

No. 6

Learning from
Practice Series
**Research
Perspectives**

Get Moving! transforming individuals and organizations

Overview

The increase in public dialogue, programming and investment around violence against women (VAW) is a promising development. At Raising Voices, we have seen a dramatic shift in the diversity and number of groups working to prevent and respond to VAW—an effort that was previously concentrated within women’s organizations. While this increased focus represents an exciting milestone—reflecting the hard work of many decades of feminist activism—it also comes with some challenges. VAW programming has grown increasingly technical rather than political, at times shifting from a social justice orientation to a development framework. While we recognize that technical expertise is essential, the increasing emphasis on quick-fix interventions that must demonstrate impact within short timeframes often comes at the expense of deeper, longer-term efforts to transform communities.

Recognizing these trends, the GBV Prevention Network set out to engage with members working on VAW (prevention, advocacy and response) to develop a shared understanding of core VAW concepts and connect to a more politicized perspective (see Box 1). To do this, we developed *Get Moving!*—a methodology designed to take organizations through a process of intensive reflection of feminist principles, at both a personal and organizational level.

Since 2010, thirty two civil society organizations across thirteen countries have participated in *Get Moving!*. After six years, with plans for expansion to additional GBV Prevention Network members, this learning paper provides a critical reflection of the *Get Moving!* experience thus far.

What is the GBV Prevention Network?

The GBV Prevention Network (preventgbvafrica.org) came to life in 2003 to create a space for organizations in the Horn, East and Southern Africa to share ideas, learn from each other, and strengthen the VAW prevention movement for a just and violence-free world for women and girls. We now have over 800 members representing 21 different countries. The Network is coordinated by Raising Voices (raisingvoices.org), which is based in Kampala, Uganda.

Box 1: What is a feminist perspective on violence against women?

A feminist perspective recognizes that VAW is not about any woman's individual experience, but is a fundamentally systemic issue of women's subordination (as individuals and/or as a group) to men. Stated simply, the core drivers of VAW are unequal power between women and men in our societies and the patriarchal systems and norms that uphold this power imbalance. As such, addressing VAW is *political* work that requires transforming power structures at multiple levels (e.g., individual, family, community and the wider society). For Raising Voices, this politicized analysis is a key component of the technical capacity required to advance VAW prevention programming.

Program Context

Get Moving! is a process grounded in feminist analysis. The methodology helps organizations move through ten topics (see Box 2) using a range of creative activities, such as private journaling, structured exercises, group reflections, role plays and supplemental reading. The three overarching objectives are as follows:

- To inspire *individuals* to critically reflect on personal values and identities and connect more deeply with key VAW concepts.
- To strengthen *organizations* by identifying opportunities to enhance organizational culture and integrity by engaging in values-driven work.
- To contribute to a cohesive *movement* to prevent violence against women by fostering a shared analysis of the core drivers of VAW and acknowledging the positive power of working in solidarity.

Box 2: The ten *Get Moving!* topics

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| a. What is <i>Get Moving!</i> ? | f. Leading with Values |
| b. The Journey | g. Exploring Activism |
| c. Knowing Ourselves | h. Championing Women's Strength |
| d. Learning from Our Own Relationships | i. Building Movements in Solidarity |
| e. Acknowledging Power Imbalances | j. Moving Beyond <i>Get Moving!</i> |

Any organization can implement *Get Moving!* with support from leadership and the initiative of a committed staff member to drive the process, using the Facilitator's Guide and Participant's Workbook. The process intentionally seeks to involve *all* staff as equal participants, from the support team to senior management. *Get Moving!* is also adaptable to the specific needs of each participating organization, and the structure of the sessions is flexible. For example, some organizations elect to cover the ten topics over one or more immersive workshops (e.g., one week or longer), while others prefer shorter sessions that address one topic at a time, implemented over the course of several months. The GBV Prevention Network offers technical assistance and support to help organizations initiate the process and navigate any challenges along the way.



Research Method

In this paper, we seek to understand how participants' experience *Get Moving!*'s feminist process of introspection and organizational transformation, by addressing the following questions: (1) What are the key aspects of the methodology that support change? and, (2) What are the potential challenges to integrating *Get Moving!* within an organization?

