



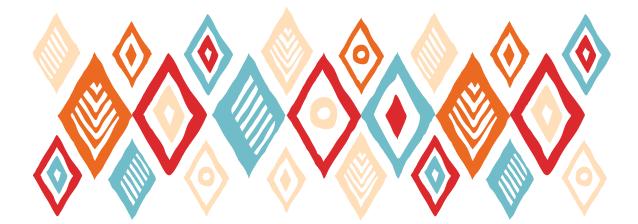
Contents

Introduction	3
Overview of the 2018-2022 Strategy	4
Practice	
Learning	
Influencing	7
Review Methodology	8
Kick off session with staff	9
Desktop analysis	9
Staff survey	9
Focus group discussions with teams	
Writing of the report	9
Findings	10
Organisational ethos	11
Overall impressions of the implementation of the 2018-2022 strategy.	13
A Deep-Dive into Practice, Learning and Influencing	16
Practice	17
Influencing	23
Challenges	27
What should Raising Voices think about?	32



Introduction

This report reviews the implementation of the Raising Voices 2018 – 2022 organisational strategy. The intention of the review is to support reflection, learning and strategising in the development of the next five-year strategy.



Overview of the 2018-2022 Strategy

The 2018 – 2022 strategy identifies three broad areas of focus, *Practice, Learning* and *Influencing*. The tables below provide an overview of the specific objectives within each of these thematic areas.

Practice

In the Raising Voices strategy, *Practice* refers to all activities pertaining to community activism, adaptations and scale, and the Violence Prevention Learning Centre (VPLC). The following activities were set:

Practice

Community Activism	Adaptations and Scale	Violence Prevention Learning Centre
VAC Prevention Centres: Supporting 10 community-based organisations across Uganda in preventing and responding to VAC.	Going to scale: Supporting SASA! and the Good School Toolkit to expand to new communities and contexts.	Partnerships: Creative training and technical assistance to organisations using Raising Voices' methodologies.
Ideas for Innovation: Experimenting and piloting to create new approaches to prevent violence.	Revising and adapting methodologies: evolving and enhancing Raising Voices' evidence-based methodologies for diverse settings and delivery modalities.	Regional SASA! Learning Centres: Working with organisations to run decentralised SASA! training courses and provide technical assistance.
Urgent Action Fund: Providing emergency assistance to women and children in Uganda in critical need.		

Learning

Learning refers to all activities pertaining to research collaborations, iterative learning, and evaluation. In *Learning*, the following goals were set:

Learning

Research Collaborations	Iterative Learning and Evaluation	Knowledge Integration
Experimental studies: Assessing the impact of adapted versions of SASA! and the GST for new communities and contexts.	Learning frameworks: organisation-wide tracking system to qualitatively and quantitatively monitor progress and explore the resonance of work.	Deepening reflection: Staff processes and retreats to promote integration of learning and study results.
Implementation research: Studies focused on feasibility and practical applications of Raising Voices' methodologies.	Program learning initiatives: In-depth assessments of programming in progress as well as key questions with implications for the organisation.	Learning circles: Curated staff development and skill building across cutting themes (e.g., violence and mental health).
Longer-term impact: Investigating SASA! and GST's sustainability and influence on life trajectories.	Consolidation and documentation: Contributing quality, practice-based learning publications and materials to the field.	Structural support: Platforms to enhance individual and organisational learning (learning plans, cloud-based server, file sharing etc).

Influencing

The *Influencing* thematic area covers activities that pertain to national activism, regional advocacy and global action. The following goals were set:

Influencing

National Advocacy	Regional Organising with the GBV Prevention Network	Global Action
Systems building in Uganda: Supporting institutional capacity to integrate the <i>GST</i> .	Engage member organisations: Using network methodologies (e.g. <i>Get Moving</i> ! <i>In Her</i> <i>Shoes</i>) to strengthen feminist analysis.	Collective activism: Leadership and co-facilitation of strategic initiatives such as Communities for Understanding Scale-Up (CUSP), Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM), the Prevention Collaborative etc.
National dialogue on VAC: Challenging and changing perceptions through mass media and community-based perceptions.	Inspire individual members: Nurturing a spirit of activism and solidarity through social media (e.g. Sister to Sister, Rethink and Renergise processes etc).	Disseminating ideas: Elevating practice-based learning through publications, events, reviews, and advisory committees.
Advocacy forums and coalitions: Playing an active and grounded role with Ugandan civil society.	Collective action and movement building: Fostering cross-national regional connections and action through campaigns, advocacy and skill building.	Strategic engagements: Shaping conceptualisation and implementation of funding, policy and programme design.



Review Methodology

The review process is summarised below:

- 1 Kick-off session with staff
- **2** Desktop analysis
- **3** Staff survey
- **4** Focus group sessions with teams
- 5 Writing of the report

Kick off session with staff

The kick-off session was an opportunity to meet all Raising Voices staff. We talked about the expectations for the review and the proposed plan of action, eliciting feedback on what would work best.

Desktop analysis

In this part of the process, I worked with Raising Voices' administrative data. I looked at the effectiveness of the 2018 – 2022 through the lens of available documentation. Reports and other administrative data were used to get a sense of the extent to which the organisation's objectives were met, what worked well, and what the challenges were.

