



# Annual Report 2021



 Raising Voices





# Acronyms

- CUSP:** Community for Understanding Scale Up
- INGO:** International Nongovernmental Organization
- LSHTM:** London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- RRPs:** Regional Resource Persons
- VAC:** Violence Against Children
- VAW:** Violence Against Women
- VACPCs:** Violence Against Children Prevention Centres

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# Executive Summary

In the final quarter of 2020, we were beginning to feel that the end of the pandemic was in sight. Effective vaccines were on the horizon, officials were talking about easing lockdown measures, and some felt that school reopening was imminent.

We then found ourselves in a second – and then a third – wave of the virus. Carefully prepared plans were first postponed, then revised and finally adapted.





The psychological toll of seeing the possibility of an end to the pandemic appearing and then disappearing cannot be underestimated. The moment demanded extraordinary resilience. But Raising Voices found the organizational resilience needed in 2021, a year that was perhaps even more demanding than 2020. This outcome was not inevitable. It emerged as a result of creative operational pivoting, enhanced by our staff and partners adapting and stretching in new directions, and bolstered by profound gestures of solidarity from many of our funding partners.


Our operational adaptations for 2021 took three main forms. The **first** was psychological: We shifted how we would measure the value of our work and reevaluated how we would conceptualize progress. We legitimized staff prioritizing their families and recognized that adjusting expectations required a rethink. We introduced flexible work arrangements, shifted accountability to a generous time frame and signaled to staff that it matters how we show up for each other, our partners and the women and children in schools and communities we engage.

The **second** significant decision we made was to leverage resources and put cash in the hands of the staff and partners dealing with extraordinary demands on their resources because of the pandemic. With generous unconditional grants from Oak Foundation, Echidna Giving, Imago Dei Fund and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, we were able to support more than 500 individuals and their families in their moment of need. This was an unusual step for Raising Voices, as we have never seen ourselves as providers of aid or services, yet we felt it was an appropriate way of showing up within and for our community.

The **third** choice was to rethink our reliance on some long-held truisms. Our strength as an organization is built on our presence on the ground, face-to-face interactions and witnessing situations unfold while we devise a response with partners. With tight restrictions on movement, there was simply no possibility of business as usual, and so we adapted. We learned new skills, invested in digital infrastructure and inspired our collaborators and partners to meet us halfway – by stretching themselves, bringing patience when internet bandwidth was fraying and learning new skills on unfamiliar platforms.

These three choices have paid substantial dividends. Staff and collaborators have told us they felt a sense of belonging that was well beyond any of their expectations. Presence in the hour of need is felt well after that hour has passed, and in tangible ways, we have seen staff and partners' investment and commitments gifted multifold back to us. We feel similarly toward donors who offered us flexibility and resources well beyond what we had requested. Some donors waived reporting requirements; others simply reached out and offered solidarity. It was this spontaneous emergence of community and compassion that fostered the resilience that allowed us to emerge from 2021 with a strengthened spirit.

However, while physical movement was restricted and business as usual came to a significant pause, violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) continued and even increased. As a result, despite the constraints and contextual considerations, we were determined to reach significant milestones at a program level – and did. We continued to work with partners in Uganda, at a regional level and throughout the world.




We supported new partners worldwide in learning how to adapt and implement *SASA! Together* in their communities, for example, and worked with the Uganda's National Curriculum Development Centre to gain their formal endorsement of the Good School Toolkit. We implemented a complex collaboration to take VAC prevention within the education sector to scale, and we acknowledged and supported activists' deep need for rest among GBV Prevention Network members. We conducted research by telephone and hosted a public dialogue on radio and TV about how COVID-19 was impacting the lives of women and children. We published *SASA! Together* in Spanish to support programming in Mexico and Latin America and developed new work on children's mental health. In collaboration with like-minded organizations, we launched our global work on VAC prevention in schools, and as a part of a larger consortium, we won the bid for What Works II funding with the aim of holding the work and investments accountable to women.


In short, we doubled down on what we could do when what we had planned to do was curtailed.

These programmatic achievements were amplified by turning our attention inward and investing in the well-being of our staff. In 2021, we provided significant access to mental health services to all staff, and the demand was high. We hosted Feminist Learning Circles and quarterly "Reflect and Act" sessions, as well as conducted internal peer-led seminars, to inspire each other and remain continuous learners. Our organizational strengthening continues, with perhaps our most significant achievement in this arena being the recruitment of an excellent leader after a ten-month global search. A Country Director will begin in early 2022, with an emphasis on further strengthening and consolidating our leadership team.

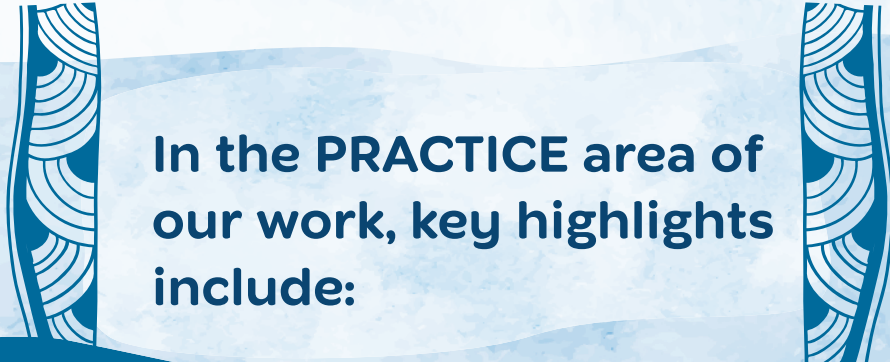

In the following pages, we provide highlights of our work's three thematic areas: Practice, Learning and Influencing, describe some of the operational environment and summarize the resources that were available to us. We end by highlighting key insights we travel with into 2022. We sense similar optimism we felt at the end of last year: Uganda is opening up, and the rest of the world seems to be edging in that direction, too. Yet after our experience of 2021, we remain cautious and plan in quarters, maintaining an agile posture. Despite this caution, we harvest the dividend that the experience of 2021 has gifted us and know that our greatest asset isn't perishable: **resilience**.



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

1. We converted in-person training content to digital formats, such as by developing a VAC prevention course and three *SASA! Together* phase trainings for Moodle platforms, as well as a Good School Program Mobile App. We also hosted frequent Zoom webinars and multiple WhatsApp groups for VAC and VAW prevention partners, sustaining relationships with activists located far from our offices.
2. Strong interest in *SASA! Together* has kept the VAW Prevention Practice team busy despite COVID-19 restrictions. With an 11-organization cohort in South Asia, a global cohort with five international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) and United Nations agencies with internal technical assistance capacity, and a variety of one-to-one partnerships, *SASA! Together* is being used in communities in every region of the world.
3. We consolidated expansion of our VAC prevention work through a Regional Resource Person (RRP) cascade model. This allowed us to reach more than 1,000 schools with Good School Toolkit implementation and expand our reach to another 5,000 schools nationwide through distributing key Toolkit materials. Our scale-up benefited from Uganda's National Curriculum Development Centre formally recognizing the Good School Toolkit as a methodology that can be used alongside the core national education curriculum.



