

Raising Voices 2023-2027 Strategy





Created by all Raising Voices Staff

Design: Samson Mwaka

Illustration: Céleste Wallaert

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Introduction

The 2023-2027 Strategy emerges from deep critical reflection and critical analysis of what it will take for Raising Voices to sustain and amplify our effort to prevent violence against women and children over the next five years.



This 2023-2027 Strategy emerges from deep reflection and critical analysis of what it will take for Raising Voices to sustain and amplify our efforts to prevent violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) over the next five years. Starting with an assessment of the shifting landscape of violence prevention, as well as our accomplishments and challenges as an organization, this document sets forward a path of aspiration and innovation. The roots that ground us remain unchanged—a passionate commitment to transformative programming and an unwavering focus on changing social norms that perpetuate violence against women and children. We will continue to nurture three core areas of work:

Practice— Creating, adapting and supporting feminist programming to prevent VAW and VAC.

Learning— Generating, integrating and amplifying knowledge anchored in practice.

Influencing— Analyzing, engaging and connecting with others to shape the overall ecosystem.



This strategic period will animate bold new aims and directions. We will:

- elevate our contributions to the discourse on how to take ideas to scale through formal studies, practice-based learning and programmatic investments;
- aim to expand our programmatic innovation and further adaptations developed during the pandemic while exploring a hybrid model of online and in person technical support and accompaniment of partners who are preventing violence;
- amplify the work of activists from the Global South across the violence prevention ecosystem, and invest our credibility in influencing how policy decisions are made and how resource investments are accountable to women and children; and
- apply our experience and resources to explore the intersection of the work on VAW and VAC prevention.

As we transition from a cofounder-led organization to a new Leadership Team, we will strengthen collective decision-making, streamline responsibilities, and improve cross-team collaboration. We will continue our investment in operational and management infrastructure and continue refining our voice as a Global South-based activist organization passionately focused on preventing violence against women and children. In this document, we outline the conceptual basis for our work and highlight examples of key activities and ideas that will enable us to breathe life into this vision. We will remain open to new possibilities as we engage with opportunities ahead and, at the same time, remain resolutely committed to the values that hold our vision together.

Our Foundation



“Raising Voices is an organization that walks the talk, that lives the values it promotes in its activism.”

**Respondent, Stakeholder
Survey, 2022**

Who we are

We are a small but mighty feminist organization based in Uganda that has been working to prevent violence against women and children since 2000. Our team of about 40 creates and implements evidence-based violence prevention programs grounded in the everyday realities of schools and communities. We rigorously and continuously learn what works to transform norms, then build on these insights to influence violence prevention efforts around the world.

Our values are at the heart of our work. We strive to put people first and believe that it is in our relationships with each other, our partners and others where joy, solidarity and potential live. Joined together with partners and sister organizations around the world, we work to elevate activist voices, harnessing our collective power to create positive change.

Box 1:

Our Vision & Mission

Our vision is a world where all women and children can flourish, free from violence.

Our mission is to prevent violence against women and children.



Our Approach

Raising Voices works to catalyze systemic change in schools and communities. All of our programming is grounded in feminist ideas and principles that we believe are essential for transformational change (Box 2). We organize our VAW and VAC prevention work across three interrelated program areas:

Practice is figuring out how to do the work of preventing violence. We start with ideas for what works to prevent violence, refine them, pilot them, share them, and when we know they are effective, and safe, scale them. We also provide technical support to partners for adapting and implementing prevention programming in their contexts.

Learning serves as our foundation for experimentation, innovation and agility. In particular, Raising Voices emphasizes “practice-based learning” which we define as the cumulative journey of intentional learning over time, informed by insights gained from direct experiences, observations, stories, informal reflections, monitoring processes, and more. Learning from doing grounds us in community realities and strengthens our accountability.

Influencing promotes feminist and child-centered perspectives and elevates activist voices within funding streams, prevention policies and global conversations on ethical programming to support safer and more effective prevention work. We believe that preventing violence requires transforming unjust power dynamics at all levels.

Box 2:

Core Principles for Transformational VAW and VAC Prevention Programs

More than two decades of creating, implementing, and adapting evidenced-based programming to prevent violence has taught us that these feminist principles are essential:

- Centering the priorities and voices of women and children.
- Focusing on creating systemic change.
- Inspiring individual and collective activism.
- Promoting critical thinking and discussion.
- Emphasizing the benefits of non-violence through aspirational programming.
- Challenging power inequalities.
- Embedding a dynamic learning-to-action cycle.
- Demonstrating the change we wish to see in the world by starting the work with ourselves as individuals, and as an organization.

Raising Voices works to
catalyze systemic change in
schools and communities.



Looking Back



What is Raising Voices' most significant contribution?

“Putting power back into programming! Raising Voices is known for integrity, transparency and accountability to grassroots activists, and incredibly innovative and evidence-based practices.”

Respondent, Stakeholder
Survey, 2022



Our Journey

Deliberately learning from our journey sets the groundwork for this new strategy. Through multiple engagements (Box 3), we turned a critical eye on the previous 5 years to identify accomplishments, core drivers of success and areas where we fell short. We collectively considered implications for what is needed to better prevent violence over the next 5 years.

Box 3:

Strategy Development Process

As we embarked on our new strategic plan, we wove together a series of participatory processes to reflect, engage with difficult questions and leverage ideas from team members, partners and other trusted friends. These included: (1) an online stakeholder survey; (2) an independent review of the work implemented in our previous strategy; and (3) multiple strategy review and development sessions with staff and leadership.

