

 *Raising Voices*

Annual Report 2023





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Acronyms

- CUSP:** Community for Understanding Scaling Processes
- GST:** Good School Toolkit
- L&A:** Learning and Assessment
- LSHTM:** London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
- R&R:** Rethink & Reenergize
- RRPs:** Regional Resource Persons
- TA:** Technical Assistance
- VAC:** Violence Against Children
- VAW:** Violence Against Women



Executive Summary

We started 2023 with renewed energy and focus, excited to bring our [2023–2027 strategy](#) to life. As the year began, we anchored ourselves in the fundamentals of our work—an unwavering commitment to preventing violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) through three core areas: Practice (creating, adapting and supporting feminist programming to prevent VAW and VAC), Learning (generating, integrating and amplifying knowledge anchored in practice) and Influencing (analyzing, engaging and connecting with others to shape the overall ecosystem). At the same time, we inspired and challenged ourselves to focus on the bold vision set forth for the next five years, aspiring to:

- Elevate our contributions to the discourse on how to take ideas to scale through formal studies, practice-based learning and programmatic investments
- 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
- Apply our experience and resources to explore the intersection of the work on VAW and VAC prevention

Guided by the new strategy and sustained by our longstanding values, we got to work—making steady progress on our work plans while, at the same time, holding space for creativity, innovation and lots of learning along the way.

Across our Violence Against Women Prevention area of work, key highlights include:

- 1. Practice: Creating and adapting methodologies and experimenting with new modalities of delivering our technical assistance (TA).** We completed a full adaptation of *SASA! Together in French*, finalized the pilot of our 33-episode *Together with Gloria!* radio drama and launched a new *SASA! Together* cohort of organizations, bringing us to 53 current partnerships. This new cohort better ensures our TA for violence prevention centers around organizations leading feminist work at the community level.
- 2. Learning: Balancing our practice-based learning and formal research partnerships to make our prevention work more impactful.** We took stock of our TA partnerships through both internal program learning and a formal research collaboration with the Global Women's Institute at George Washington University.
- 3. Influencing: Convening activists at the national, regional and global levels, as well as leveraging our role as a What Works 2 consortium member to embed accountability and other core feminist principles into the very structure of the global grantmaking program.** The need for feminist care and collective healing took center stage on our social media campaigns and the "Feminist Healing Festival" co-hosted by Akina Mama wa Afrika. Regionally and globally, we elevated the collective voices of our activist partners to advocate for feminist programming. This included high-level events and spaces, such as "Maputo@20: Bridging the Gap Between Policies and People" (at the Women Deliver Conference), Wilton Park "What will it take to end gender-based violence? Rethinking pathways to preventing violence at scale" event, and the What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls: Impact at Scale (What Works 2) implementation consortium.

Across our Violence Against Children Prevention area of work, key highlights include:

- 1. Practice: Deepening the impact of the Good School Toolkit (GST) at scale.** We celebrated a huge milestone in our journey toward scale, with over 1,000 primary schools from 34 districts transitioning to a sustainability phase of toolkit implementation and a new cohort of 500 secondary schools implementing GST-Secondary. We continued challenging ourselves to keep innovating and responding to emerging needs in 2023—for example, creating a standalone mental health module, progressing in the development of GST Agile for more streamlined programming and stepping up our community activism work around our Good Schools.
- 2. Learning: Infusing rigorous learning initiatives alongside our program innovations.** 2023 was a rewarding moment for three extensive research collaborations, including a study on adolescent mental health and a longitudinal study following nearly 3,500 young people. We also rigorously tested aspects of our Good School programming and, as always, dedicated time to unpacking findings and bridging the gap to program strengthening.
- 3. Influencing: Co-facilitating coalitions for collective advocacy and expanding our own media campaigns.** In solidarity with like-minded organizations, we are building momentum for preventing VAC through school-wide programs: for example, through the Positive Discipline and Sexual Violence Against Children coalitions in Uganda, as well as coordination for the Coalition for Good Schools working at the regional and global levels.



Across our Organizational Learning & Communications, key highlights include:

- 1. Elevating our practice-based learning.** We are finding new avenues and platforms to engage various stakeholders in considering and reflecting on the value of practice-based learning—including through university lectures and important conferences, such as the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) Congress and the Impact and Innovations Development Centre regional learning convening.
- 2. Evolving our approach to nurturing an organization-wide culture of learning.** We have maintained a dedicated practice of collective reflection through staff development sessions and other creative ways of unpacking our internal learning and findings from research partnerships. In 2023, we became more intentional in exploring how staff are responding to these spaces—and making adjustments as needed.
- 3. Honing our communications strategy and platforms.** Our communications work took a big leap in 2023 with the recruitment of a new team member to coordinate and deepen our overall communications strategy. This intensified focus is bearing fruit, with more up-to-date content on our website and cohesive organizational X (formerly Twitter) handles that help share our stories, speak out against injustices and demonstrate solidarity with activists, sister organizations and partners.