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

1. Through seven formal research collaborations, we continued to focus on what we have learned from adapting and scaling up *SASA! Together* and the Good School Toolkit, as well as explored broader questions relevant to the field, such as on understanding COVID-19's effect on VAC and children's mental health.
2. We strengthened data management systems across our programming and supported the design and synthesis of practice-based learning. We also provided quality technical assistance to 34 partners as they conducted iterative learning for their prevention programming.
3. Internally, we experimented with different ways to feed learning back across teams and sustain a collaborative learning culture, including through standing meetings every two weeks for teams to reflect on rich data and emerging insights from programs. This also included conducting staff development sessions virtually, a thoughtfully planned team retreat and the launch of an internal quarterly newsletter.





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

1. We maintained our national, regional, and global presence through ongoing VAC prevention communications campaigns on radio and TV, three dynamic GBV Prevention Network social media campaigns on VAW prevention and the well-received 16 Days of Rest campaign focused on care and well-being for activists. We also expanded the scope of our Get Moving! approach to focus on preventing sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse and provided technical assistance to women's rights organizations and INGOs on this new adaptation, to roll it out in humanitarian settings.
2. After several years of preparation, partnership and patience with partners, a consortium led in part by Raising Voices won the bid for the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's new seven-year, GBP 45 million program, What Works II: Impact at Scale. Being part of this consortium allows Raising Voices to advance feminist VAW prevention work, ethical scaling and the voices and programming of women's rights organizations. The learning curve is steep, but the presence of a small, feminist organization from the Global South in this work indicates important change in the field of VAW prevention.
3. With support from 12 founding members across seven countries, Raising Voices launched the Coalition for Good Schools, a global group of practitioners and thought leaders working to prevent VAC in schools in the Global South. The Coalition launched a new website, published a global evidence review on effective interventions to prevent VAC at school, and held two globally facing events in collaboration with partners.

The need for safe and effective programming to prevent VAW and VAC has never been higher. Rates of violence, high before the pandemic, only grew – and with new vulnerabilities for women, girls and boys. Raising Voices responded by ensuring a strong practice component in our work, even as this required experimenting with new ways of working with communities and schools to create social norms change. We learned through research and practice-based learning about the implications of these pivots, and we leveraged our influence in new and existing groups, recognizing the larger ecosystem of which we are part. In 2022, we will continue striving to strengthen the field of violence prevention.







# Care & Mental Health Support During COVID-19

As we geared up for a more promising 2021, a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic hit Uganda in May and stringent lockdown restrictions were put in place to prevent community transmission. Many of our staff and their families were infected with the Delta variant and struggled to support the family, friends and community members who relied on them. While we are grateful, we didn't lose any staff, the loved ones of several staff members passed away and others struggled to recover. It was a time of grief, trauma and heightened anxieties, deeply felt across the organization.

Putting people first is our utmost priority and value. This was the time to support and stand in solidarity with our staff, our partners and the communities where we work. With generous backing, we took quick action to support self and collective care and well-being in this challenging moment:

- 1. Fostering an organizational culture of care and support.** As the second wave emerged, we assessed what support our staff would need and made quick decisions. For example, staff were allowed reduced schedules and provided with time off to prepare for, adjust to and then manage the day-to-day challenges of the new lockdown restrictions. We also established support groups facilitated by professional counselors and provided individual counseling to those who needed it, ensured all staff had the equipment needed for remote work, provided quick guidance on vaccination and worked to facilitate access to vaccines for staff and their families despite lockdowns and reduced mobility.
- 2. Through generous support from several of our donors, we also made unconditional financial contributions** to more than 500 families to mitigate the economic burden many were experiencing with health care for loved ones, higher costs of food, loss of income, and delivery services during the lockdown. Staff were encouraged to tap into an urgent action fund to support themselves or those around them in dire circumstances.
- 3. Supporting our partners.** We also set up a separate fund to support our long-time collaborators and partners who didn't have access to emergency funds, including 40 RRPs, three Violence Against Children Prevention Centers (VACPCs), two sister organizations and 100 community activists and other friends of Raising Voices in our community. We ensured our research teams and long-term study participants had access to study counselors and referrals for a range of mental health and violence response services.


## 4. Providing mental health support in communities.

Schools in Uganda remained closed for 83 weeks, longer than any country in the world. As a result, the need for mental health support was high. While we couldn't access schools directly, we continued to support our Good School partners, who maintained strong relationships with local governments and teachers amid closures. We held dialogues with our RRPs on mental health and offered therapy services to Good School partners, highlighting for them the importance of mental health support for school personnel and students as they return in the coming year. During a brief window in which loosened restrictions allowed for in-person training, our RRPs cascaded this support through small, clustered, and socially distanced trainings with over 2,000 teacher protagonists and 1,000 headteachers.

Additionally, the VAW prevention team supported partners in using specially developed materials on community mobilization during COVID-19. These materials step back from some of the more difficult conversations of "power over" and encourage empathy, family, and community unity, as well as discuss how to care for ourselves and others.

## 5. Prioritizing and advocating for rest.

To acknowledge and honor this challenging year, the GBV Prevention Network's 16 Days of Activism theme for 2021 was "REST." The campaign explored rest as resistance, the importance of resisting self-sacrifice, and how activists and women in communities have a right to self-care and a responsibility toward collective care. To "walk the walk," we provided all staff with an extra two days off at the end of the year to recover from the stress of the past year and to start the new year more refreshed.



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# Practice

In 2021, we pivoted to remote engagement, strengthening partners' skills and capacity to prevent violence in their communities. We devoted our time to refining and developing new content, facilitating online learning, building relationships and consolidating our learning systems.

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





## 1. Adapting With Agility

**Creating virtual adaptations.** As in-person trainings were seldom possible in 2021, we cultivated online learning spaces to continue our work through lockdowns and school closures. We adapted training courses for *SASA! Together* to the online learning platform Moodle, adding dynamic videos and audio guidance to enhance engagement and deepen impact. The *SASA! Together* Set-Up and Start Phase courses were completed by 135 and 35 participants, respectively, while the Good School team developed its first online introductory course on the Good School Toolkit. Collectively, the VAW Prevention and VAC Prevention teams hosted 18 interactive webinars and facilitated 208 online trainings on Zoom, Skype and Microsoft Teams, creating effective and engaging learning experiences despite partners struggling with connectivity, attention and meaningful engagement (not to mention Zoom fatigue!).

### BOX 1: The Good School Mobile App



The Good School team launched a mobile application to support VAC prevention in schools. Developed in collaboration with GreyChain, the app houses a comprehensive database of school contacts, a suite of eight Good School monitoring tools, built-in learning modules on Good School content and monitoring tools for measuring progress. App users can also discuss key issues at the school and community levels, as well as receive quick feedback.

This first-of-its-kind mobile adaptation is being piloted by RRP and VACPCs in more than 1,000 schools, and it will later be rolled out to civil society organizations and to ministry and district-level partners across Uganda to facilitate local ownership of the Good School program at scale. The app is now available in the Google Play Store.