Staff survey

A survey containing both quantitative¹ questions as well as qualitative² questions was sent to all staff. It focused on gains, challenges, impact, lessons learnt, and the changes that staff think are necessary. The survey was anonymous to provide an opportunity for confidential feedback. Most staff, twenty-nine people, responded to the survey.

Focus group discussions with teams

A series of focus group discussions was conducted with teams: Learning, Operations, Violence against Children (VAC), Violence against Women (VAW) and Leadership to understand the work done by the teams, the challenges they face, and the organisational and social context within which they operate.

Writing of the report

The analysis of the administrative documents, the focus group discussions, and the online survey was used to map and understand the extent to which the 2018 – 2022 strategy had been implemented. Key thematic areas were identified and the report draws on these themes. High-level themes framed a broad scope of themes and these were broken down into lower level themes where possible. Inductive analytical reasoning was used to develop an understanding of patterns in the themes.

¹A response set

²Open ended



The section below documents the review findings. This is structured to reflect on:

- The Raising Voices organisational ethos
- Overall impressions of the implementation of the 2018-2022 strategy
- A deep dive into: Practice, Learning, Influencing and Operations

In the discussion of findings, I have interwoven the views held by staff with my analytical commentary.

In some ways, it is difficult doing a review of goals set in 2017, at a time when it was not envisaged that the world would be faced with the significant challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The review has had to therefore take cognisance of the socio-economic context and the enormous societal strain brought about by the pandemic.

Organisational ethos

"Raising Voices stretches me, but in ways that makes me better, that helps me to grow"

(staff member)



Figure 2 Jam board Session with Staff on "What has Raising Voices Brought to Your Life?"

It was evident from the focus group discussions that Raising Voices is a warm and kind workplace, deeply sensitive to the personal well-being of its staff. The focus group discussions made it clear that Raising Voices valued an organisational ethos of care. Staff felt that they worked in an environment that did not exert pressure and expressed that Raising Voices both listened to and valued its staff. When facing personal challenges, the organisation responded with empathy. Staff felt a sense of control of the ways in which they worked – the pace at which they worked, as well as how they were able to claim agency. Of note, there seemed to be no incidents of victimisation and bullying. It was heartening to note that staff thought that the Leadership Team managed with integrity and humility and that there was an ambience of trust, with no attempts to micro-manage. A common theme was that the organisation was nurturing and values-driven.

The COVID-19 pandemic fore-fronted the organisational ethos and values of the organisation in a number of ways. This included:

- 1. Changing ways of working and adapting to the strategy to take the difficulties of the pandemic into account;
- 2. Bringing to the fore the intersection between staffs' professional and personal lives and the consequent prioritisation of the families of staff members;
- 3. Finding practical ways of supporting both staff and organisational partners in dealing with the hardship brought about by the pandemic. Examples of this include: adapting working hours and creating flexibility in relation to how long staff worked and where they worked from, the provision of counseling sessions to those experiencing trauma, hosting and participating in 'sense making forums' as a site of discussion for trying to navigate through the pandemic, and making additional cash payments to both staff and partners to deal with the economic hardship brought about by the pandemic.

It was generally felt that Raising Voices was not a run-of-the-mill type organisation in its approach to both giving effect to its mandate and in how it engages with its staff. Those who work for the organisation generally tend to have a vocation for working in the area of social justice and in addressing violence in society. This drive and commitment is at the core of what creates the organisational ethos. David Whyte (2015) describes a vocation as being a calling, a conversation between our physical bodies, our work, our intellects and imaginations – one in which we see a vision for a new world. He argues that a true vocation always metamorphoses both ambition and failure into compassion and understanding for others. It is important to note that the staff at Raising Voices view their work as being part of a vocational calling and it this drive that comes together to form a collective organisation that is values-driven. It is no small feat that the Leadership Team have worked consciously to create a particular type of organisation – one that is based on the principles of respect, appreciation of people, and managing with empathy and understanding.



Overall impressions of the implementation of the 2018-2022 strategy

"Raising Voices has an agenda. It is very intentional in what it is doing and the strategy is a political statement. The strategy is therefore a political agenda."

(staff member)

In approaching the overall impressions of the implementation of the 2018 – 2022 strategy, I will start with a brief synopsis of my overall impressions, followed by the main finding of a survey with external stakeholders, and finishing off with the findings of a staff survey at Raising Voices.

Raising Voices has done exceptionally well in implementing the 2018 – 2022 strategy, especially so in a time of global turmoil brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. In working with all the data sources, I thought that it had done very well in all its areas of work, namely: Practice, Learning, Influencing and Operations. Operations still has some challenges, but these are in the process of being addressed. The reasons for my view are substantiated in the sections that follow on Practice, Learning, Influencing and Operations. At the outset though, I would like to make a few observations when thinking about the wide reach and impact that Raising Voices has had.

First, it is worth noting that the Raising Voices methodologies have been the subject of academic curiosity and pursuit. Many different research organisations have wanted to collaborate with Raising Voices to test the evidence-base of its work. This body of work adds credibility to the programmatic interventions that Raising Voices has developed.

The second, auxiliary observation is that Raising Voices is interesting in that it straddles both academic and community spaces. By this, I mean that the organisation does practice-based work at community level and these ideas have been studied, thought about, and discussed in academic spaces. Having a foot in each of these spaces and ensuring that there is a symbiotic relationship between them, is of tremendous value. Raising Voices has excelled in taking carefully thought-through concepts, ideas, and theories of change and translating these into accessible, user-friendly language. In so doing, it narrows the divide between how knowledge is generated and used.