Several key themes emerged from these participatory processes:

- **Values-driven.** We center values and believe that relationships and process matter, not just the outcome. We seek to engage with kindness and care.
- **Evidence-informed interventions.** *SASA! Together* and the Good School Toolkit have transformed how impactful prevention programming is conceptualized and delivered—with a focus on power, school and community leadership, and holistic change.
- **Feminist leadership.** Our leadership produces impact in key networks and coalitions, including the GBV Prevention Network, the Community for Understanding Scaling Processes (CUSP) and the Coalition for Good Schools. Our influence is stronger when we join our power with others.

- **Voice.** Raising Voices has earned credibility through thoughtful engagement with partners around the globe. While we are a small organization, we participate in influential platforms, and are increasingly pulled in many directions. Balancing our ability to focus, bring innovation, and stay true to our organizational values is challenging, yet essential.

Stakeholder Survey

The 188 responses to our stakeholder survey were encouraging and validating! The majority of respondents have significant experience in the VAW and VAC fields (at least 6+ years) with 35% highly experienced (over 20 years).¹ Overall, respondents ranked most aspects of Raising Voices work as “exceptional,” highlighting our unique strength in creating methodologies, generating evidence and demonstrating



Staff Reflections

Following review of internal and external feedback, staff were invited to give advice to Raising Voices: "If this organization was a young person about to venture out on their own, what key advice would you share?"

Remain Focused

Remember that your DNA is to challenge social injustice and prevent VAW & VAC.

Stay true to your mission and voice! We are the custodians of our vision.

Keep Learning

Continuously reflect and integrate learning, while remaining open, agile, and innovative in the face of new developments.

Trust your voice. Your experience is valuable, share it with the world.

Follow Our Values

These are your compass.

When in doubt, let values guide your decisions.

Cultivate Humility

Take pride in achievements but invest in listening, especially to quieter voices. Use your power to raise others.

Your choices are not for external validation, but in service of women and children.

feminist values. Open-ended contributions included compelling accounts of how our work has made a personal impact and influenced global discourse and practice. For example, responses to the question "What has been Raising Voices most significant contribution?" highlighted all three areas of our work:

Practice: "Putting the power back in programming;" "Creating groundbreaking models to prevent VAW and VAC."

Learning: "Building the evidence base;" "Influencing a shift in the positioning of knowledge and evidence from Global South."

Influencing: "Creating the platform so voices can be heard;" "Thought leadership."

Survey respondents also shared valuable advice to consider for our future. Three clear recommendations emerged which we have integrated into the new strategy (see Section III Looking Forward): (1) engage more with smaller, local organizations from different regions; (2) scale Raising Voices methodologies and initiatives; and (3) build partnerships and connections between actors who play different roles in violence prevention.

Independent Review

An independent consultant carried out an external review² involving the following steps: facilitating five focus group discussions (FGDs) with all teams at Raising Voices, administering an anonymous staff survey, analyzing organizational reports and resources, and collecting inputs from the Leadership Team through an online share back session. In presenting the findings, several key achievements were emphasized, most notably:

- Raising Voices' innovation, adaptation and support for the implementation of the Good School Toolkit and *SASA! Together/SASA! Faith*.
- The organization's deep commitment to violence prevention and our leadership in contributing to the global knowledge base.
- The support provided to staff and partners throughout the COVID-19 pandemic reflected our ability to live our values during a moment of crisis.
- Staff approach their work as a "vocation" or personal calling for social justice. This orientation yields fierce commitment to see real change as well as attention to self and collective care for us and our partners.

Key challenges included: meeting rising demands for our expertise and the ensuing workload while adhering to our values-driven vision; maintaining commitment to our tried and tested methodologies while holding space for creativity; and strengthening our organizational approach to selecting and sustaining partnerships. Several specific questions were foregrounded as important to think through during the next strategy period (Box 4).

Box 4:

Questions for Further Reflection

- **Partnerships:** How do we determine which partnerships are fruitful to pursue? How do we navigate partnership challenges, including the possibility of closing out partnerships when there is misalignment of values and goals?
- **Scale:** What are the organizational implications of the differing approaches to scale for VAC prevention in schools and VAW prevention in communities? Can approaches diverge if principles are coherent across programs?
- **Feminist identity:** How do we navigate our feminist commitments in challenging political contexts? How can we more intentionally center intersectionality in our programming and learning?
- **Nurturing creativity:** What balance do we want to have between continuing to support our methodologies that have demonstrated impact on preventing violence, while also nurturing new innovations and possibilities?
- **Technical Assistance (TA):** How can we meet rising demand for our TA while maintaining a small team? How do we strike a balance between online TA support that grew during the pandemic and in-person relationship building?



Analysis of the Prevention Landscape

There are many achievements to celebrate over the past two decades in VAW and VAC prevention. We now know that VAW and VAC are preventable and there is a global consensus that the prevention is essential in the promoting health, human rights and dignity. Prevention of violence against women and children are now global objectives embodied in Sustainable Development Goals. More than 30 countries have signed up as pathfinding countries committing to prevent VAC and large funding initiatives such as What Works 2 and Spotlight are expanding the VAW prevention landscape. Core principles for impactful prevention work (see Box 2) have been taken up across the globe. The work of activist organizations has contributed to elevating the effectiveness of community mobilization and school-based prevention work to advance a vision of healthier and safer communities. There is growing advocacy for core and sustained funding of WROs, and an uptick in dedicated research around VAW and VAC. In this moment of heightened conversations of injustice around the globe, practitioners, policymakers and researchers continue to strengthen collaborations and rethink power dynamics at multiple levels.