**Adapting *SASA! Together*.** The *SASA! Together* Spanish adaptation made its debut in 2021 both digitally and in print, a foundational milestone for our support of VAW prevention in Mexico and throughout Latin America. The visibility of *SASA! Together* is increasing in the region through regular engagement with donors and activists including webinars, presence in virtual events and social media platforms including Facebook.

Additionally, widespread restrictions to in-person gatherings during COVID-19 added new urgency to our efforts to support alternative ways of reaching communities. In 2021, we began adapting *SASA! Together* for radio to help boost the reach of *SASA! Together* ideas. In partnership with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), the Uganda Network on Law Ethics and HIV/AIDS, and Peripheral Vision International, we will pilot the radio adaptation in Uganda's Kasese district in 2022. Based on what we learn from this pilot, we will refine the adaptation and release a package of materials and guidance for partners in other contexts.

## 2. Supporting Partners to Build Capacity

**Expanding capacity through three *SASA! Together* cohorts.**

Our South Asia cohort began community programming in 2021 with 11 organizations in Myanmar and Bangladesh, with adaptations for their humanitarian and cultural contexts. We also launched a new cohort of *SASA!* technical assistance providers with three INGOs (the International Rescue Committee, CARE and Norwegian Church Aid) and two United Nations agencies (the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), providing training and ongoing mentorship so they may grow in their ability to provide internal technical assistance to their various country offices and programs. By increasing these large institutions' in-house capacity, we are expanding access to technical support on *SASA! Together* in response to the rising demand from partners worldwide. Members of the cohort have completed Set-Up for their programs and are now in Start Phase.

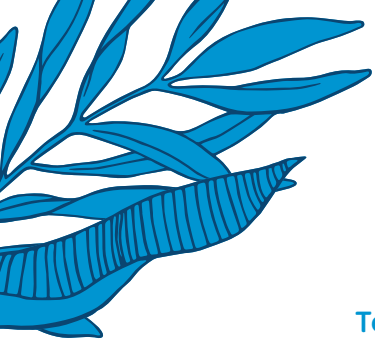
Additionally, a third cohort has been established in Latin America with three organizations in Mexico, with two Spanish-speaking consultants from the region providing contextualized technical assistance. Also, the *SASA! Faith* cohort sustained a strong sense of community and collective learning during this challenging year, and it plans to complete *SASA! Faith* implementation in 2022.

On top of the work with cohorts, the expansiveness of digital spaces allowed our VAW Practice team to continue supporting over 40 organizations using *SASA! Together*, *SASA!* and *SASA! Faith* across the Asia-Pacific region, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

### BOX 2: *SASA! Together* Spanish Adaptation

*SASA! Together* in Spanish is a full adaptation – involving both translation and cultural adaptation – that builds on previous *SASA!* work done in Honduras and broadens the focus to the wider region. Adaptation was a rigorous process that included *SASA! Together* orientation for artists and translators, an in-person convening with activists to adapt and test communication materials and extensive reviews of drafted materials. We remained deeply engaged with regional activists and women's rights organizations throughout the process, to ensure quality and relevance. The adaptation amplified the availability of evidence-based VAW prevention approaches in Mexico and Central America. It is now accessible in print and digitally, and it is being shared with members of the new *SASA! Together* cohort in Latin America and other interested organizations.





### Testing and refining work with Good School Regional Resource Persons (RRPs).

We continued to test and refine our RRP model to cascade Good School Toolkit ideas to more schools across Uganda. 2021 began with refresher trainings for 40 RRs and three VACPCs as schools prepared to reopen, followed by RRP-led trainings to 840 head teachers and 1,680 Good School teachers. In early 2021, RRs and VACPCs conducted their first in-person technical assistance visits to more than 1,000 schools, verifying data on implementation and progress through 2020's school closures. Realizing how significantly school closures have hindered Good School progress and facing even more, the remainder of 2021 focused on virtual capacity-building for RRs and VACPC staff, with a focus on mental health support, proper stepwise implementation of the Good School Toolkit and proper monitoring.

**Strengthening donor engagement.** We have learned the importance of helping partners work with their donors for increased flexibility on and understanding of COVID-related delays and disruptions during their *SASA! Together* programming. While Raising Voices' own donors have been very flexible and supportive during the pandemic, our partners' donors have often been less accommodating. We have seen that donor often pressure partners to adhere to timetables and deliverables agreed on pre-COVID, without sufficient appreciation of the delays and disruptions caused by the pandemic and the toll taken on staff and communities. Where donors have been inflexible and required partners to adhere to original timetables, we have thought creatively about ways to accelerate *SASA! Together* implementation in ways that minimize the risk of harm.



Widespread restrictions to in-person gatherings during COVID-19 added new urgency to our efforts to support alternative ways of reaching communities.



# Learning

The Learning team navigated the constraints and interruptions imposed on our work in 2021 by embracing an adaptive spirit filled with curiosity, creativity and care. We continued to learn through our formal research partnerships, iterative learning and knowledge integration.

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.





## 1. Learning Through Research Collaborations

We participated in seven formal research partnerships in 2021. Through these, we focused on learning from the adaptation and scale-up of *SASA! Together* and the Good School Toolkit. We also explored broader questions relevant for the field, such as understanding the impact of COVID-19 on VAC and mental health.

Continued school closures and lockdown restrictions in 2021 meant that for five key studies on *SASA! Together* and the Good School Toolkit, we adapted the study objectives and tools, obtained the necessary approvals from ethics boards and piloted our tools in preparation for final data collection:

1. **“Pathways for Agile Implementation: Identifying the Active Elements of the Good School Toolkit,”** is being conducted with IDinsight to help us create a modular, lighter version of the Toolkit (Good School Toolkit Agile) in preparation for scale-up across Uganda. In 2021, we developed a research uptake plan with support from The Evaluation Fund. The research team conducted a small pilot, which showed encouraging results that suggested children and teachers recalled elements of the Toolkit despite long school closures.
2. **The Good School Toolkit for Secondary Schools pilot study**, conducted with LSHTM and the AfriChild Centre, aims to assess the feasibility and resonance of the Good School Toolkit ideas and materials adapted for secondary schools. In 2021, the focus was on learning from implementation in the intervention schools during the months that schools were open for candidate classes. Endline data collection is scheduled for 2023.
3. **The “Taking the Good School Toolkit to Scale” study**, also conducted with LSHTM and the AfriChild Centre, focuses on the RRP model’s feasibility and scalability as a means to scale up Good School Toolkit implementation, as well as on understanding how schools are experiencing reopening after long closures. In 2021, we tested both the quantitative and qualitative questionnaires and are ready to conduct the study once schools reopen in 2022.
4. **SASA! Together for Radio** is a new collaboration in 2021 (with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Peripheral Vision International and the Uganda Network on Law, Ethics and HIV/AIDS) that embeds rigorous learning throughout the process of creating and implementing a quality radio adaptation of *SASA! Together* content. As the adaptation is being piloted, we are conducting a study alongside our partners exploring the adaptation’s reach, assessing perceptions of change in the community and examining the radio content’s influence on *SASA! Together* programming – all particularly relevant given the COVID-19 pandemic and the added challenges of community mobilization.
5. **“Understanding SASA! Together Adaptations, Implementation and Technical Assistance”** is an ongoing partnership launched in 2020 with the Global Women’s Institute at George Washington University. This work follows the global cohort of five organizations implementing *SASA! Together* while strengthening their internal capacity to provide technical assistance. The learning component aims to understand *SASA! Together*’s adaptation to diverse contexts and to different types of organizations, opportunities and barriers to technical assistance provision, as well as the feasibility of maintaining program fidelity.