The third broad observation that I would like to make is about the approach that Raising Voices adopts in engaging with communities and the partners with whom it works. I would like to adapt a concept used by Cassim (2016) to explain this. When we think about how organisations can work with communities and other organisations, there are, broadly speaking, one of three ways in which it might engage. The first is engagement with 'hearing moments', when organisations engage with citizen voices, they might try to 'hear,' but do not quite listen, resulting in a situation where they do not change the way in which they act. The second is 'consultation moments' when there is a genuine engagement through dialogue, but the resulting action is one-sided. 'Concertation moments' are moments when there is two-way dialogue and action that results in the formation of coalitions. Through these coalitions, communities become partners in engaging with social change. Getting to the concertation moments is arduous. It requires much work and sustained effort. The fact that Raising Voices has had its eye on the same core objectives over a long period, has yielded dividends for achieving sustained moments of concertation with both the partners and communities it works with. A key factor contributing to the success of the work of Raising Voices is that it has remained focused, staying true to its mandate, even when asked to take on work that would bring in additional resources but would detract from its core area of focus.

External Survey:

In June 2022, Raising Voices engaged in an exercise to understand how its work was being perceived with a view to identifying areas of growth. A survey was distributed to its networks and elicited a significant response, a total of 188 responses. The findings show that 74% of respondents knew about VAC work and that 88% of respondents knew about the VAW work and found most aspects of Raising Voices work to be 'exceptional.'³

Internal Review:

An internal survey asked staff about their overall impressions of the extent to which the 2018-2022 strategy was effectively implemented. Most staff felt that Raising Voices was successful in implementing the strategy. This is reflected in figure 3.

³ A summary of the findings of the stakeholder survey can be found here: https://raisingvoices.org/resources/stakeholdersurvey/

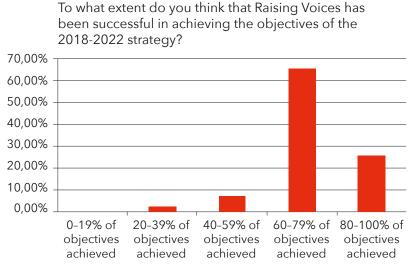


Figure 3 Impressions of the extent to which the 2018–2022 strategy was achieved

From figure 3, we see that the vast majority, 66 % of staff, thought that 60-79% of objectives were met and 24% thought that 80-100% of the objectives were met. The survey also asked staff how successfully different components of the strategy were implemented.

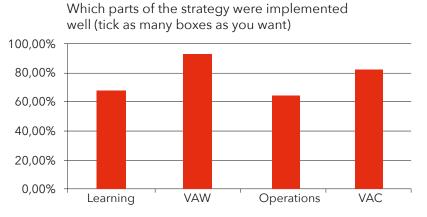


Figure 4 Impressions of which parts of the strategy were well implemented

Figure 4 shows that 93% of staff thought that the VAW programme was well implemented and 82% thought the same for the VAC programme. *Learning* did not fare badly, 68% of staff thought that the objectives in the strategy were achieved. It is worth noting that the Learning Team contributed quite significantly to supporting development in the organisation. It also supported learning and development with partners, as well as facilitating a significant number of research collaborations.

64% of staff felt that the operations strategy was successfully implemented. The focus group session with the Operations Team noted that there had been significant challenges in the past in terms of developing efficient and effective operational systems. In addition, the team was under-resourced with key posts being vacant. Significant progress has been in the course of the past year in streamlining systems and processes and there is a need to focus on consolidating work in this regard.



A Deep-Dive into Practice, Learning and Influencing

Jam board session with staff: What have we accomplished as an organisation?

What have we accomplished as an organisation?



Figure 5 Jam board session with staff on what the organisation has accomplished

Practice

"Our practice has entailed the development of language, concepts, evidence and learning. But also, it has entailed living feminist principles. Our practice is rooted in doing good work, doing no harm and, with purpose, making sure that others have a voice."

(staff member)

In the Raising Voices strategy, *Practice* refers to all activities encompassed in the following building blocks:



The achievements in delivering on the strategy in terms of *Practice* have been significant, especially so in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with curtailed movement and social interaction.

Community activism

Insofar as community activism is concerned, the 2018-2022 strategy set out to do the following:

- Support 10 community-based organisations in Uganda to prevent and respond to VAC.
- Experiment and pilot new approaches to prevent violence.
- Provide emergency assistance to women and children in need.

Raising Voices performed well in achieving the objectives identified as part of its community activism strategy. While programme innovations had been underway before COVID-19, the pandemic brought about additional innovations in experimenting with new approaches. When, for example, Covid-19 disrupted plans to strengthen implementation of the GST in schools, Raising Voices supported online and socially distanced learning processes. A simplified version of the GST, GST Agile, was conceived with the goal of reaching 5000 schools. Through the Regional Resource Persons (RRPs), Raising Voices maintained contact with schools and strengthened local activism with community-based groups. Notwith-standing the pandemic, an estimated 4297 community members were reached via a series of dialogues on VAC.