To explore these questions, we reflected on our experience supporting numerous organizations with *Get Moving!* and collected data through the following methods:

- 5 key informant interviews (three with facilitators and two with executive directors)
- 42 written evaluations completed by *Get Moving!* participants after their final session
- 18 written evaluations completed by *Get Moving!* facilitators after a five-day training
- 1 group discussion during a *Get Moving!* closing session with 20 participants
- participant remarks from a workshop with 20 *Get Moving!* facilitators

Data analysis

We used thematic coding to analyze the data. Trustworthiness and credibility was enhanced by using verbatim transcripts of the informant interviews and a multi-step process to identify common themes across the various data types. Emergent themes were discussed and contrasted with Raising Voices' organizational reflections. The findings below reflect the outcome of this collective, iterative analytic process. Note that all respondents provided informed consent prior to their participation; pseudonyms are used in this paper to maintain confidentiality.

Limitations

The sample of interview participants was small and, as such, is not necessarily representative of the experiences shared by all individuals—or organizations—involved in *Get Moving!* In addition, since the interviews and written evaluations took place after respondents had engaged with *Get Moving!*, some comments may have been influenced by a desire to portray the process in a favorable light. At the same time, we hope that the trust and accountability fostered through *Get Moving!* helped spark honest feedback, and indeed several participants shared challenging moments during the interviews. While the findings below are not intended to provide scientific evidence of impact, by sharing key observations from diverse perspectives we hope to provide valuable insight about the types of changes that can emerge from *Get Moving!*, as well as some challenges to consider in order to enhance organizational uptake of the methodology.

Findings

Based on the data collected, our analysis synthesizes diverse reflections, from *Get Moving!* participants including management, program and support staff. In establishing key findings, we focused primarily on the narratives of change that emerged when participants were asked to reflect on (a) their *personal* experience with *Get Moving!* and (b) any contributions *Get Moving!* has made to their *organizations*. Discussion of *Get Moving!*'s third objective—building a cohesive *movement* for VAW prevention—is included in the “Turning Research into Action” section.

Overall, we discovered a fairly consistent sense of enthusiasm for *Get Moving!* and frequent descriptions of the process as a powerful, and deep, experience that contributes to the growth of individuals and organizations. The potential benefits of *Get Moving!* seem strongest when organizations implement with fidelity to the approach—meaning that all topics are covered in a comprehensive manner and that individual staff complement the group sessions by engaging with the Participant's Workbook. That said, not all organizations benefited to the same extent. A few were unable to sustain the momentum and did not complete all ten topics. While the positive feedback emphasized various change trajectories, the challenges were cross-cutting and more foundational in nature. Thus, the first three findings below describe the potential benefits of *Get Moving!* and relevant aspects of the methodology, whereas the fourth finding collates the challenges organizations faced in integrating and sustaining the *Get Moving!* process.

1. A feminist connection to VAW work grows from first looking inwards at oneself.

All ten topics in *Get Moving!* are designed to prompt critical self-reflection and inspire a more personalized connection to VAW concepts—ultimately enhancing the quality of VAW-related work. We found promising indications that many participants have experienced such a shift within themselves and in their professional practices. As one facilitator explained, “The process is designed to raise three powerful questions: Who am I? What do I stand for? and How am I living my values through my work?” In the written evaluations, participants frequently credited *Get Moving!* with increasing their self-awareness of their core values and the power within themselves. This opportunity to turn the focus inward and critically examine how one upholds—or at times falls short—of her/his personal values in everyday life became an eye-opening experience for many participants.

“ I had never put it together before, but the way I treat house girls and neighbors is also about my values and what I believe in.
– Margaret, *Get Moving!* Participant

“ We have a guy who came in as IT. At first he would not talk, he did not know why he was there. Now he has blossomed. We call him the ‘*Get Moving!* guru.’ He has been impacted. . . it has been an eye opener [for him], around things you do at home and the role it plays in perpetuating VAW.
– Hanifa, *Get Moving!* Facilitator

Our data further suggests that *Get Moving!* helps to deepen individual analysis of the core drivers of violence and related VAW concepts—such as feminism, activism, power and social justice—resulting in participants possessing greater conviction and confidence when engaging with these issues. Importantly, participants confirmed that the participatory activities utilized throughout *Get Moving!* helped them understand and relate to these complex concepts not only as part of their work but also on a personal level.

“ People were really shocked that the work on violence was actually about power. Staff didn’t really know that . . . even though we have been doing this work for a long time. This was a big moment with us.
– Rita, *Get Moving!* Participant

Organizations often make the assumption that their staff members bring personal perspectives that align with the organization’s mission, given the political nature of the work. However, our experience suggests that this is not always the case. For example, some staff may understand human rights and gender equality as “work” topics, divorced from their personal values and actions in other spaces. Our findings indicate that *Get Moving!* can help to bridge this gap, as personal shifts triggered by *Get Moving!* generate a ripple effect across the organization. As more individual staff members gain a deeper grounding in core VAW concepts, the organization’s foundation for engaging in quality, politicized VAW programming is likely to grow stronger. In addition, by creating a space to *collectively* discuss, question and reflect on sensitive topics, *Get Moving!* enables team members to learn from one another and come to a place of shared understanding and analysis. *Get Moving!* can help staff feel more personally connected to their organization’s mission and to become more committed and passionate about their organization’s work.