Lockdowns and school closures also increased the risk of violence and elevated mental health concerns in communities. Therefore, we invested in learning about how COVID-19 has impacted interpersonal violence and mental health through two key studies:

6. **The Contexts of Violence in Adolescence Cohort Study (CoVAC)**, also known as 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 controlled trial. Partners include LSHTM, the Medical Research Council, Makerere University and University College London. In 2021, we conducted Wave 3 phone surveys in 2021, which contained an additional element assessing COVID-19’s impacts on violence experienced by the young men and women of Uganda. (See Box 3 for more.)
7. **The “Adolescent mental health and COVID-19 in Uganda Study”**, with the University of Alabama, is a qualitative study in which we plan to interview secondary school students and teachers to understand how Ugandan schools can support children’s mental health as schools reopen.

We participated in seven formal research partnerships in 2021. Through these, we focused on learning from the adaptation and scale-up of *SASA! Together* and the Good School Toolkit. We also explored broader questions relevant for the field, such as understanding the impact of COVID-19 on VAC and mental health.





### BOX 3: Adapting Research to Remote Methods

In 2021, we started conducting phone surveys with Footprints Study participants to understand COVID-19's impacts on violence as experienced by the young people in Uganda. The initial plan was to conduct phone surveys from our offices as a team, but these plans were halted during the second lockdown.

We saw that our partners' qualitative research suggested the participating young men and women appreciate being contacted and confirmed they were willing to continue with the study. So, we adopted a hybrid approach whereby we trained and supported our research team through a mix of remote and small in-person sessions. We also supported researchers in creating work-from-home environments conducive to confidential phone calls, as well as delivered materials like phones, chargers, power banks, files and headsets.

Due to the sensitive nature of questions, we tested out the hybrid approach with non-sensitive questions and carefully tailored counseling support to the needs of our research team and study participants. We learned that calling study participants at a convenient time, building strong relationships with participants and interviewers, and having a well-planned referral system enabled and enriched the data-collection experience.

## 2. Iterative Learning: Promoting Adaptive & Agile Programming

The Learning team strengthened its support to Raising Voices' Practice teams through increased collaboration in managing program databases, technical assistance to partners and practice-based learning.

**Collecting quality data for the Good School Toolkit.** To better understand implementation quality in our 1,000 Good Schools, we shifted our learning and evaluation for Good School activities to our mobile app. We built automated data visualization to showcase progress on key indicators in real time, and we made capacity-building support more accessible to partners by creating detailed videos for the app explaining how to use the learning and evaluation tools to collect information in schools.

**Providing technical assistance to SASA! Together partners.** Despite pandemic-imposed restrictions, Raising Voices provided technical assistance on SASA! Together learning and assessment to 34 partners worldwide in 2021. As a result, partners demonstrated greater interest in and use of our databases to track progress on SASA! Together implementation. It is encouraging to see more partners committed to quality learning and assessment in their prevention programming, and we will continue to strengthen the databases and provide technical support on their use, collaboratively learning how to make their SASA! Together programming even stronger.

An anonymous survey of partners receiving technical assistance from Raising Voices indicated that 95% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that our technical assistance lives up to our six core principles: mutuality, tailored and contextualized, ownership, flexibility, open communication, and sustained and systematic. Particularly in a time when we relied on virtual engagement, it was gratifying to know that the team's efforts to remain connected were successful.

**Learning from VAC communications campaigns.** We interviewed 40 respondents from media houses and local governments who participated in our six-month communications campaign from late 2020 to the first quarter of 2021. We learned that the campaign was well received, improved media personnel's ability to communicate about VAC and provided opportunities for children to speak on their rights. We also helped develop tools to gather feedback on the campaign from talk show participants. As SASA! Faith partners move into the Action Phase, we are also preparing for a learning exercise to synthesize insights and impact across the 16 partners.

## 3. Knowledge Integration

In 2021, the Learning team explored innovative ways to feed back learning and sustain a collaborative, engaging learning culture while thoughtfully navigating the challenge of increasing Zoom fatigue.

### Deepening a culture of reflection.

For the first time, we held staff development sessions virtually. After assessing our organization's learning needs via a survey, the Learning team organized three sessions focused on what staff development is, emotional intelligence and nurturing partnerships. To reinforce key messages after each session, the team created infographics with quick takeaways and shared them with all staff. We also launched a quarterly internal Learning team newsletter called "Three Insights" to create a space for teams to exchange knowledge and to foster a learning culture. We also continued with our Feminist Learning Circles, exploring key concepts of feminism and what it means in our day-to-day lives.

### Supporting program teams to take the lead in Reflect and Act sessions.

Each team took a leading role in our internal "Reflect and Act" learning review presentations in 2021, ensuring they are in the driver's seat of their own learning. We paid special attention to substantiating our learning by critically engaging with data and contextualizing it based on program experiences. We will explore creative ways to share these insights with our partners as we move through 2022.

### *Tips to build emotional Intelligence*

- Recognize** your negative thoughts, emotions and expressions.
- Ask** for others perspectives on your emotional intelligence.
- Listen** for clarity instead of just waiting for your turn to speak.
- Examine** how your actions will affect others – before you act.
- Understand** others' emotions to build healthier relationships.
- Accept criticism**, Ask what you can learn rather than resist.

### *Ways to take care of your emotional health*








# Influencing

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



While in-person activities were restricted in 2021, much of the action moved online. We participated in multiple fora, consolidated relationships and developed new partners, reaching a significant global audience.



## 1. National Advocacy

**Continuing communication during the pandemic.** The VAC Media & Influencing team wrapped up two national communications campaigns in 2021. Each campaign aired on 17 radio stations and three national television networks in 56 districts across Uganda under the themes “A Good School = A++ Better Life” and “In the Time of COVID-19, What Is Your Promise to the Children of Uganda?” with a focus on aligning public health measures with measures to prevent VAC and promote mental health as children return to school.

The VAC Media & Influencing team wrapped up two national communications campaigns in 2021. Each campaign aired on 17 radio stations and three national television networks in 56 districts across Uganda.