SASA! Together was published in 2020. It is an important resource in community mobilisation in VAW prevention. The focus group session with the VAW team expressed the view that the *SASA!* methodology has been refined over the course of many years - where there had been challenges in the past, these have been adapted and addressed in *SASA! Together*. The insights gathered have been used to improve the methodology, which has become a 'household' name both regionally and globally. The uptake of *SASA! Together* and its global reach as a resource used in VAW prevention work in communities is a clear indication of its success.

Adaptations and scale

The strategy set out the following objectives in terms of adaptation and scale:

- Support SASA! and the GST to expand to new communities and contexts.
- Revise and adapt methodologies for diverse settings.

By the end of 2021, the *SASA! Together* cohort expanded, including a cohort in South Asia, a global cohort with five international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) and United Nations agencies with internal technical assistance capacity, as well as a cohort established in Latin America. In addition, the VAW Practice Team has supported over 40 organisations across the Asia-pacific region, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. *SASA! Together* has been published in Spanish to support work in Latin America and Mexico. The work of Raising Voices in preventing VAW has gained widespread legitimacy and credibility, resulting in a significant global footprint.

In terms of the 2018 – 2022 strategy, the goal was to roll out the GST to 1000 schools over a five-year period. At the time that the goal was set, the GST was implemented in approximately 500 schools. At the time of writing, 1009 schools were implementing the GST. The fact that the target was exceeded is significant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the GST, Raising Voices reached an estimated 20,000 community members through direct outreach with messaging about preventing violence against children. Via a media campaign, Raising Voices regularly reaches an estimated 2 million people per month and the campaigns run over the course of 6-7 months every year.⁴ The Regional Resource Persons (RRP) model has had a significant impact in contributing towards this. Currently, there are 43 resource persons implementing the GST in schools. During the course of the pandemic, the GST strategy was amended to adapt to the circumstances

⁴This excludes teachers and leaders who are engaged in training and advocacy initiatives.

of curtailed movement. Violence Prevention Centres (VPCs) have also been pivotal in building capacity to implement the GST, as well as being emergency sites where help and support are provided. The VPCs have been instrumental in building the capacity of teachers and community members.

During the course of COVID-19 pandemic, schools in Uganda remained closed for 83 weeks, longer than any country in the world. This resulted in a situation where there was a great need for mental health support. Raising Voices was not able to access schools during this time and had to find innovative ways of providing support. It continued to support the Good School partners, who maintained strong relationships with local governments and teachers. Raising Voices engaged with the RRPs and managed to make mental health and psychosocial support to the Good School partners a priority. The RRPs cascaded this support through small, clustered, and socially distanced trainings with over 2000 teacher protagonists and 1000 teachers.

One of the strategic achievements of the VAC programme has been its close collaboration with the Government of Uganda. The nurturing of this relationship has resulted in the GST being formally 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. The institutionalisation of the GST within the pedagogical approach of the Government is a monumental achievement, worthy of a huge pat on the back.

An exciting, relatively new development, has been the focus on adapting the GST for implementation in secondary schools. This is already underway and is being piloted in about 100 schools.

Violence Prevention Learning Centre

The following objectives were set:

- Provide creative training and technical assistance to organisations using Raising Voices' methodologies.
- Regional SASA! Learning Centres: Work with organisations to run decentralised SASA training courses and provide technical assistance.

The VPLC provides learning and skills development on the VAC and VAW methodologies. It has been actively engaged in providing support to partner organisations. The VLPC has been instrumental in developing capacity to use *SASA! Together* and the GST. It has also been an important resource in learning about good practice in violence prevention. The VLPC has also provided technical assistance to help organisations strengthen their programming.

Learning

"Our key aim is to inspire other teams, to develop a culture of learning in the organisation. This is done through a number of different initiatives - by supporting teams to do what they are doing. There is no formula for providing support. It is needs-based, but there has been some discussion on how to create more balance."



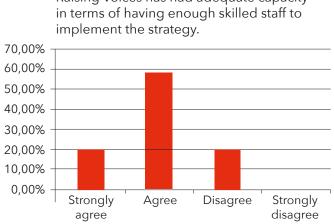
One of the things that stands out about Raising Voices as an organisation is the fact that a culture of learning has been successfully woven into the ethos of organisation, so much so that it has a structural element to retaining it as an area of focus. This is somewhat atypical and significantly contributes towards integrating knowledge gained from the work done. The Learning Team's key aim is to inspire other teams by developing a culture of learning in the organisation. This is done via a number of different initiatives. Figure 6 encapsulates the focus of learning at Raising Voices:

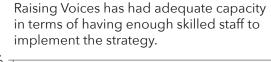


Figure 6 The learning focus of Raising Voices

As can be seen from the diagram, there is an iterative learning process that focuses on staff members as individuals, the teams, the organisation as a whole, the partners of the organisation, and the communities it engages with. In turn, this influences processes at national, regional and a global level. This is quite a remarkable learning footprint for a small organisation, suggesting a unique approach. There seems to be a clear link between the extent to which learning is a priority and the influence that Raising Voices has. Not only is learning structurally incorporated into the work of a dedicated team, but it is also incorporated into the cycle of particular time slots over the course of a year. Staff development sessions, bi-weekly learning collaborative meetings, quarterly reflect and act sessions, learning circles, team building, and retreats are integral to facilitating how knowledge is processed and integrated. These initiatives are used to think about how to strategically enhance the learning framework. Data acquired through the course of programming work is used to adapt practice through the learning process. One focus group participant described this as follows, "Internally, we have experimented with different ways to feed learning back across teams. We have tried to sustain a collaborative learning culture, including through standing meetings every two weeks for teams to reflect on the rich data that emerges and the insights learnt from programmes. This also included conducting staff development sessions virtually during the pandemic and a carefully planned team retreat."