At the same time, there have been immense challenges and, at times, backlash against progress in the violence prevention field. The repercussions from COVID-19 continue to regress gains and exacerbate rates of violence in communities and schools. In many spaces, experiences from the Global South are overlooked and feminist activism is devalued, as is the critical role that civil society plays in violence prevention.

Beyond these evident obstacles, fundamental questions about how to sustain, support and scale this work remain. The field of violence prevention faces complex, programmatic challenges such as:

- How can the field shift from implementing violence prevention programs toward building movements that sustain social change?
- How can programs at scale remain grounded in feminist values, be technically rigorous and accountable to increased numbers of communities and schools?
- What will it take to ensure the experiences of activists and communities leading this work are valued, prioritized and shaping global discourse and decisions?
- What will it take to ensure that funding for VAW and VAC prevention programming goes to the organizations leading this work in their own communities?
- How will innovation be sustained as violence prevention concerns extend to newer partners, such as cultural institutions or the education sector?

As this work unfolds, an important concern will be to ensure that voices from the Global South shape responses to these challenges, and that we build communities of practice that nurtures and elevates these voices. Through our work, we will make a case that all forms of knowledge—including practice-based learning—are valuable in the search for an efficient way forward. While challenges lie ahead, we feel optimistic by the deep commitment, solidarity and strong relationships and focus within our team and in the broader fields of VAW and VAC prevention. Together, we can ensure that women and children flourish.

Looking Forward

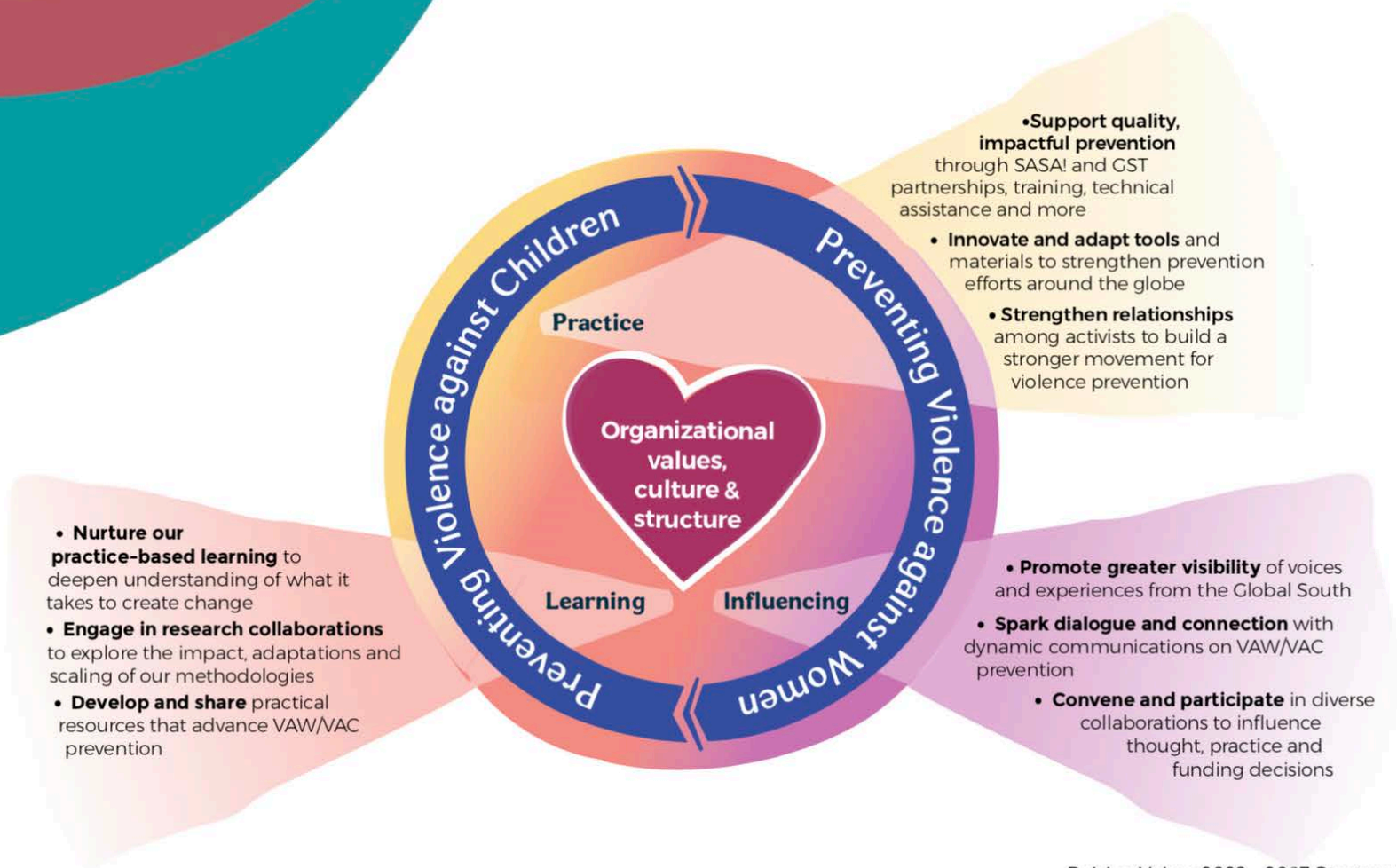
“Raising Voices should consider how to build on the work so far done to ensure sustainability. For instance, how do we sustain the huge movements of change agents built during implementation of SASA!? How can organizations harness their potential for growing the movement?”

Respondent, Stakeholder
Survey, 2022

At a Glance

our approach

Our vision is a world where all women and children can flourish, free from violence.