**A scene from “A Good Teacher” from the 2021 communication campaign on VAC prevention**

**Strengthening accountability to women in Uganda.** We continued work with women’s rights and feminist organizations to promote accountability to women in Uganda. Additionally, we had in person and virtual engagements with MenEngage Uganda to hold them accountable to feminist principles and help them to work more supportively with the women’s movement. Although this is a longer process, MenEngage Uganda has been open to engagement and has committed to continuing this process with the Uganda Feminist’s Accountability Group in 2022.

**Stepping into the national curriculum.** After years of close collaboration with the Government of Uganda and with a formal memorandum of understanding about to be signed, the Good School Toolkit has been formally reviewed and approved by the country’s National Curriculum Development Centre. With this certification, Raising Voices now holds official verification that the Toolkit is appropriate to augment the core curriculum at the national level. Working closely with government at this level allowed

us to better understand the close attention to detail needed as reviewers worked to synchronize our tried-and-tested Good School Toolkit materials with the national curriculum. We learned the importance of standing our ground on the Toolkit’s core elements, while modifying terminology and not taking issue with smaller adjustments that did not rob us of the impact we wished to achieve.

## 2. Regional Organizing

**Expanding *Get Moving!*** In collaboration with the International Rescue Committee, the GBV Prevention Network created two adapted versions of *Get Moving!* for humanitarian organizations and rolled out *Get Moving! to Prevent Sexual Harassment & Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*. One adapted version is for in-person processes and another recognizing the reality of COVID supports virtual facilitation. We conducted two virtual trainings of trainers with 48 representatives from 15 regional INGOs and United Nations agencies and 10 women’s rights organizations from 17 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa. The training and ongoing technical assistance to participants gave us many insights about what it takes to do this work well and some of the constraints, particularly within a humanitarian context. To inspire more regional humanitarian actors to prevent sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, we conducted a mini social media campaign and a webinar in which facilitators and panelists shared their stories. We will continue to engage in this work in 2022.



We continued work with women’s rights and feminist organizations to promote accountability to women in Uganda.





#### BOX 4: 16 Days of Rest

It has been a difficult few years for everyone, particularly for women in communities and for activists preventing and responding to VAW during COVID. Resisting the pervasive societal messages of self-sacrifice, the GBV Prevention Network made a bold decision to promote 16 Days of Rest rather than 16 Days of Activism. During this period, we validated the need for self- and collective care and encouraged community and solidarity around stepping back to rest, recover and reset. With a poster, a journal, a **blog post**, a social media campaign and practical ideas for individuals and organizations to promote rest as a political act of resistance, the campaign garnered much support and love.

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**Fostering online activism.** The GBV Prevention Network held three dynamic social media campaigns on VAW prevention in 2021. The topic evolved from understanding the basics of prevention to knowing the evidence and strengthening a feminist approach to prevention, as well as knowing key controversies in the field of VAW prevention. The quality of member engagement deepened in 2021, from just sharing and retweeting from our platforms to actively using the social media kit to post on their own accounts. We also strengthened collaboration with allies, working closely with 10 like-minded groups, allowing for deeper engagement and broader reach to new circles and audiences.

### 3. Global Advocacy

**Launching the Coalition for Good Schools.** 2021 saw the official launch of our global advocacy group for VAC prevention in schools, the Coalition for Good Schools. The Coalition brings together a group of practitioners from the Global South, with 12 founding members from seven countries. We launched our website and crafted a two-year strategy, built out a **resource hub** featuring key VAC prevention resources and established three **regional hubs** carrying out this advocacy work in Latin America (led by Aulas en Paz in Colombia), Asia (led by Breakthrough India) and sub-Saharan Africa (led by HakiElimu in Tanzania). Communications partner Mighty Ally have been instrumental in providing structure behind our organizing and planning, leading in-depth processes to think through our **impact model** and **positioning strategy**, as well as a comprehensive **messaging platform** to present ourselves to external audiences and take our place on the global stage.

**Publishing a global evidence review on VAC prevention in schools.** Through the coalition, we commissioned the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town and the International Center for Research on Women Asia to conduct a comprehensive evidence review on **preventing VAC in and through schools in the Global South**. We launched this evidence review, which highlights successful interventions and notes promising practices in the Global South, alongside the UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti during an event attended by more than 500 participants. We also formally introduced the coalition alongside the Safe to Learn initiative **in a webinar** exploring VAC prevention as a unique opportunity for early gains.

**Continuing work with the Community for Understanding Scale Up (CUSP).** CUSP is going strong after five years. Although CUSP began as a time-bound group, the discussions, learning and interest in its ideas and experience continue to grow. In 2021, CUSP focused on writing a new vision of feminist scale. Frustrated with business models that leave out the values and principles behind ethical scale-up, CUSP put forward an analysis of how patriarchy, geopolitical forces and neoliberal economics (among other elements) are shaping the discourse of scale, resulting in programming that is harmful to women. The collective explored an ecological metaphor that honors communities and the agency of those most affected, as well as proposed the principles and essential elements for feminist scale and also how these can support movements. CUSP launched the paper through a 10-day social media campaign, and it is planning a webinar and infographic in early 2022.