The survey asked staff to rank on a Likert scale the statement, "Raising Voices has adequate capacity in terms of having skilled staff to implement the strategy." The diagram below shows an overview of the responses.





From the diagram above, 20.69% of staff strongly agreed that the organisation has enough skilled staff while 58.62% agreed with statement (a joint 79.31%). Interestingly, 20.69% of staff disagreed with the statement. The reasons for this view warrants further discussion in a "reflect and act" session. The survey did not yield additional information on the reasons for this response – it may be that some staff think that the body of work is complex and that they need additional skills, or could potentially mean that a small percentage of

Figure 7 Overview of perceptions of capacity in terms of skilled staff

staff think that there is a need for more staff who have certain skills. For this reason, it is important that the issue be flagged for further discussion.

It has been interesting to note that in addition to facilitating learning that is inspired from outside of the organisation, Raising Voices makes strategic use of the data that it generates *internally* to generate learning. The nature of its work results in a situation where Raising Voices has access to a rich source of data on preventing violence against children and women. The fact that Raising Voices has leveraged usage of this to optimise learning is significant. To facilitate the integration of internally produced knowledge, Raising Voices has strengthened its data management systems over time to support the design and synthesis of practice-based learning. The organisation has put considerable effort into thinking about how it collects and analyses information, with a view to making informed programmatic decisions. The Learning Team has been instrumental in thinking about how to generate reports and how to use databases to best support partners. This has contributed to Raising Voices becoming renowned for generating invaluable data through its work.

Given the impact of its prevention interventions and its access to rich data, many research partners have approached Raising Voices, wanting to study what it does, wanting to use the access it has and the methodologies it has developed, to enhance prevention work. As a result, Raising Voices has been inundated with requests for research partnerships. One staff member used the following words to describe this, "We did a lot of studies over the last 5 years, with an estimated 13-15 partners, different partnerships, although sometimes with the same institution. A significant amount of time has gone into this. Not all the research projects were completed, as some are longer-term and will be built into the new strategy. The research collaborations have been instrumental in studying *SASA!* and the GST as intervention methodologies and in thinking about what can be learnt from them in terms of adapting them for scale. Knowledge gained from the research collaborations has not only been useful for the work of Raising Voices, but also in exploring broader questions relevant to the field, such as on understanding COVID-19's effect on VAC and children's mental health. In the section on challenges experienced in the organisation, the demand for research collaborations is discussed further.

The Learning Department plays a pivotal role in developing capacity in the partners of the organisation. In the focus group discussion, it was estimated that technical assistance is provided to 34 partners. One participant in the focus group discussion had this to say about the learning support provided to partners, "It is encouraging to see more partners committed to quality learning and assessment in their prevention programming. We will continue to strengthen the databases and provide technical support and work collaboratively with partners to facilitate learning. In this way, programming becomes even stronger."

In terms of how learning assistance is provided by the Learning Team, there is a strategy for the support provided, but in the words of one focus group participant, "There is no formula for providing support, it is needs-based. We have discussed how to create more balance in

providing support. We do quite a bit of work in providing external support – the support that is provided to partners in the VAC and VAW methodologies. We provide technical support to partners to use the Raising Voices tools, how they manage their data, and how they facilitate their own learning. Internally, we try to ensure that the support that we provide is balanced, but some teams have more learning needs than others. In 2020, more support was given to the VAC team, as we had more requests from them."

One of the key issues to emerge in the focus group discussion with the Learning Team was the need to carve out more time for the team to focus on its own learning trajectory. The team seems inundated with requests for support and collaboration, which has meant that it has had less time to focus on both learning within the team as well as learning uptake. By nature of the fact that it responds to requests, the work of the team is currently very reactive. It is worth thinking through how to ensure that instead of this approach, that the working of the Learning Team is more aligned to pre-determined strategic priorities. This is explored in the section on the issues to think through.

Influencing

"Arguably, influencing is where we have had the greatest impact. Both in the areas of VAC and VAW, we have credibility. I think that because we have credible ideas that we bring to the table and because we have integrity in the way that we do our work, we are able to influence others."

(staff member)



The synergistic efforts between *Practice* and *Influence* in preventing VAW and VAC has had a significant footprint on work in the field globally. Raising Voices has been effective in terms of its ability to influence ideas, methods, concepts, collaborations and ways of thinking about prevention of VAC and VAW. When it comes to influencing others, its success has been outstanding. As a small organisation in the Global South, it has

successfully managed to reach out its tentacles and make an impact at both a regional and global level. As a result, it has gained respect, credibility and leverage in prevention of violence work. If one had to pinpoint the key reasons for this success, three things stand out: The first is that the quality of its programmatic work speaks for itself – the refining of the methodologies for prevention of VAW and VAC over many years, has resulted in initiatives that have been tried and tested. As a result, many other organisations are keen to experiment and adapt the methods to suit their contexts. The second reason is that Raising Voices has been innovative in its approach to its influencing initiatives. Thinking about how to reach out to others, how to best partner and collaborate, and how to expand *SASA!* and the GST has been at the core of the organisation's area of focus. Third, *Influencing* requires a high level of technical skills. It clear that Raising Voices has demonstrated clear ability here.