Strategic Aims



Practice

Learning

Influencing

Preventing VAW

- More dynamic, effective and supported *SASA! Together/ SASA! Faith* programming around the world.
- Increased VAW prevention programmatic innovation, tools and guidance.
- Stronger connections, synergy and community among activist organizations and movements.

- Greater prioritization of learning integrated within programming, strengthening accountability to communities.

- More supportive and connected VAW prevention ecosystem that elevates and funds feminist organizations.
- Stronger connections and shared analysis among VAW prevention activist organizations.

Preventing VAC

- Increased uptake and impact of GST within and beyond Uganda.
- Increased VAC prevention programmatic innovation, tools and guidance available to support impactful programming.

- Enhanced recognition of the value and contributions of practice-based learning within the global knowledge base on VAW/VAC prevention.
- Increased investment in learning that unpacks the why and how behind effective VAW & VAC prevention programming.

- Greater visibility of VAW/VAC prevention practitioners from the Global South in regional and global spaces.

- Improved access to learning tools that assess program fidelity and integrate learning for more tailored, responsive and impactful programming.

- Increased integration of principles for safe, effective, and ethical VAC prevention at all levels.
- Strengthened ability of religious and cultural leaders, government institutions, media personalities and journalists in Uganda to speak out against VAC.



Preventing Violence against Women

The VAW prevention team is a bridge builder, grounded in practice, connected to activists and engaged in global processes. We will leverage our skills, position and energy to advance a feminist VAW prevention agenda. We will continue to support safe and impactful programming in communities through our partnerships and innovation. We will continue to animate a vibrant network of feminist activists through our role in coordinating the GBV Prevention Network and engaging with aligned movements in Uganda and beyond. And we will remain steadfast in our commitment to feminist VAW prevention led by activists in the Global South, using our influencing channels to strengthen the field to support effective and ethical prevention efforts in our region and globally through our involvement in key feminist collectives and the What Works 2 Consortium.

Building from critical learning and introspection, we will pivot from strategies we found less effective or less aligned with our values. For instance, during the period of limited mobility throughout COVID-19, our partnerships gravitated toward online engagements and often with larger INGOs and bilateral actors. While this reflects funding dynamics and shrinking spaces for WROs, in the coming 5 years we will prioritize activist organizations in our global collaborations and continue to strengthen connections with feminist movements in Uganda and beyond. We will explore creative modalities to move us beyond technical assistance-style partnerships to movement building approaches that leverage relationships and shared values to better harness momentum for prevention.

We will also nurture and expand several concepts initiated during the last strategic plan, especially by promoting the value of care at personal, organizational and program levels and furthering our commitment to being deliberately intersectional in our

partnerships, the materials we create and our activism with feminist and other aligned movements. We will also sharpen our position around the "how to" of feminist scale of violence prevention programs. Further, we will intensify our commitment to expanding our own practice-based learning as well as supporting activist organizations to share and leverage their grounded expertise for stronger programming and increased accountability to women and communities.



VAW Prevention Practice

Aims: *The change we seek is...*

- * More dynamic, effective and supported SASA! Together / SASA! Faith programming around the world.
- * Increased VAW prevention programmatic innovation, tools and guidance.
- * Stronger connections, synergy and community among activist organizations and movements.

Initiatives: *We will do this by...*

1. Establishing and sustaining partnerships with

WROs and other organizations preventing VAW in their communities:

- Provide sustained mentoring, training and technical support to at least three cohorts of partners using *SASA! Together / SASA! Faith*.
- Develop the concept, secure funding, lead and learn with a unique cohort of WROs for the feminist scaling of *SASA! Together*.
- Create accessible online and in-person learning opportunities for partners and the broader field for feminist VAW prevention programming.
- Build a more sustainable approach to TA requests on our VAW prevention methodologies.

2. Creating, innovating and adapting new tools and materials to strengthen VAW prevention programming:

- Engage extensively in major adaptations of Raising Voices' methodologies to ensure quality and fidelity.
- Create, pilot, assess, revise and publish *SASA! Together for Radio*, including a guide for how to use the program in community organizing for VAW prevention (Box 5).
- Experiment with interventions addressing the intersections between VAW and VAC through integrated implementation of *SASA! Together* and the Good School Toolkit.

3. Building connection and community between activist organizations using *SASA!* and other methodologies to prevent VAW:

- Facilitate knowledge exchanges / convenings for partner organizations to share and learn from one another.
- Create platforms and opportunities for community building, learning, knowledge production and activism among activist organizations.



Box 5:

SASA! Together for Radio

During COVID-19, when face-to-face activism was not possible and violence continued and even increased, we developed a new initiative to enhance scalability, reach, and impact of *SASA! Together*—particularly for rural communities and areas where in-person mobilization is a challenge. In collaboration with the Uganda Network on Law, Ethics and HIV/AIDS (UGANET), Peripheral Vision International (PVI) and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), we began adapting *SASA! Together* for Radio. The work includes 33 episodes that bring to life key *SASA! Together* ideas of power, communication and activism. Accompanying the radio programs are training modules for activists on how to use them and discussion group guides for use in communities. The radio programs, currently being piloted, can be easily integrated alongside other *SASA! Together* or other VAW prevention activities. We will capture and disseminate learning throughout, and if results from the research are encouraging, we will refine and freely share the resources.

VAW Prevention Learning

Aims: *The change we seek is...*

- * Increased investment in learning that unpacks the why and how behind effective feminist VAW prevention programming.
- * Enhanced recognition of the value and contributions of practice-based learning within the global knowledge base on VAW prevention
- * Greater prioritization of learning integrated within programming, strengthening accountability to communities.