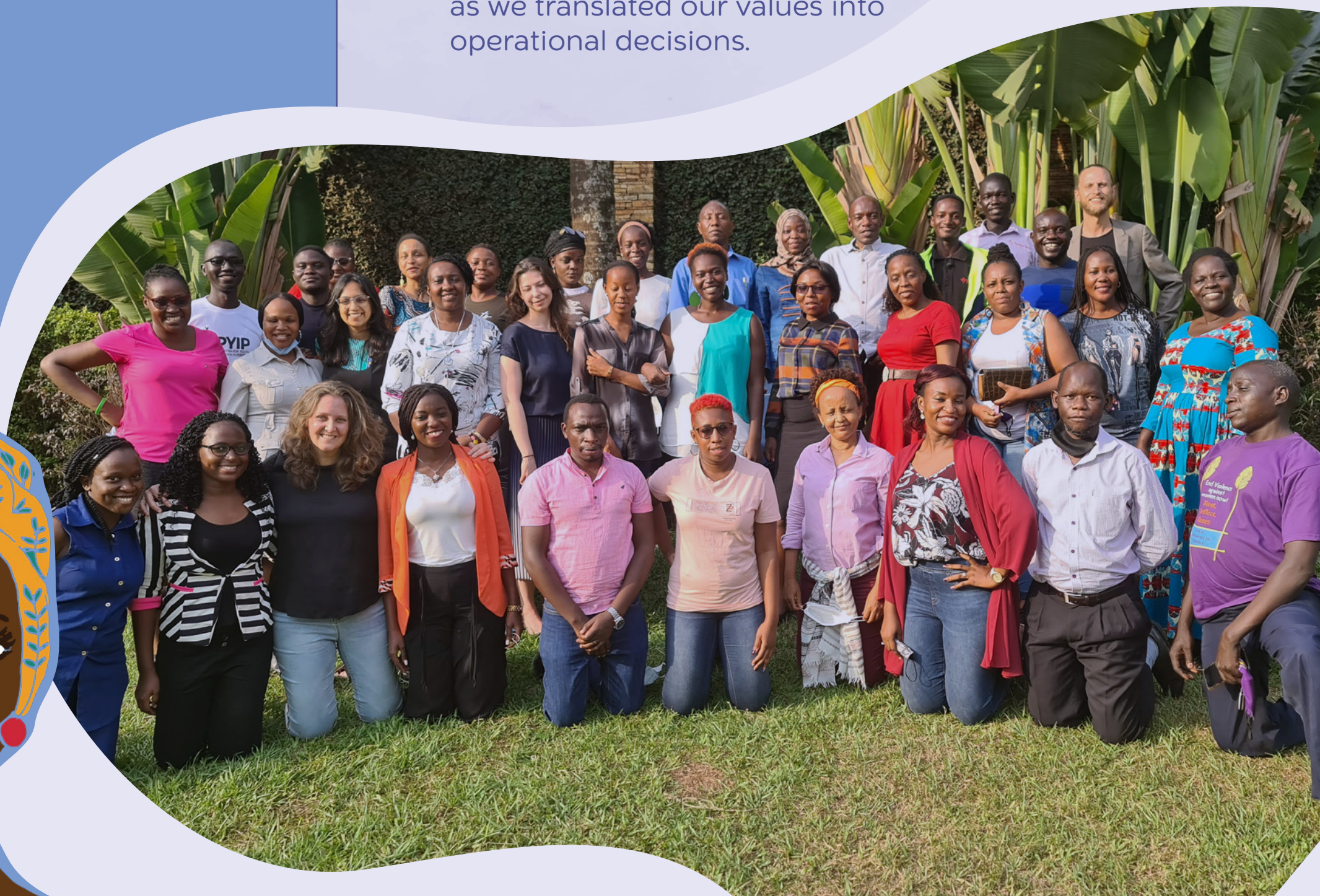
**Engaging on What Works II.** In 2020 Raising Voices joined a consortium of the International Rescue Committee, Social Development Direct and CARE on a bid to lead the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's new seven-year What Works II program. In 2021, we learned that our consortium was successful and will take forward the GBP45 million investment even though this type of work is typically the purview of INGOs and international development contractors. As a small, feminist organization in the Global South, Raising Voices adds a distinctive voice and perspective. We joined the consortium based on the commitment of all members to define and follow feminist principles in working together with partners and in the VAW prevention programming that we support. Now in the inception phase, we are grappling with the complexity of this commitment and type of funding yet are dedicated to using our voice and platform to bring about change and ensure that What Works II lives up to its feminist vision.



# Organizational Overview

In many ways, 2021 tested our commitment to modeling feminist leadership, and while we could have done better in some places, in many other ways, we feel proud of how we responded.

In 2021, we entered the penultimate year of our five-year strategy and reflected on how we were doing and what actions were needed to maximize the chances of achieving our outcomes. We invested in strengthening our board, our teams and our operational systems as we translated our values into operational decisions.





## BOX 5: Investing in Staff and Partners

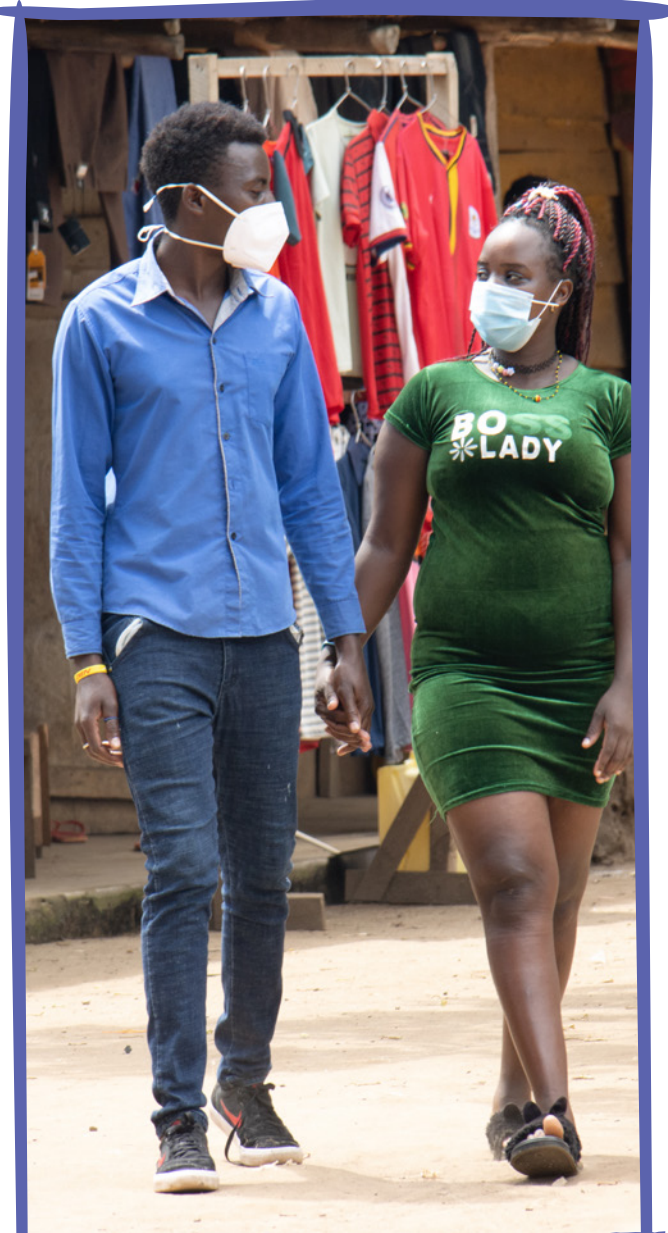
As the pandemic continued, we responded with extraordinary pivots. We invested heavily in systems, partners and staff.

1. With generous support from the Oak Foundation and Imago Dei Fund, we invested more than \$120,000, or 5% of our total expenditure, in directly supporting the well-being of our staff, collaborators and partners. We provided staff with three installments of cash support beyond their salaries. We also provided cash support to several sister organizations, more than 100 activists and 30 collaborators, as well as extended stipend support to volunteers for six additional months even though activities had stopped.
2. We maintained an urgent action fund for women and children who were facing extraordinary violence and disbursed \$10,430 through this mechanism.
3. We maintained a staff welfare fund from which we offered support to those facing a heavy financial burden, as well as sent care packages to those whose families were grappling with COVID infections.
4. We offered access to professional mental health services through the Safe Haven Child and Family Counseling Centre, including 20 support group sessions, over 20 individual counseling sessions and 36 individual coaching sessions for staff. We also paid for 13 support group sessions for 28 RRP.
5. We maintained flexible workloads and work hours, as well as leaned heavily on creating a compassionate environment in which we reached out to each other when we needed support.