Integral to its success in expanding the use of its methods for others to take up is the fact that Raising Voices has been open to innovations in adapting its approach to suit different contexts. One example of this is the adaptation of Get Moving! for dealing with the specificities required found within humanitarian contexts. In collaboration with the International Rescue Committee, the GBV Prevention Network created two adapted versions (in person and online versions) of Get Moving! for humanitarian organisations and rolled the initiative out to prevent sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse. This included the provision of technical assistance to women's rights organisations and INGOs on the new adaptation. Another example of an innovation in reaching out to influence is the adaptation of the GST for usage on a mobile APP. This has meant that the GST methods and technical assistance is readily at hand, with many more practitioners able to access it easily.

In terms of building partnerships and collaborations, Raising Voices has put considerable effort into thinking about how to develop and grow strategic collaborations that fit with the organisation's mandate. Examples here include the GBV Prevention Network, the Coalition for Good Schools, and the Community for Understanding Scale Up (CUSP). These collaborations have been led by Raising Voices as part of an initiative to deepen its connection in the area of violence prevention. The GBV Network has been instrumental in bringing together activists to collaborate on joint campaigns and in raising awareness about VAW. It has played a key role in deepening feminist analysis and in developing concepts, such as 'body politics,' and 'self care.' It plays an important role in developing an understanding of these concepts across the region. In 2019, the Coalition for Good Schools was formed in collaboration with 12 founding members in seven countries. It brings together a global group of practitioners and thought leaders working to prevent VAC in schools in the Global South. The Coalition for Good Schools has published a global evidence review on effective interventions to prevent VAC at schools. Initially, CUSP was set up as a time-bound initiative in 2016. More than five years later, the interest in its ideas and discussions continues to grow. In 2021, CUSP focused on writing up a new vision of feminist scale. In so doing, it has sought to link together an analysis of how patriarchy, geopolitical forces, and neoliberal economics are shaping the discourse of scale, resulting in programming that is harmful to women. CUSP has been thinking about scale in ways that foreground communities and the agency of those most affected.

The credibility of the work of Raising Voices has recently resulted in contributing to the securement of the *What Works II* bid. As members of the successful consortium, Raising Voices with IRC, Breakthrough, SDDirect and CARE will co-lead the UK Foreign, Common-wealth and Development Office's new GBV prevention programme (estimated at 67.5 million pounds (GBP) and to be rolled out over a seven-year period). Being part of this consortium allows Raising Voices to advance feminist VAW prevention work, ethical scaling and the programming of women's rights organisations.

In wrapping up the discussion on influencing, it is worth thinking about how to invest in continued support to partners in adapting the Raising Voices methodologies to suit their context, as well as in growing and developing the technical skills needed for support.

Operations

In the focus group discussion with the Operations Team, it emerged that there had been significant challenges in the past in ensuring that the operational systems driving the administrative efficiency of the organisation were running smoothly. In the past, work pertaining to administration and finance was separated into two teams. There was some level of subliminal tension in working collaboratively. One staff member described this as follows, "We were like two siblings, fighting with each other, but now we are in a good place." These two areas of focus have now been merged in the Operations Team and the combination has significantly improved operational systems overall. Steps were taken to address administrative efficiency and these have yielded results. As a result, there has been a steady improvement in operational efficiency, particularly over the course of the past year.

It was clear from the focus group discussion that the team comprised staff who are passionate and committed to the organisation's mandate. Even at an operational level, the staff are driven by a sense of vocation as opposed to viewing their work merely as 'just another job.' When describing the transition from a time when things were difficult to the current situation, one staff member had this to say, "The investment in systems and skilled people has yielded results in terms of improving administrative accountability. We have a good, skilled caliber of staff, a team of professionals." We needed to beef up our administrative procedures and we have done so. Our accounting system works well and we're in a good place now. The systems in place support the funding that we have. In fact, it would support funding even if we were to get double the amount of money that we currently have. Our internal control systems have been improved and we have sound policies in place."

Over time, there has been gradual buy-in from staff in terms of compliance with the operational systems. The Operations Team noted, however, that there was room for improvement in terms of enhancing compliance. A related challenge here was that when things were not properly planned, resulting in 'last-minute' decisions. This significantly affected the ability of the Operations Team to process administrative issues. It was also noted that while there were sound policies in place governing operational systems, there was still a need to update the finance and human resources policies.

It is important to note that there have been no issues of fraud or fruitless and wasteful expenditure, attesting to the efficacy of the operational systems. One staff member had this to say, "At times, staff argue that the systems that we have are bureaucratic, but we have not had any fraud. At times, others think that we are inefficient, but there are times when the programme teams impact on our ability to do our work timeously and we end up having to juggle things. If it carries on in the same way, it is going to be a big problem. Having said that, I would say that there is room for improvement in terms of our efficiency."

On the whole, things have changed for the better. Substantial resources have been invested in establishing IT infrastructure, management and accounting systems, operational policies and the human resources required to operate efficiently.