Initiatives: *We will do this by...*

1. **Prioritizing our practice-based learning** and elevate learning with our activist partners:
 - Synthesize change stories from around the world to better tell the story of how *SASA! Together*/*SASA! Faith* is impacting women and communities.
 - Learn from our partnerships with regular assessments of how partners experience our technical support.
 - Investigate and document our experience to support intersectional VAW programming and movement building that acknowledges and addresses the strengths and priorities of women in all their diversity.
2. **Engaging in research collaborations** to explore important questions arising from our work that require external research expertise. During this strategy period, we will prioritize the following research collaborations, and remain open to opportunities as they arise:

- Understand how *SASA! Together* is being adapted and implemented by diverse partners, with a specific focus on new elements of the methodology (Global Women's Institute).
- Explore *SASA! Together* for Radio (Box 5), with the aim of assessing the reach, community perceptions, and any positive changes emerging from the pilot in Uganda (LSHTM, UGANET and PVI).
- Document the process and impact of feminist scale within the funded *SASA! Together* cohort (research partnership pending).

3. **Centering learning uptake** by actively synthesizing, popularizing, and sharing the knowledge base:

- Develop infographics, Learning Papers, Briefs, social media tiles, and other popular materials accessible to activist organizations.
- Create spaces to internalize learning and support the full cycle of learning-to-action to further strengthen VAW prevention efforts.

- Demonstrate how practice-based learning can be harnessed to leverage change for global initiatives, policies and funding for VAW prevention.

VAW Prevention Influencing

Aims: *The change we seek is...*

- * More supportive and connected VAW prevention ecosystem that elevates and funds feminist organizations.
- * Stronger connections and shared analysis among VAW prevention activist organizations.
- * Greater visibility of VAW prevention practitioners from the Global South in regional and global spaces.

Initiatives: *We will do this by...*

1. **Supporting collective activism** by convening activists and collaborations at national, regional and global levels, including harnessing existing collectives and cultivating new energy and long-term thought partnerships with feminist groups:

Box 6:

Enhancing activism across the GBV Prevention Network

The GBV Prevention Network, with a vibrant membership of over 2,500 organizations and activists, will continue its virtual and in-person engagement at individual, organizational and collective levels to enhance feminist analysis, strengthen connections and facilitate collective action and leadership. As co-founder and coordinator, in the coming strategy we plan to deepen efforts in current member countries, expand member engagement in five focus countries, intentionally expand inclusion and participation of diverse groups and continue to serve smaller community-based organizations with programming materials, ideas and relationships that strengthen their VAW prevention programming.

- Continue to coordinate the GBV Prevention Network, a powerful force for feminist organizing in the Horn, East and Southern Africa (Box 6) including the creation of a new website and active use of social media channels.
- Sustain and expand the Community for Understanding Scaling Processes (CUSP) which has been going strong since 2016. Established as a time-bound initiative, the influence and demand for CUSP ideas and experience continues to grow. Raising Voices will continue co-convening this important group and build a broader CUSP community.
- Launch a new initiative, the African VAW Prevention Group, a collective of activist organizations that have been actively engaged in VAW prevention in their communities. This group will build collective voice and power, building a shared advocacy agenda to amplify our voices in key VAW prevention spaces and processes.

2. **Influencing thought, practice and funding** for VAW prevention through participation in global consortiums, advisory committees and critical document reviews. We will engage in strategic initiatives that elevate our practice-based learning and reflect our VAW prevention advocacy agenda and experiences within the broader field. During the 2023-2027 period, a key opportunity to advance this area will be through our role in the What Works 2 Consortium (Box 7).

Box 7:

Scaling our influence with What Works 2

What Works 2 is a seven-year programme funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to support the innovation and scale up of violence against women and girls (VAWG) prevention programs. The Consortium is co-led by five partners including: Breakthrough/SAMYA, CARE, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Social Development Direct (SDD) and Raising Voices. This is an exciting opportunity for us to influence the development and implementation of ethical and feminist-informed VAW prevention programming. As one of the two Southern-based Consortium partners, we bring the experience and voice of an activist organization to the leadership body of What Works 2 to shape decisions and directions of the Consortium. We will also provide technical assistance to innovation and scale grantee partners and co-lead an innovative accountability pillar that is dedicated to animating the feminist principles of the What Works 2 program among consortium members, partners and the broader field of VAW prevention.

Preventing Violence against Children

The past five years have revealed critical insights, challenges, and opportunities for our VAC prevention efforts. Demand for the Good School Toolkit (GST) has expanded nationally and globally as we continue to strengthen partnerships with over 1,000 Ugandan schools and institutions and respond to global demand for our expertise. We remain committed to prioritizing schools as our primary entry point for VAC prevention and promoting a whole school approach that aims to transform the operational culture within schools. We will invest in iterative learning to adapt, refine, and innovate our programmatic interventions, and leverage our credibility to influence stakeholders' investment in VAC prevention in schools.

Based on our internal learning and our participation in the evolution of the VAC prevention field, we have prioritized several key initiatives to strengthen our impact. We will continue to scale the GST, leveraging existing infrastructure to reach up to 5,000 schools over the next 5 years. We will adapt and create content based on feedback and our own learning of how the GST is being used in schools. We will continue to refine our digital tools for learning from and tracking quality implementation of the GST and other innovations such as our new module on mental health. We will leverage our experience and credibility to influence the global response to VAC prevention, particularly in and through schools.

We also recognize that experiences of VAC are not homogenous. We will adopt a stronger intersectional lens to our programming, particularly in how to better respond to diversity in gender, age and ability and reach communities beyond the school. Our commitment to building safer and non-violent environments in which children can learn and thrive is steadfast as we listen, learn and contribute to the field of VAC prevention.