“ I can facilitate better now, because I feel the issues and connect to them personally . . . It’s not that I didn’t know before, but I hadn’t really wrapped my head around ideas of equality between men and women and power balance, and a lot of other contextual issues . . . so sometimes when I facilitated I would just leave these ideas hanging. Right now, I can articulate the issues with conviction, and this helps participants really connect with these concepts.
– Harriet, *Get Moving!* Facilitator

2. Individually living the values of VAW work can shift organizational culture.

Beyond strengthening staff members' commitment to their organization's mission and work, we find that *Get Moving!* can transform aspects of organizational culture, including how team members relate to one another. Throughout the *Get Moving!* process, facilitators repeatedly explore organizational values and how power is utilized in decision-making and other staff processes. While at times challenging, we find that these conversations have helped organizations identify latent issues and take action to address underlying tensions. Specific examples of how *Get Moving!* can open communication channels include empowering staff to speak out about gender roles in the office (e.g., speaking out against designating cleaning responsibilities to female staff only), fostering more direct styles of communication when giving feedback and resolving disputes, and strengthening overall communication between staff and management as everyone becomes more aware—and transparent—about sensitive issues related to power.



People have changed; we are a different organization. We are now trying much more to walk the talk. We didn't even ever think about it before; now we are really trying to live our beliefs.

– Susanna, *Get Moving!* Participant



We used to consider ourselves open before, but there were certain critiques that people wouldn't dare to raise within group processes—that they would only whisper. . . in the corridors. I feel [since *Get Moving!*] there is now more openness—and people can now hold you to account, whether senior staff or not.

– Harriet, *Get Moving!* Facilitator

Participant evaluation and interviews also revealed that the open, yet structured discussions that take place during the *Get Moving!* exercises can have long-term effects on team dynamics and promote bonding among individuals who do not typically work together. In addition, the emphasis on involving *all* staff members in *Get Moving!*—including junior, senior, program and administrative staff—was often credited for encouraging more organizational cohesion. Participants described staff getting to know each other in new ways, while simultaneously attempting to “undress titles” and break down existing power hierarchies. Some of the organizations we spoke with shared that they experienced stronger leadership at various levels, as well as an increased sense of collective responsibility to the organization and broader area of work.



We are more of a team, since we finished the process. . . It is not just about us coming to work. We support each other more. There is more of a family culture, and we feel safer around each other.

– Hanifa, *Get Moving!* Facilitator



The process helped many staff to understand that everyone has a leadership role to play in their work and their relationship with others. In the past, they would wait for me, but now people are realizing their power and [that] their contributions are important, no matter what the title . . . Staff have become more accountable to the organization and to women's rights—which is the most important.

– Sharifa, *Get Moving!* Participant

3. A reframing of activism and professional solidarity helps to build a movement.

Participant experiences indicate that in addition to shifts in awareness and personal beliefs, *Get Moving!* can inspire *action*. As noted above, the methodology encourages scrutiny of potential contradictions between *believing* in values and *living* them in everyday life. Emerging from this awareness, some participants made intentional changes in how they relate to their families, colleagues and others. For example, people shared accounts of how *Get Moving!* has helped them to question—and ultimately shift—the way they discipline their children and interact with domestic workers, their partners and others in their lives.

Importantly, many participants appreciate *Get Moving!* for helping them recognize how such actions in their personal lives and workplaces are a valid form of activism. Interview data suggests that prior to *Get Moving!*, participants frequently had a narrow understanding of activism and leadership, believing for example that the term “activist” is reserved for protestors in the streets and that only executive directors can lead organizational change. However, by fostering more inclusive definitions of “everyday activism” and “values-driven leadership,” *Get Moving!* helps people to recognize their own agency within these concepts, which is critical for effectively addressing VAW.²

“*Get Moving!* is a basic need for any feminist or activist organization. It helps staff to connect with issues of injustice and rights and to activate that activism spirit.

– Sharifa, *Get Moving!* Participant

“[Before *Get Moving!*] I thought activism was moving around with a placard and shouting. Now I know I can do activism in many small ways—how I treat others, for example, how I treat my domestic helper or my children.