## Organizational Strengthening

We continued investing in the organizational-strengthening process that began 18 months ago, including:

1. **Strengthening the board's oversight role.** The Raising Voices Board of Directors played a critical role in identifying our new director as part of the Recruitment Committee. The board also endorsed plans to increase its membership from seven to 10 directors and established two oversight committees.
2. **Strengthening the team. In 2021, we recruited seven staff members.** Through a global search led by the Recruitment Committee, we recruited a Country Director, who will transition into an Executive Director role in quarter 3 of 2022. We also recruited four senior program staff (VAC coordinator, Learning and VAW Technical Advisors, and VAW Prevention Program Manager), as well as an experienced Finance Manager and an Information Technology Manager.
3. **Strengthening financial and operational systems.** The new Finance Manager conducted a thorough diagnosis and implemented a capacity-strengthening process that involved introducing an upgraded reporting format, streamlining our annual budgeting process and rationalizing roles of Finance team members. We reviewed and updated organizational policies and invested in organizational archiving and information storage.



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# Financial Summary

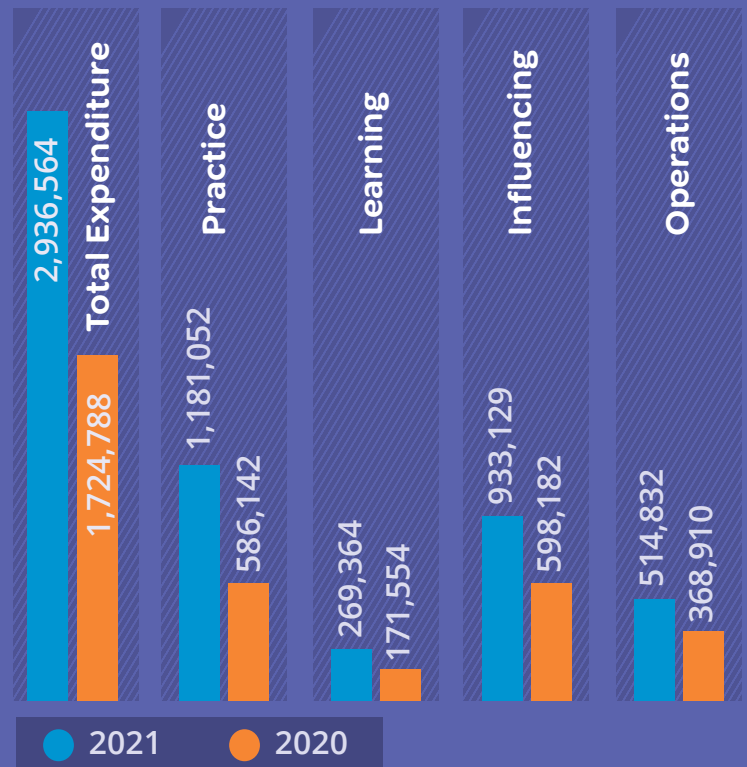
For the first time in our history, the total funds available in 2021 exceeded US\$5 million. This was primarily due to the larger-than-usual balance carried forward from 2020 due to COVID; as a result, our expenditure in 2021 was also an unprecedented \$2.9 million. In every area of our work, the expenditure was higher in 2021 compared to 2020, and the biggest increase was in the Practice area. This was partially due to a large grant expenditure under the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

Our income in 2021 was diversified, coming from 17 distinct sources and with none exceeding 15% of our total income. A significant proportion of our income (45%) was carried forward to 2022, mainly due to several grants arriving late in the year and one donor disbursing funds earmarked for 2022 in advance. In 2022, several multiyear grants will come to an end, and we will invest effort in finalizing our new strategy and enlisting support for the next five years of our work.

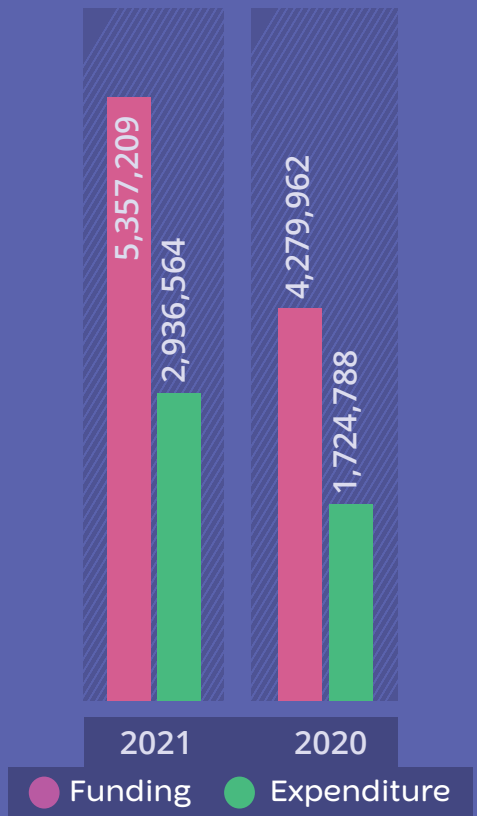
## BOX 6: Safe to Learn: Propelling Us to Scale

2021 saw the successful implementation of complex work to take our VAC prevention work to scale as part of the first cohort of grantees under the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children's Safe to Learn Initiative. The nearly \$1 million awarded to take the Good School Toolkit to scale arrived just as schools closed in 2020, creating considerable implementation challenges and a need for adaptation. It offered us the opportunity, however, to refine our cascade model for the Good School Toolkit: training 40 RRP's and three VACPCs, as well as supporting them in providing technical assistance visits to more than 1,000 schools and in building relationships with local leaders and the community. This support also allowed us to partner with the Ministry of Education and Sports to distribute key Toolkit materials to another 5,000 schools. In 2022, we will collect observational data on how schools use Good School activities and ideas with limited support as we continue to refine our plans for scale.

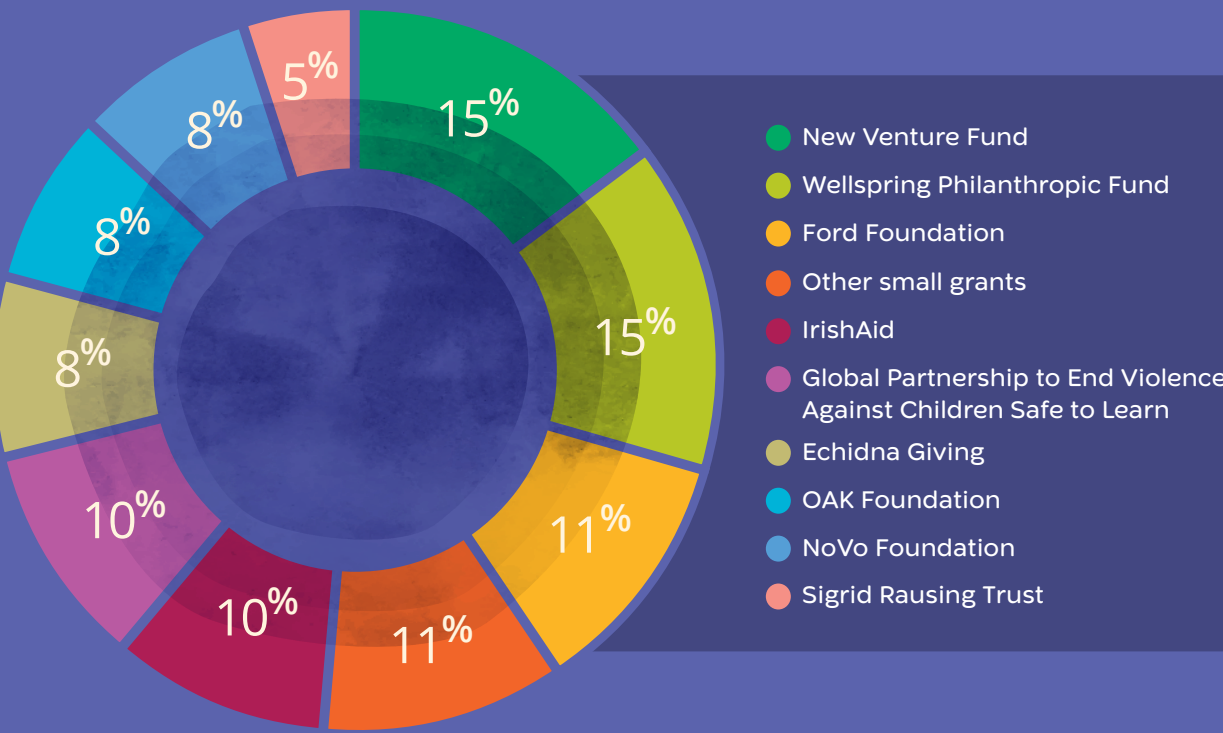
Comparison of expenditure by program area over the past two years