VAC Prevention Practice

Aims: The change we seek is...

- * Increased uptake and impact of GST within and beyond Uganda.
- * Increased VAC prevention programmatic innovation, tools and guidance available to support impactful programming.

Initiatives: We will do this by...

1. **Supporting and deepening the impact of GST implementation at scale - in up to 5,000 primary and secondary schools** - through innovative in-person and remote/digital delivery models:
 - Provide technical assistance from staff and a diverse cohort of Regional Resource Persons (RRPs) to support quality implementation at the school level.
 - Initiate peer-to-peer learning and capacity exchange between existing Good Schools and new cohorts of schools with cascading TA models, leveraging district education infrastructure, and further strengthening digital learning and monitoring systems.
 - Respond to diverse contexts through GST Agile, GST-Secondary, and online and modular adaptations, supporting additional adaptations in global contexts as needed.
 - Strengthen collaboration with district structures, civil society, Teacher's Unions and Teacher's Training Colleges to further this work.

Box 8:

Mental health and VAC prevention

The VAC prevention field is deepening its understanding of the nuanced linkages between experiences of violence in childhood and mental health outcomes. In response to this growing awareness and the adverse emotional impact of an extended two-year school closure on many learners (and teachers) in Uganda, we are expanding our existing GST resources related to mental health. This will include creating additional booklets and posters, as well as drawing on our research collaborations and learning to develop comprehensive guidance on how teachers, students and surrounding community members can prioritize and care for their mental health.

2. Exploring **synergies and intersections between our VAW and VAC prevention** streams of work. For example, we will identify opportunities for implementation of GST alongside *SASA! Together* in specific communities. In addition, we will draw from internal VAW prevention expertise to enhance our engagement in schools around the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and the promotion of positive gender norms.
3. Engaging communities surrounding Good Schools to support GST implementation and **promote non-violence in homes and communities** through various initiatives:
 - Rollout our Community Activism Toolkit (CAT) to guide community dialogues in select districts with support of student activists and other partners to take GST ideas to school-surrounding communities, parents and out of school children.
 - Create stronger linkages between Parents Committees, school administrations and local structures to bolster relationships between the school and the community.
 - Encourage children's participation and peer learning through community dialogues, Booklet Clubs, Ideas Contests, and online engagements in line with key commemoration days, providing space for students to transform their schools' operational culture.

VAC Prevention Learning

Aims: *The change we seek is...*

- * Increased investment in learning that unpacks the why and how behind effective school-based VAC prevention programming at scale.
- * Enhanced recognition of the value and contributions of practice-based learning within the global knowledge base on VAC prevention.
- * Improved access to learning tools that assess program fidelity and integrate learning for more tailored, responsive and impactful programming.

Initiatives: *We will do this by...*

1. **Prioritizing our practice-based learning** and elevating learning with our activist partners:

- Refine our learning and assessment (L&A) tools and create a digital monitoring system alongside “program learning initiatives” to assess fidelity to the core components of the GST and whether desired outcomes are emerging at each step.
- Deepen, synthesize and consolidate learning from over a decade of a national dialogue to unpack to what extent and how our communication campaigns influence beliefs and behaviors at the community level.
- Incorporate learning questions in our programming as we adapt GST and innovate in our communications engagements to support quality implementation.

2. **Engaging in research collaborations** to explore important questions arising from our work that require external research expertise to address. During this strategy, we will prioritize, amongst others, the following research collaborations:

- Understand the impact of COVID-19 on children’s mental health and explore pathways to improving children’s mental wellbeing in schools (University of Alabama).
- Collaborate on multiple related studies building on the Good Schools randomized trial to (1) assess the feasibility and resonance of the GST for secondary school, (2) understand the acceptability and feasibility of the Regional Resource Person delivery model of the GST, and (3) compare scalability and effectiveness of various delivery models with the aim of identifying the optimum structure for GST at scale. (LSHTM and the AfriChild Centre).

- Understand the contexts of violence throughout adolescence, including during the COVID-19 pandemic (LSHTM, Medical Research Council, Makerere University and University College London).

3. **Centering learning uptake** by actively synthesizing, popularizing, and sharing our knowledge gained on VAC prevention:

- Create and share infographics, Learning Papers, Briefs, blogs, cartoons, and other popular materials accessible to activist organizations.
- Create spaces to internalize learning and translate it into action to strengthen VAC prevention efforts and GST implementation.

VAC Prevention Influencing

Aims: The change we seek is...

- ★ Increased integration of principles for safe, effective, and ethical VAC prevention at all levels.
- ★ Strengthened ability of religious and cultural leaders, government institutions, media personalities and journalists in Uganda to speak out against VAC.
- ★ Greater visibility of VAC practitioners from the Global South in regional and global spaces.



Initiatives: *We will do this by....*

1. **Expanding our long-term communications work (Box 9) through annual multi-media communications campaigns** to generate a national dialogue on preventing VAC in policy and cultural spaces, civil society, and throughout communities:
 - Create national-level campaigns on television and both national and local radio networks with content translated into local languages.
 - Engage in local activism to extend this dialogue on VAC prevention in communities surrounding Good Schools through various engagements including an innovative "Mobile Village Cinema."
 - Work directly with media stakeholders and journalists to promote ethical coverage of VAC, sustainability and ownership of GST ideas and broader VAC prevention principles across the national dialogue.
 - Engage the Interreligious Council of Uganda (IRCU) and various cultural institutions to facilitate conversations about non-violent childhoods in community spaces.