– Janet, *Get Moving!* Participant

“[Through *Get Moving!*] we came to realize that everyone, not only senior staff, can do something to become an activist. Everyone has power to do something.

– Martin, *Get Moving!* Participant

Furthermore, participants discussed that by enabling this sense of agency, while concurrently breaking down power hierarchies at work, *Get Moving!* shifts organizational culture and, in the process, strengthens organizations.

“When we reflect [on *Get Moving!*], it helped us change. There are some things in organizations that are not good—that hurt us as individuals. And if we have weak organizations, then how can we really have a movement?

– Franklin, *Get Moving!* Participant

4. Personalizing VAW work takes courage, time and resources that can feel beyond one's capacity.

While participants shared powerful examples of how *Get Moving!* can transform organizations, some narratives also highlighted the courage and openness such changes often require. Staff, particularly senior leadership, at times expressed concerns about breeding cynicism, particularly if issues raised through *Get Moving!* do not result in concrete change/action or if participants focused on the negative and not strengths of introspection. While the majority of participants value the open communication that emerges through the process, in certain instances sessions can reveal areas of discontent—or even exposure of past abuse of power. It is important to be aware that the process has the potential to temporarily arouse tension and disagreement, as previously-concealed perspectives are shared, dealt with and resolved. While *Get Moving!* is designed to help organizations move safely through these difficult moments, on occasion organizations have discontinued the process when sensitive issues are raised and they were not prepared to handle them in a positive manner.



[My biggest fear is that] it will grant the poisonous apples in my organization more power to be critical of me.”

– Gloria, *Get Moving!* Participant

In our experience, follow-up action between sessions helps to resolve issues that surface through *Get Moving!* In addition, skilled facilitation is absolutely critical; during tense moments. The *Get Moving!* facilitator must artfully balance the need to recognize individual concerns, prevent the conversation from spiraling into a negative space, and, at the same time, lead the group towards a solutions-oriented resolution.

Managing such a provocative process can be further challenged by more practical constraints. The most common struggle associated with implementing *Get Moving!* was allocating sufficient time and resources as well as sustaining these throughout the process, which can span over several months or even more than a year. As a result, some organizations experienced large gaps between sessions or abandoned the process all together. In addition, many of the *Get Moving!* sessions conclude with action points that, if not carefully prioritized, can leave an organization feeling overwhelmed by various “self-improvement” steps to fit into busy schedules. The reality is that the work of an activist organization frequently involves intense work plans and repeated travel, and subsequently, finding time when everyone is available to participate can pose a logistical challenge.

Similarly, deadlines can interfere with the process, especially if staff perceive *Get Moving!* as distinct from their “real work.” It can also be difficult to orient new staff joining midway through, as well as individuals who miss sessions for any number of reasons. Organizations have experimented with different implementation strategies (e.g., intensive, multi-day workshops, as well as short sessions that extend over several months), and we are still exploring the most effective method of implementation, which likely differs by organization. Taking the time to articulate a clear vision of how *Get Moving!* can best be integrated within the structure and context of each organization—and making adaptations when necessary—can go a long way towards quality implementation.



The [*Get Moving!*] time frame was very difficult—the full process took like two years to complete . . . People were so busy . . . In the early stages it was practically coercive to get people to come . . . Senior management had to send out an email, and at first they came begrudgingly. Timing is a huge challenge.”

– Harriet, *Get Moving!* Facilitator

These practical constraints are a very real part of VAW work. At the same time, addressing such challenges can become part of an organizational culture shift that elevates the importance of better understanding and strengthening the foundation upon which we work. In that context, resolving practical constraints becomes, in part, about supporting staff and senior management to 1) fully appreciate the value of deeply engaging with these issues personally, interpersonally and organizationally, and 2) prioritize staff and organizational development.

Similarly, we have found that participants commonly overlook the private reflections in the *Get Moving!* Participant’s Workbook—with journaling being a new concept for many. However based on our own organizational experience with *Get Moving!*, this introspection—and the act of writing as a way to deepen the process and concretize learning—can be integral aspect of the methodology, and, as such, a core component to retain. When staff do use the Participant’s Workbook, it is typically a powerful experience, yet we have not yet pinpointed how to sustain motivation and support staff in this process. Indeed, the significance an organization attaches to *Get Moving!* becomes a critical influencing factor in how staff navigate the challenges of implementation and participation. The GBV Prevention Network is seeking ways for the design of *Get Moving!* itself to make it easier to embark on and stay committed to the journey.

