, a feminist analysis, violence prevention and activist organizations in the Global South.







Enhancing staff safety in the workplace and at home. As COVID-19 emerged as a global pandemic, we issued emergency guidelines on workplace safety and protection, as well as travel and meeting guidelines for all our staff and partners. For example, we introduced a procedure for staff to be on teams that alternated working from home and working in the office; enforced mask-wearing, temperature checks and social distancing at the office; and extended our IT infrastructure to staff members' homes to allow them to work from home whenever required. We also issued a special one-time payment to all staff to prepare for COVID lockdown.

Organizational Overview

In 2020, we adjusted nearly all our plans, practices and processes to account for COVID-19 limitations on movement, travel, in-person meetings and activity implementation.

BOX 4: Virtual Staff Retreat

out over a month and a half. A different team designed and led each session, and the retreat









Strengthening the Organization

In 2020, we continued investing in the organization strengthening process that began 18 months earlier by:

- a. Bolstering the board's oversight role. The Raising Voices Board of Directors increased the frequency of meetings in 2020, from twice per year to four times a year, and used those meetings to harness the board's expertise and oversight role to navigate the turbulence unleashed by COVID-19. The board also welcomed one new member.
- b. Strengthening financial systems and ensuring financial stability. Although the office closure delayed the 2019 audit process, we were nonetheless able to test the reliability and efficiency of our financial management system. With the support of external experts, the team tailored our financial reporting templates to produce higher-quality reports with greater accuracy. We also established six new funding partnerships, considerably strengthening the resource base of the organization.
- c. Placing recruitment on hold. We had to pause recruitment on three senior staff positions in the final stages of recruitment due to the pandemic. It was not feasible to bring senior staff on board and do a meaningful onboarding process. We instead hired several consultants to support our work, but it was a challenge to accomplish our ambitious agenda and we will resume recruitment in 2021.
- **d.** Nurturing a learning environment. In 2020, we continued our Feminist Learning Circles, a series of internal all-staff discussions to enhance our collective understanding of a feminist approach to violence prevention that began in 2019. The series has covered topics such as the history of feminism worldwide and in Africa, what a feminist organization is, and what feminist prevention programming looks like. This enabled staff to appreciate the unique foundation that informs our programming, actions and values. We also invested in several partnerships with the explicit objective of enhancing our capacity (see the Learning section).

Financial Summary

The pandemic reshuffled investment priorities, with many donors feeling both the pressure to address urgent needs caused by the crisis and the financial slowdowns across the globe. However, despite the uncertainty, our funding base grew and we were able to establish six new funding partnerships in 2020. We received new grants from GPEVAC, Echidna Giving, New Venture Fund, the Ford Foundation, Sigrid Rausing Trust and the Imago Dei Fund. Alongside our 11 continuing partnerships, this meant we continued to cultivate a diverse donor base in 2020

Much of this funding arrived in early 2020, the culmination of pre-pandemic relationship-building. Due to the lockdown and restricted movement, we found ourselves in the unusual dilemma of wondering whether we would be able to expend the funds within the grant time frames. While some donors had their own external restrictions, most could accommodate our position that it was better to slow expenditure than to simply spend in order to maintain a track record and were willing to grant no-cost extensions. We slowed expenditure in the Practice area of work (by 27%) and increased our expenditure in the Learning (by 122%) and Influencing (by 65%) portions of our work that could be executed more readily online.







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Funding contribution by donor for 2020



- GPeVAC (Safe to Learn)
- Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
- IrishAid
- Ford Foundation
- Oak Foundation
- NoVo Foundation
- Echidna Giving
- New Venture Fund
- African Women's Development Fund
- Sigrid Rausing Trust
- The Evaluation Fund
- Vista Hermosa Foundation
- Imago Dei Fund
- Misc.









no an





continuing partnerships, some over multiple years





The Year in Numbers

Practice

1.000

schools implementing the Good School Toolkit

4,297 community members and

139 community leaders reached through VAC Prevention Dialogues

40

regional resource persons trained to support

153 activists from

18 countries

participating in the

SASA! Together launch

6

community conversations, as well as **3 posters** and **2** infosheets, developed for preventing VAW during COVID-19

Learning

9 formal research collaborations

2,000 telephone respondents

40

RRPs and **3 VAC Prevention Centers**

organizations responding to the online survey about the

Variation Influencing

12 leaders in the field of VAC prevention recruited into the global influencing group



presentations on VAW prevention

16 pre-recorded magazines, while audio content includes **25** pre-recorded audio magazines (**3** spot ads,

16 dramas)

102

one-hour live radio talk shows, 6 invited TV appearances, **34** invited radio appearances, and **8** national print media publications



participants reached virtual learning







the GBV Prevention Network in 2020, resulting in **784** retweets



Reflections

The flavor of this third year of our five-year strategy was one of cultivating adaptation and fostering resilience. We continued to invest in strengthening the organization and made bold strides in growing our resource base, yet most of our energy focused on responding to the unusual circumstances. From regular revisions of our workplans to developing new models for rolling out our work, 2020 stretched us and reminded us why we value versatility and agility in our work.