We hope these highlights have sparked a curiosity to learn more! Across the following pages, we dive into the details of our 2023 experiences. We also share an overview of our organizational and financial systems and overall reflections on the pivotal moments that emerged. We conclude with a “Final Word” connecting our learning to implications for the year ahead.



Preventing Violence Against Women





VAW Prevention Practice

The VAW Prevention Team is a bridge-builder, grounded in practice, connected to activists and engaged in global processes. Our 2023–2027 strategy envisions the following changes from our Practice initiatives within VAW Prevention:

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- 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

1. Establishing and sustaining partnerships with women's rights and other organizations preventing VAW in their communities.

- **Growing the number and diversity of our TA partnerships.** In the first quarter of 2023, we launched the Activist Cohort for *SASA! Together* with 12 members, bringing our total number of partners to 53. These organizations are adapting and implementing iterations of *SASA!* in 23 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific. In recent years, our *SASA! Together* partnerships had been skewed toward larger organizations, such as United Nations agencies and international nongovernmental organizations. Forming this Activist Cohort helped us regain balance in ensuring our TA is supporting diverse partnerships; 23 of the 53 member organizations are women's rights or activist organizations.
- **Energizing trainings through our Violence Prevention Learning Center and onsite TA.** In 2023, we delivered eight full *SASA! Together* Phase trainings (six in person, two online) and conducted eight on-site TA visits to partner programs in Asia, East Africa and Western Africa. In addition, we continued to deliver remote TA regularly through one-on-one check-ins and thematic webinars. While virtual support helps increase the frequency and intensity of our engagement, we are grateful to have resumed in-person work with partners, as this strengthens relationships and deepens our understanding of partner organizations and their communities, enabling *Raising Voices* to deliver contextualized support.
- **Listening to and learning from our TA partnerships.** We are uplifted by partner feedback on the quality of the TA we provide. We conducted a survey in the last quarter of 2023, which found that 97.4% of respondents agreed that *Raising Voices* upholds the six principles of quality TA: mutuality, sustained and systematic, tailored and contextualized, ownership, flexibility, and open communication. Partners have also recommended that we increase in-person engagement, create opportunities for them

to share experiences with other partners, and provide learning and assessment (L&A) support focused on data analyses and applying L&A to their *SASA! Together* programming.

- **Looking toward feminist scaling of *SASA! Together*.** We explored ways to establish a fully funded feminist cohort for scaling *SASA! Together*. This included having discussions with funders and fund managers, with several promising outcomes and expressions of interest. While we closed 2023 without a ready modality to move this idea forward, we are working to identify a feminist funding expert who can help us understand the landscape and recommend a way forward.

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

The team remains invested in adaptations and the development of new tools to strengthen programming that is relevant to our various partners and emerging realities. Milestones to celebrate from 2023 include:

- **Increasing *SASA! Together's* reach.** In partnership with the International Rescue Committee, we fully translated *SASA! Together into French*, representing a major milestone for program uptake in Francophone regions. We planned a joint launch webinar for April 2024 and disseminated information on *SASA! Together* in French across platforms. These efforts have intensified our search for how to strengthen TA delivery in French, and we are exploring ways to build that capacity internally and within the pool of our external *SASA! TA* providers.
- **Levering the radio for scale-up.** We made important strides in our collaboration with the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Peripheral Vision International and the Uganda Network on Law, Ethics and HIV/AIDS to create a radio-based drama for *SASA! Together, Together with Gloria!* We fully piloted the radio show in Kasese, Uganda, and preliminary findings were promising (see the "VAW Prevention Learning" section); we will draw on this learning to revise the scripts and discussion guides. We expect to launch a *Together with Gloria!* guide for partners in April 2024 and hope this radio component will greatly contribute to scaling *SASA! Together* for more impact.

"I've eagerly awaited this site visit, and the training was long overdue. It is one thing to implement and observe things, but hearing from someone else offers a fresh perspective. I'm pleased that we're on this journey with *Raising Voices*"

SASA! Together partner





- **Expanding online adaptations.** We have continued to adapt our *SASA! Together* training for Moodle, a self-paced online training platform. By the end of 2023, we completed six of the nine Action Phase sessions. By mid-2024, *SASA! Together* training will be fully available in Moodle. In addition, the *SASA! Together* L&A database and guide are now available in Spanish to support partners in the Americas.