Box 9:

Our long-term media engagement for VAC prevention

For over a decade, we have hosted a national dialogue in Uganda through communication campaigns aimed at sparking reflection and discussion on VAC. Through consistent media engagement including television, radio and print, we have learned about the tradeoffs of each, and that radio offers an affordable way to maintain a national dialogue across a broad audience. Going forward, we will invest more in radio while strengthening relationships with senior media personnel working with print and TV such as, senior journalists, editors, program managers, producers, and presenters to influence national conversations around VAC. We will also identify and use influential voices from cultural and religious institutions to speak across our communications campaigns. Through these engagements, we will continue to build momentum for partnerships with key line ministries and stakeholders as we influence the national conversation around how to prevent violence in Uganda.

2. Leading and engaging in **national, regional and global communities of practice and coalitions:**

- Collaborate with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and Ministry of Gender Labor and Social Development (MGLSD) and associated working groups and inter-sectoral committees.
- Participate in the National Sexual Violence Against Children Coalition (SVAC), Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN), Federation for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU).
- Co-convene the Coalition for Good Schools (Box 10) to advocate for VAC prevention in schools in the Global South.



Box 10:

Building a global movement for Good Schools

The Coalition for Good Schools is an independent group created by and for activists in the Global South. Despite the widespread occurrence of VAC in schools in the Global South, practitioners from these communities are often missing from key decisions about how to move the field forward. The aim of the Coalition is to advocate for the prioritization of VAC prevention at school by sharing ideas, innovations, knowledge and support across our three regional hubs in Latin America, Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. With a growing online presence, a fully developed impact model and strategic plan and a core membership of 12 founding members, the Coalition is positioned to implement a global advocacy agenda led by Global South practitioners.



Organizational Learning and Communications

Organizational Learning

Raising Voices is a learning organization, and a core pillar of our strength is our learning culture. While detailed learning strategies for VAW and VAC prevention are included above, learning also remains an organization-wide commitment. Keeping an organizational learning culture vibrant requires effort, skill and courage to take risks and course correct when needed. While this often happens organically through engagements at the workplace and with partners, we will further invest in the following learning spaces across Raising Voices.

- **Skill strengthening:** We aspire to build technical skills and deepen our personal and professional activism and care practices. We will support staff to develop individual learning plans and encourage engagement in learning opportunities as they arise.
- **Space for synthesis:** Rigorous discussions and robust engagement lead to deeper insights. We will deliberately take time to reflect upon, synthesize and share our practice-based learning across the organization through written and creative resources.
- **Knowledge exchange:** Engaging and sharing is essential to learning. We will create spaces for knowledge sharing across the organization, experimenting with thematic working groups that bring staff together from different teams to reflect on areas of mutual interest and consolidate organizational perspectives. We will continue holding learning circles and creating recurring monthly spaces for teams to share their knowledge, deepen their understanding on relevant issues and seek feedback on relevant topics.

- **Learning frameworks:** Structured mechanisms for tracking progress is critical for accountability. We will develop and apply a robust yet simple organization-wide learning framework to articulate our desired impacts and related indicators to understand if and how we are meeting our goals. In bi-annual Reflect & Act (R&A) sessions, teams will come together to reflect on progress, share feedback and plan to act on lessons learnt.

Communicating our Experience

Over the coming 5 years, Raising Voices will use various communication modalities to amplify our learning culture by sharing our experiences, building connection with others and promoting our influencing agenda. Our work will contribute to communicating our organizational experiences through the following core platforms:

- **Website:** We will maintain an up-to-date, accessible website that showcases our work and provides open access to all our violence prevention resources.
- **Twitter:** We will harness the power of social media to share relevant news, engage on key topical discussions and demonstrate solidarity and support through our Twitter handle. This includes hosting interactive campaigns promoting our advocacy agenda.
- **Media:** We will continue to develop creative films, animations, print and online publications and more to elevate our own and the collective voice, priorities and experience of activist organizations.



Organizational Capacity

Over 22 years, Raising Voices has developed a vibrant body of work and garnered credibility within the field. We have created two evidence-based methodologies (SASA! and the Good School Toolkit) currently being used in over 40 countries and adapted for diverse contexts nationally, regionally and globally. Our methodologies have been identified as good practice in multiple global publications and funding calls. We have contributed original research to the broader field as well as elevated practice-based learning within the field of violence prevention. We have nurtured a team of veteran staff with significant on-the-ground experience and expertise in delivering effective and ethical violence prevention programming and influencing policy.

We have created a diverse network of collaborative relationships with activist organizations, schools, researchers, funders, government agencies, and international organizations across the globe. We are founders of the GBV Prevention Network, and co-founders of the Community for Understanding Scaling Processes (CUSP) and the Coalition for Good Schools. We have sustained a national dialogue on preventing violence against children in Uganda for over a decade, and senior staff serve on advisory committees of influential global initiatives and organizations.

Raising Voices has a dedicated Learning Team that supports the entire organization to learn from our work and share these insights with the broader field. From leading our collaborations with external researchers to helping to create a learning culture internally, the team facilitates accountability and reflection processes throughout the year, and acts as an internal partner that helps staff probe deeper into each organizational activity with the view to extracting insights and applying them in our programming.

Box 11:

Co-Founders Transition

Over the past three years, as the co-founders prepared to transition from their co-directorship, Raising Voices invested in strengthening the organization. With the help of an external agency, we began by identifying and addressing four key areas: a) creating multilayered leadership structure to enhance sustainability, b) strong operations and management infrastructure, c) cultivating diverse partnerships, d) strengthening and diversifying the resource base to support our work. With strong systems, staff, governance and programming, Raising Voices is ready for the transition. The new Leadership Team, consisting of three technical Directors and an Executive Director, is in place to lead Raising Voices into the next phase of our work.