Challenges

Jam board session with staff: What are the challenges we've faced?

What are the challenges we've faced?



Figure 8 Challenges identified by staff during the kick-off session

The focus group discussions brought to the fore a number of challenges that the teams experienced in giving effect to the 2018-2022 strategy. The challenges listed below are the ones that emerged most frequently in discussions and the ones that were emphasised as being important. These were pulled out and categorised into the following key thematic areas:

Organisational challenges

COVID-19 affected the ability of the organisation to do its work (notwithstanding the fact that it did very well in the context). It affected programming and research. It also affected the health and well-being of staff, partners, and the communities that Raising Voices works with.

A common theme in the focus group discussions was that staff felt that the organisation lacked capacity (particularly in the Learning and Operations Teams). Many expressed the view that they worked long hours and had difficulty maintaining a healthy work/life balance. These views of carrying strain are also taking place at a particular point in time, where there is additional pressure placed upon us in working in the context of the pandemic. There is still, however, a need to examine this and to think about ways of incorporating more practices of self-care in the organisation. In addition, there needs to be a systemic approach to dealing with many ad hoc requests and what should be prioritised in the face of competing external demands. The pressure to respond to external demands comes at a cost of not fostering enough internal, creative time for thinking and developing.

Ideological challenges

Raising Voices is a feminist organisation – it espouses feminist values and it seeks to act these out in its praxis. A key challenge that emerged from both the focus group discussions and the survey, was the difficulty entailed in promoting intersectional feminist values in a relatively conservative socio-political context. While there is an appetite to think about what this means for the work of Raising Voices, the reality is that in the Ugandan context, lives have been threatened when this agenda has been pushed. There is a need to think about how to manage this in the context of 'doing no harm.'

Practice

Community activism and the need to rethink how to mobilise effectively at community level to raise awareness about VAC and VAW prevention emerged quite a few times in the course of the review. It was interesting to hear this, given that it was estimated that, for example, through the GST, Raising Voices reached an estimated 20,000 community members directly with messaging about preventing violence against children. Notwithstanding this, it seems that work at community level is a priority for many. It goes without saying that COVID-19 negatively affected engagement at community level. What also emerged was the need to think strategically about the sites of community engagement in terms of what is likely to have the greatest impact. Questions were raised about whether Raising Voices needs to do more work focusing on homes, religious sites, and other community structures.

Across the board, the adaptation of *SASA!* and the GST by others was raised as a concern. The key challenge here is that in the widespread usage of the models, it has been difficult to ensure that when the programmes are adapted to suit different contexts, that quality and integrity is maintained.

Feedback from the focus group session with the VAC team noted that challenges have emerged with the RRP model. When resource persons are recruited, an investment is made in the building of their capacity to assist with GST roll-out. It was envisaged that their skills would cascade down to those with whom they work. While coaching and mentorship initiatives have been used to facilitate this, the cascading of skills has not worked well in practice. The capacity of those with whom the RRPs work is not the same as those who had initially been recruited as resource persons.

All the teams talked about the difficulties in conceptualising scale and in identifying what the 'tipping' point would be for both *SASA! Together* and the GST. There are different ideas of what scale looks like. Some discussions have been had on the subject, but there has been no resolution. In thinking about scale, it would be useful to think about this long-term. Discussions with the co-directors revealed that when Raising Voices was first established, it was established with a long-term vision. It seems as if the organisation is at a point where it needs to envisage what scale would look like long-term into the future. Importantly, a discussion in one focus group session pointed out that the 2018-2022 strategy might have been too ambitious. It would be worth thinking about scale along two lines. The first is the vision over a long-term period. The second is the conditions under which it might be necessary to be flexible and adapt the strategy given contextual changes.

Feedback from the focus group sessions was that some choices have to be made in terms of scale and that these might be difficult to make. Some noted that the current level of engagement was significant and that it might not be possible to sustain this. Areas that require some thought include both the number of schools reached with the GST as well as thinking about what is needed to support effective technical assistance to partners. Thinking about scale is inextricably linked to thinking about capacity. The current view is that Raising Voices is able to maintain its organisational ethos because it has remained small. Scale is also linked to the capacity to enter into strategic partnerships. All these factors need to be considered in identifying a realistic sense of scale in a manner that is ethically responsible in terms of quality.

On the whole, many staff members thought that VAC and VAW worked 'in silos' and that there was a need to think about what working more collaboratively would look like. It seems that there have been some discussions in the past, without any resolution. Some

expressed strong views in this regard – that it sometimes seemed as if the two teams were two different organisations and that there were conceptual differences in the approach to doing feminist violence prevention work. This is a discussion that needs to be explored further, in a safe space where both teams can unpack this. It is also worth exploring, for the organisation as a whole, how to create more intersection in VAW and VAC work.

The fact that Raising Voices is venturing into new and different terrain with diverse cultural contexts, has meant that the support it provides in the form of technical assistance has to adapt to suit changing contexts. There is a need for a conversation about re-imagining the provision of technical support in the context of rapid expansion of the ideas, concepts and methods of Raising Voices.