Despite the challenges, we reached important milestones in 2020. First, we launched the fully revised SASA! Together, our flagship methodology that has been applied in more than 40 countries spanning from the Asia-Pacific region to Latin America. The demand for technical assistance to implement this work keeps growing, as does the evidence for its applicability in diverse settings. Our work on preventing VAC also reached a milestone related to the measurable implementation of the GST in 1,000 schools in Uganda, an ambition that we have been nurturing for five years. Beyond these achievements, in 2020, we formed partnerships that fostered mutual learning and exercised astute leadership in the global discourse. We added new capabilities in our work, further fortified our team and strengthened the organization in important ways.

In the trajectory of our five-year plan, 2020 will be characterized more as refinement and deepening rather than linear progress, but the investments will also set us up well for the remaining two years. The following are some of the key reflections from the year:

There is integrity in numbers but also tension between scale and quality.

We began 2020 by reflecting on the perennial tension between scale and quality. While our monitoring data showed that the GST was being used in more than 1,000 schools, we wondered how many of those schools were using the ideas at the level we could consider to be meaningful implementation. In late 2019, we had hired an independent firm to administer a scoring exercise. We found that while the results were gratifying, we needed to invest in strengthening implementation in all the schools to claim with integrity that the Toolkit was being used in 1,000 schools. We embarked on a 15-month plan to consolidate work in all 1,000, and in 2021, we will only count schools that score at least 67% on our scorecard as implementing schools. Preliminary monitoring data suggests we reached that goal in late 2020, pending formal administering of the scorecard in 2021. The crux of our reflection rested on the internal insistence that we need to be confident of the numbers we claim to reach. Our reputation depends on partners and collaborators being able to rely on the integrity of our word.







Necessity inspires innovation.

For years, our core belief was that our strength lay in being able to work alongside partners, to sit face to face with them and solve problems together. A considerable proportion of our resources were invested in traveling physically to various places and being in the presence of collaborators. While we still believe there is no substitute for face-to-face engagement, we have come to realize there may be new ways of expanding our reach. We invested substantial resources in establishing IT infrastructure, experimented with bulk purchases of mobile telephone innovations and engaged with groups that could help us manage data and curate communication by leveraging technology. The GBV Prevention Network developed digital content, hosted webinars and leveraged the support of feminists who lived outside of Uganda but were keen to join in feminist sisterhood, using their voices and credibility to strengthen our collective movement. The VAC team developed an alternative model of supporting schools and communities in VAC prevention through online capacity-building and accompaniment of local activists. This adaptation has proven so promising that we have now planned a formal assessment of this leaner model's efficacy.

The VAC team developed an alternative model of supporting schools and communities in VAC prevention through online capacitybuilding and accompaniment of local activists.

In an uncertain time, making sense of things is the most practical gift.

During this uncertain moment, when no one really knew what was going to happen next (or when), we found ourselves hosting and participating in collective "sensemaking" forums. We hosted webinars, contributed to podcasts, wrote opinion pieces, facilitated virtual retreats and reached out to sister organizations to check in on them. We wrote a midyear letter to our collaborators and partners to report how we were faring and invited experienced colleagues to share their wisdom with our staff. Our staff appeared frequently on TV and radio and in global processes and presentations to discuss COVID-19, its impact on VAW/VAC and what prevention looked like during that time. The need to find words to describe what we were all going through, and how we were responding to it together, was intense, palpable and comforting.



In times of crisis, normal rules can be suspended.

As the months of the new reality unfurled, we slowly found ourselves accepting that new circumstances required new behavior. We began by instituting a liberal policy of flexible working hours that measured work by output rather than the number of hours spent at the office. We emphasized self and collective care and reduced work hours during lockdowns to recognize and support heightened caregiving and the challenges many face when working from home. We invested in helping people to work from wherever they felt safest and recruited consultants who lived thousands of miles away. We adjusted how we met to discuss work and even revised long-held beliefs about how we should accomplish our work.

We found donors, too, changed their expectations. Two donors waived the requirement for written interim reports, and three offered additional resources - a pleasant change from the normal world of carefully scrutinized proposals filled with numbers of individuals reached and formal statements of accountability. In the ultimate break from our normal modus operandi, we put cash in the hands of our staff (Urgent Action Fund), who were being inundated with neighbors and friends whose income had dried up and were finding themselves in desperate situations. This aberration from the norm profoundly humanized our work.







Final Word

By all accounts, 2020 was like no other year in living memory. The best-laid plans for the year were upended, and there was a new global reality, an imposed pause as the world collectively stood still to take stock of and adjust to what had befallen us. Yet amidst this reality, there were stories of practical problem-solving, solidarity, survival and resilience. There were stories of generosity, collective ingenuity and innovation, and thus, as the year proceeded, a feeling that we would endure. Of course, the violence against women and children did not abate, and we heard stories and collected data on how the circumstances were exacerbating the injustice. We therefore enter 2021 with full awareness that our work needs to be even more focused, and now more than ever, there is an urgent need to prevent violence against women and children.



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