We have assembled a Leadership Team that will take this work forward in the next 5 years (Box 11). Raising Voices' financial management systems and information management technology are robust and able to manage large and complex funding. We have diverse and aligned funders, the majority of whom support our work through core funding and multi-year contracts. We have a technically skilled Operations Team managing our human resources, IT systems, administration and finance systems that is continually refining and enhancing its structures (Box 12). Our continued investment in equipment, in management software, and broadband internet means we have a robust implementation and accountability infrastructure including a comprehensive suite of operational policies, a procurement system and personnel management. We have established a comprehensive reporting system that generates monthly, quarterly, and annual financial statements. On an annual basis we produce workplans that remain faithful to this strategy along with an operational budget; both are monitored through monthly financial reports, an annual internal and external audit as well as a comprehensive annual report.

Estimates of our 2023-2027 operating costs

2.5 million USD per year
(total of \$12.5 million over 5 years).

Box 12:

Realizing New Heights for Operations & Finance

Over the next 5 years, Operations & Finance will further strengthen our efforts to support programming and staff at Raising Voices. We will improve and automate the grants management function to strengthen transparency, accountability, and our ability to manage organizational risks. Additionally, to better support professional development, teamwork and a positive working environment, we aim to integrate, consolidate and build on existing IT innovations across the entire organization, add value to the human resource policies and support programs and enhance efficiency in administration and contract management. The Operations team will strive to be supportive, responsive, accountable and do so with care and kindness, which remains an organization wide priority.

Our work is overseen by a highly respected Board of Directors, primarily from the Global South, whose oversight is conducted through committees, internal and external audits, and evaluations undertaken by independent contractors. With this wealth of experience and skill, Raising Voices is well placed to take the work described in this strategy forward over the coming 5 years. As Raising Voices straddles innovation and implementation, we look forward to advancing the collective work of preventing violence against women and children.

Key Results 2023 - 2027

Programmatic Results		
Areas of Work	VAW Prevention	VAC Prevention
Practice	<p>One cohort of at least 8 feminist organizations is fully funded to implement <i>SASA! Together</i></p> <p>Three additional cohorts of at least 8 organizations are actively implementing <i>SASA! Together</i> / <i>SASA! Faith</i> in their communities.</p> <p>Two adaptations of <i>SASA! Together</i> published</p>	<p>5,000 schools in Uganda are actively implementing the Good School Toolkit</p> <p>One adaptation of the GST ('GST Agile') and 3 new accompanying modules completed</p> <p>Community Activism Toolkit rolled out in at least 1,000 school-surrounding communities</p>
Learning	<p>Three Learning Papers/Briefs published to share our VAW prevention-focused practice-based learning</p> <p>Two peer-reviewed journal articles on VAW prevention published</p> <p>Two research collaborations ongoing to assess adaptations and scaling of <i>SASA! Together</i></p>	<p>Three Learning Papers/Briefs published to share our VAC prevention-focused practice-based learning</p> <p>Two peer-reviewed journal articles on VAC prevention published</p> <p>Two research collaborations ongoing to assess adaptations and scaling of the Good School Toolkit</p> <p>One set of tools developed to guide learning and assessment relevant for all GST programming</p>
Influencing	<p>A collective of feminist activist organizations in Africa advocating for improved policy, funding and practice on VAW prevention in global spaces</p> <p>Two new global collectives/initiatives actively engaged in to advance feminist advocacy objectives</p>	<p>55 government officials, 20 journalists and media personalities, and 30 religious and cultural leaders make public commitments on the need to prevent VAC at school</p> <p>Three regional hubs and one global Coalition for Good Schools center Global South practitioners in global convenings and decision-making bodies to advocate for effective approaches to prevent VAC</p>
Organizational Results		
Learning	<p>Organization-wide learning framework developed and applied through bi-annual Reflect & Act sessions</p> <p>One Technical Working Group launched to explore intersections in VAW and VAC programming</p> <p>Four all-staff processes held annually that cultivate professional growth and learning</p> <p>Two Learning Circles completed to unpack new ideas and cross-cutting themes related to violence prevention</p>	
Communications	<p>Annual 10% growth in Twitter followers to @RaisingVoices</p> <p>Four updates/news items added to the Raising Voices website per quarter</p>	
Organizational Capacity	<p>Transition to automated internal monthly financial reports for effective grants management</p> <p>All organizational values are fully operationalized across policies and office environment to support staff achieve key results</p> <p>All donor reporting requirements completed with quality and on time</p>	

Final Reflections



The past few years have been like no other. They have stretched us and demanded adaptations that were well beyond imagination. In response, we innovated, supported each other with compassion, and expanded our community of care. We developed a clearer sense of purpose and emerged with new resilience. We reorganized our structure, recruited new leaders, developed new partnerships, and invested in strengthening our capacity. As we emerge from this profound experience, we maintain gratitude for the support and solidarity of the vast network of our partners, and as a result, look to the future with renewed vigor and hope. Now, more than ever, we know we need to redouble our efforts and remain focused on actualizing the vision articulated in this strategy. We cannot wait to get started.

ENDNOTES

¹ Raising Voices. (2022). "Stakeholder Survey: Feedback from Partners, Friends, Experts and Others." <https://raisingvoices.org/resources/stakeholdersurvey/>

² Watson, J. (2022). "Review of the Raising Voices Strategy 2018-2022." <https://raisingvoices.org/resources/review-of-the-raising-voices-strategy/>