Total funding and expenditure



Funding Contributions 2021





# The year in numbers

## Practice

**1,010**

Schools implementing the Good School Toolkit, supported by 40 RRP and 3 VACPCs

**18,426**

Community members reached through household dialogues on VAC prevention

**1**

Major adaptation completed with the publication of *SASA! Together* in Spanish

**11**

*SASA! Together* courses conducted with 201 participants from 31 organizations

**5**

Onsite technical assistance visits made 41 for *SASA!* and 4 for the Good School Toolkit

**34**

Organizations reached through *SASA! Together* virtual learning

## Learning

**7**

Ongoing formal research collaborations underway

**40**

RRPs – alongside 3 VACPCs – trained to use the Good School Program mobile app

**11**

VAC learning and evaluation tools revised

**5**

Staff development sessions held

**12**

Reflect and Act sessions held to learn and remain accountable in our programming

**95%**

*SASA!* partners affirming Raising Voices adheres to its principles of technical assistance in an anonymous survey

## Influencing

**18**

Presentations made at high-level events worldwide for VAW/C prevention

**100**

Invited radio appearances, alongside 26 invited TV appearances, made on VAC prevention

**4**

GBV Prevention Network social media campaigns held, resulting 1,217 retweets

**2**

Coalition for Good Schools global events held

**3**

Regional hubs created for the Coalition for Good Schools

**1**

Organizational Twitter account created (finally!) @RaisingVoices





# Reflections

As the second and third wave of the pandemic tested our resilience, we discovered that our values had deeply permeated our organizational culture.

## 1. Values inform behavior, particularly in times of need.

Our response to the pandemic and the challenges it posed were profoundly determined by our values rather than strategized in the moment. From the outset, our first priority was staff and partners: how we show up for each other matters, and *how* we do the work is as important as the work itself. We promoted self- and collective care, made mental health care available and augmented people's resources with financial assistance. The resultant appreciation and sense of organizational belonging were palpable and sustained.

## 2. We must maintain our identity as we grow.

As we firmly entered the category of mid-sized organization, we found ourselves negotiating contracts and partnerships with a different type of partner. We had to ask: "Do we want to be a party to commercial contracts, develop facility with legalese and operate using technocratic measures of inputs and outcomes?" These partners often present limited flexibility around the language and format of their partnership agreements, constricting the ability to express value-driven partnership. Some proposed that Raising Voices play the role of a service provider rather than a thought partner (even though we had developed the methodologies partners want to use); others proposed burdensome reporting requirements and asymmetrical accountability mechanisms. Ultimately, we stood our ground, making pragmatic compromises but also drawing clear lines we will not cross. The key insight from this experience was that we needed to articulate and document the underlying beliefs informing where we draw the line – where we are willing to accommodate and where we decline in order to maintain our autonomy and integrity.

## 3. The way forward is hybrid.

As more of our work turned to digital spaces, we found ourselves weighing the benefits and trade-offs. We developed a suite of online courses and trainings, explainer videos, and training modules to extend the reach of our support. Yet we also heard from partners and staff that one of our hallmarks is our relationships, and trusting relationships need face time – like opportunities to talk on the margins of meetings and inject fun and joy into processes – to help develop bonds beyond jointly agreed outcomes. Thus, we are beginning to calibrate a hybrid approach in which vital in-person relationship-building is augmented by more efficient digital tools and online communications.

## 4. VAC and VAW are inextricably linked.

2021 highlighted how our VAC and VAW prevention work can sometimes operate in silos and fail to leverage a collective approach. While we have always recognized conceptually that the experiences of violence against women and children are diverse, we have also understood that practical responses need refined, disaggregated strategies. Yet we wondered if there was room to experiment more deliberately around intersections. For example, we are actively developing ways to combine *SASA! Together* and the Good School Toolkit in a community-wide intervention. With Raising Voices in the What Works II initiative's leadership body in 2022, and with so many girls unable to return to school due to unwanted pregnancy and disproportionate rates of sexual violence, the issue-based intersections are obvious. As we develop our next five-year strategy in 2022, these considerations will garner deeper attention in our deliberations.



# Final Word

As we emerge from 2021, the predominant feeling is one of a distorted sense of time. The beginning of the year seems far away, and the middle of the year feels intangible. Yet when we look at our achievements and reflect on how we supported each other, there is a considerable feeling of pride amongst staff. In this moment of need, we were able to uphold our values and demonstrate our feminist principles in action. As we enter the final year of our five-year strategy, and a momentous year of transition, we look forward to consolidating gains and launching the organization in a fresh new direction.

# Publications



Community for Understanding Scale Up. (2021). *Enhancing social norms programs: An invitation to rethink "scaling up" from a feminist perspective*. [tinyurl.com/4rn3kdm](https://tinyurl.com/4rn3kdm)

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Mathews, S., Achyut, P., October, L., & Makola, L. (2021). *Evidence review: Prevention of violence against children in and through schools in the Global South*. Raising Voices & University of Cape Town. [https://coalitionforgoodschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Coalition\\_for\\_Good\\_Schools\\_Evidence\\_Review\\_R4.pdf](https://coalitionforgoodschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Coalition_for_Good_Schools_Evidence_Review_R4.pdf)

Michau, L., Namy, S. (2021). *SASA! Together: An evolution of the SASA! approach to prevent violence against women*, Evaluation and Program Planning, Volume 86, 101918, ISSN 0149-7189, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2021.101918>.





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New Venture Fund

NoVo Foundation

OAK Foundation

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The Evaluation Fund

UN Women

University of Alabama

Vista Hermosa Foundation

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