Learning

Learning simultaneously emerges as an area of work in which Raising Voices has had huge success, as well as being a site of challenge. In thinking about why this is, I am employing the diagram used earlier to illustrate the different levels at which learning in happening both within and outside of Raising Voices. Much thought has gone into how to best integrate a culture of learning in the organisation, how to extend this to partners (based on their particular needs) and how to share learning more

widely, in national and global spaces. Given this, there has been significant learning at many different levels, both inside and outside of Raising Voices. This means that the Learning Team is juggling different learning processes at different sites of interaction. The team expressed that it is inundated with learning requests – both internally and from partner organisations. In addition, there is high demand for research collaborations. Collaborations take up a significant amount of time and the need to analyse the costs versus the benefits of each collaboration was emphasised. The focus group revealed that some partnerships did not work out even though



much time had been spent in cultivating them. There is a need to rethink the mechanism for deciding on which partnershi

a need to rethink the mechanism for deciding on which partnerships are strategic and likely to be beneficial. One example is in relation to research partnerships. What are the criteria for entering into research collaborations? Which ones will best add value to the organisation and the communities its services? Which ones will best add to the field of knowledge in prevention work? Last, how will potential collaborations be assessed in terms of their value-add?

Influencing

Influencing is an area where Raising Voices has done well. No challenges emerged in this regard in the course of the focus group discussions. This might be because it is an area of work that has been done well, but it might also be because, inadvertently, not enough space was created to think it through. I would like to add something that comes to mind in relation to influencing work insofar as working towards social transformation is concerned. Working towards social change requires an understanding of how different role-players bring about or resist change. This, in turn, is useful in understanding when communities or societies resist change and the moments when transformation is possible. Influencing requires an understanding of the interplay between role-players and notions of structure, agency and power in continuity and change. Organisations, communities and societies are often resistant to change. When a particular path is decided upon in an organisation, community or society, it is usually self-reinforcing and moves to shift this path dependency, even when it is in everyone's interests to do so, is hard. Influencing requires an understanding of what makes moments of change possible within a longer period of stasis and resistance to change. Effective influencing requires an astute understanding of the dynamics at play and a re-imagining of what might make a moment of change possible.

Operations

The focus group session with the Operations Team noted that their main challenges either have been or are in the process of being addressed. Significant resources have been invested in improving upon operational systems, policies, staffing and management. At a management level, it would important to ensure that there is continued investment in operations running smoothly.



What should Raising Voices think about?

Jam board session with staff: What should Raising Voices think about?

What needs to change?

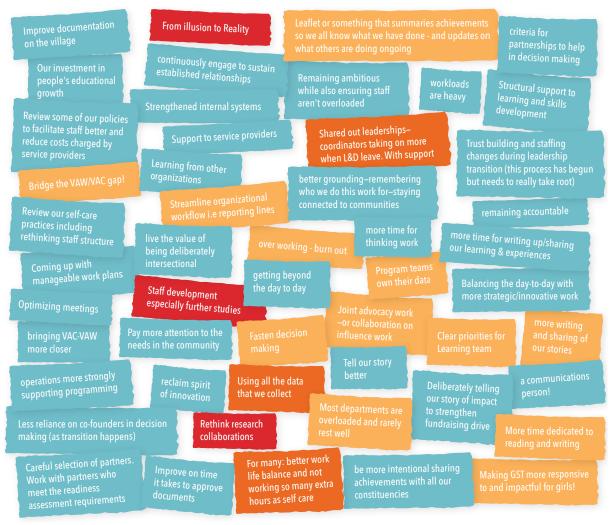


Figure 9 Kick-off jamboard session- what needs to change

In wrapping up the review, in addition to addressing the challenges identified in the previous section, the following issues are worth thinking through:

lssue	What needs to be thought about	Level of priority
Developing the new strategy	How ambitious/ modest should the new strategy be?	High
Partnerships/ Collaborations	At different levels: how to get partners to do what is needed without pressure, how to determine who the right partners are, what happens when partnerships do not work out?	High
Scale	What does this look like realistically? Where are the similarities/divergencies between scaling VAC/VAW prevention?	Medium
Methodology	Retaining what has proven to work versus the need identified by some to be creative and experiment with new methods.	Medium
Ideological questions	Using a feminist and intersectional lens and analysis more. How to do this in constrained socio-political contexts? How best should staff engagement and understanding be deepened?	High
Working with communities	What are the most effective ways of engaging communities? What are the different sites of engagement?	High
Technical advice and support	What are the needs? What is the vision? What is the current capacity? What is the desired capacity?	High
Develop and expand influencing	How to use existing and new structures?	Low
Staff workloads and self-care	How to address self-care and take into account the intersection of work/home/ societal lives?	High
Operations	Identify where there are bottlenecks in systems, resolve staff shortages	High

In ending off this report, I would like to draw on an analogy made by Rebecca Solnit.⁵ She describes walking on a beach one night. She describes how her footprints registered in the wet sand at low tide, before the waves came and devoured all trace of passage. We can envisage this as the line we leave behind. Solnit argues that it is useful to view our lives this way, as though each step is a stitch, as though we are a needle leaving a trail of thread that sews the world together as we go by, criss-crossing the paths of others, quilting it all together in some way that matters even though, at times, it can hardly be traced. A meandering line, she argues, sutures together the world in some new way, as though walking was sewing and sewing was telling a story and that story was your life's purpose. In sewing the new story that Raising Voices will create, in crisscrossing with the paths of others, it will leave a mark and it can decide on where it wants to go and how far.

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⁵ The Faraway Nearby, 2013