Turning Research into Action

We embarked on the *Get Moving!* journey to engage individuals in becoming more politicized and committed to a feminist analysis of VAW. We know that as the work intensifies and our organizations grow bigger, maintaining a politicized outlook can be challenging and deliberate effort is required to bring that analysis to life through organizational practice and programs. We believe that remaining committed to a feminist analysis of VAW would create stronger organizations and a more cohesive movement grounded in a vision of social change. After five years of programming, *Get Moving!* has registered notable successes in deepening personal connections to the work, transforming organizational culture to reflect positive power in day-to-day interactions and fueling activism and solidarity at individual and organizational levels. Based on what we have learned thus far, we believe these shifts are already influencing the wider VAW prevention movement, as *Get Moving!* participants and organizations interact with communities, partners and networks—role modeling new ways of thinking and working.

By teasing out the specific processes within *Get Moving!* that facilitated positive change and reflecting on how to further alleviate or resolve the remaining challenges, we identified the following key practices that can contribute to feminist violence against women prevention and response programming:

- **Make a commitment to looking within before looking out:** VAW is deeply personal and touches the core of our belief system as individuals and groups. Effective VAW prevention and response requires an organization to invest in and set aside time for staff processes that foster personal reflection of one's own values about power, equality, non-discrimination and agency—and how these values are applied at personal and professional levels.
- **Prioritize regular, creative internal staff processes:** Despite busy schedules and intensive work plans, it is important to prioritize internal learning and reflection processes for staff. Rather than being seen as a luxury, treat these processes as an essential foundation for quality programming. Breaking down core VAW concepts repeatedly and through a range of creative and participatory formats—including readings, exercises, group work, private reflections and journaling—can ensure meaningful staff development and organizational growth.
- **Welcome and accept tensions and challenges as growth opportunities:** The most transformative processes often bring discomfort and uncertainty. We encourage communities to take on challenging topics that are intended to inspire change, yet are we as courageous in our organizations? Change requires an openness to new ideas and perspectives and accepting some unease in the process. Leaders can welcome rather than avoid such tensions, choosing to see these moments as opportunities. This role modeling can foster more openness among staff and the safety needed for honest conversations to emerge.
- **Engage a strong facilitator for key organizational processes:** The importance of strong facilitation by a staff member who is skilled, respected and perceived as fair cannot be overstated. For example, the facilitator's ability to create a safe space where divergent views can be freely expressed provides the foundation for authentic personal reflection and organizational change. In addition, a facilitator who is able to fully explain key VAW concepts can contribute to the process of committing to these concepts.
- **Use and adapt tools for staff development:** It is important to seek new tools for staff development that allow for authentic transformation. Whether using *Get Moving!* or another open source tool, it is critical for organizations to reflect on how the process can best be integrated within their own organizational context. At times, this may require tailoring the content or structure, as no one model fits all. Irrespective of whether organizations undertake adaptations on their own, or solicit input from a group with relevant expertise, creating space to articulate a clear vision and process at the outset is an essential step.
- **Expect profound changes to take time.** Our experience suggests that momentum for the process of re-politicizing the work (which involves staff sessions) often builds over time, and that active encouragement during the early stages is often necessary. We have found that adopting a long-term view and remaining patient can go a long way toward consistent implementation.

Transformative VAW programming is possible and begins with individual and organizational introspection. If you would like to *Get Moving!* on this journey, please write to info@preventgbv africa.org

Interested in learning more?

- Raising Voices. 2015. "Creating an organizational culture for social justice activism." *Learning from Practice Series, No. 1: Organizational Perspectives*. Kampala, Uganda: Raising Voices. Available online at <http://raisingvoices.org/resources/>
- Chigudu, H. and Chigudu, R. (2015). *Strategies for building an organization with a soul*. African Institute for Integrated Responses to VAWG & HIV/AIDS (AIR). Available at: <http://airforafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Strategies-for-Building-an-Organisation-with-Soul-for-web1.pdf>
- *In Her Shoes: A Toolkit for reflecting on violence against women in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2011). The GBV Prevention Network and Raising Voices, Uganda <http://preventgbvafrica.org/in-her-shoes/>



The *Learning from Practice Series* is a collection of articles that synthesize perspectives and activism emerging from Raising Voices' experience in preventing violence against women and children.

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Available online at <http://raisingvoices.org/resources/>

Notes

- 1 Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Participating civil society organizations were self-selected to participate in the process, having been exposed to the idea they expressed interest to conduct *Get Moving!* within their organizations.
- 2 Details of the activist introspective pieces can be accessed online in the Participant's Workbook here <http://preventgbv africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FINAL.ParticipantsWorkbook.pdf>