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

In 2023, we worked on the foundation for this community-building initiative. The team held several strategic reflection spaces to identify options for how best to build community and connections among our partners. We see the potential in establishing communities of practice in which partners come to share resources, experiences and learning together. We plan to approach this at two levels:

- **Country-level communities of practice** where there is a higher concentration of partners (with Uganda, Malawi, Ethiopia and Nigeria prioritized for 2024); these partners will use a hybrid engagement modality (online and in person)
- **A global-level community of practice** that involves all partners through online convenings, an unmoderated email list and a WhatsApp group

"When I got this acting role, it was a gig, but now it is a healing process for me, and I believe for other people here. And to the people who will listen to the radio drama, I strongly believe that the message will impact them in a positive way."



Together with Gloria!
actor



VAW Prevention Learning

In our current strategy, Learning initiatives within VAW Prevention aim to contribute to the following field-wide changes:

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

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

- **Critically reflecting on L&A through internal discussions.** The Learning team held two internal discussions with the VAW Prevention Team, focusing on strengthening our capacity in L&A databases and responding to concerns around social desirability bias. These collaborative sessions helped in documenting emerging issues, collectively brainstorming and agreeing on actions to strengthen L&A among partners.
- **Creating opportunities for *SASA! Together* partners to share feedback on L&A.** In 2023, we delivered TA to 53 partners across 23 countries globally, focusing on L&A tools, databases and data interpretation. This assistance helped our partners leverage data effectively for tracking progress and making informed programmatic decisions. At the end of the year, a vast majority of partners who responded to our survey (83% of 42 respondents) reported feeling confident in using L&A tools, while 59% expressed confidence in using L&A databases. Encouragingly, 74% felt confident in analyzing and using data with guidance from Raising Voices, and many partners provided examples of using L&A data to inform their trainings and phase transitions. In 2024, we intend to tailor our L&A support to focus on areas where partners expressed more demand for support.

"We appreciate the support provided in guiding us on how to collect data and analyze data, as well as overcoming possible challenges."



***SASA! Together* partner**



2. Engaging in research collaborations to explore important questions arising from our work.

In 2023, we worked closely with our research partners to hear from community members and partners, analyze and unpack data, and share the emerging learning through accessible resources and in diverse formats.

- **The “SASA! Together for Radio” study.** This research is a collaboration with LSHTM, Peripheral Vision International and the Uganda Network on Law, Ethics and HIV/AIDS. Using a mixed-methods approach, we explored the extent to which this new radio component, *Together with Gloria!*, expands the reach, influence and resonance of *SASA! Together* ideas. We are assessing the potential impacts on community perceptions of VAW and potential mechanisms of change among community members relating to the acceptability of intimate partner violence, quality of relationships, activism and intention to prevent or respond to VAW. The final round of surveys was conducted in April 2023. Preliminary findings are promising, indicating that *Together with Gloria!* increased reach in all surveyed communities and that listeners tended to tune in consistently and were interested in discussing the content with others in the community. In 2024, we will focus on finalizing the analysis, disseminating findings from the pilot study and launching a guide for partners.
- **“Understanding SASA! Together Adaptations, Implementation and Technical Assistance.”** Through partnership with the Global Women’s Institute at George Washington University, we sought to understand how our first-ever SASA! Together cohort members (comprised of international nongovernmental organizations and United Nations agencies) were adapting the program in diverse contexts. Key insights helped us identify opportunities and barriers for Raising Voices TA provision. This exploration identified **five key enablers** to quality SASA! Together programming, and related implications and considerations for donors and partners interested in (or already using) SASA! Together to prevent VAW.
- **“SASA! in Ethiopia Learning Journey.”** This comprehensive learning assessment was led by our partner Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP). CSSP has implemented SASA! over seven years through highly challenging circumstances that include funding suspensions, political turmoil and conflict. [This study](#) highlighted important insights, notably that SASA! is well-received by community members and other important stakeholders (such as local government officials and community leaders). SASA!’s positive reputation extends beyond the locations where it is currently implemented, with the assessment finding that nearby districts were requesting SASA!’s expansion into their communities. Additionally, the assessment found SASA! has brought about many positive changes, including perceptions that VAW is reducing and that more cases are being reported, decreased child marriages, and changes in attitudes related to the household division of labor, household decision-making and behaviors reflecting more balanced power within the home.



VAW Prevention Influencing

Our current strategy prioritizes the following outcomes for our VAW Prevention Influencing:

- 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

1. Supporting collective activism by convening activists and collaborations at the national, regional and global levels.

Feminist collectives are powerhouses to accelerate progress and manage resistance and backlash. To tap into this strength in 2023, we co-convened collectives at the national, regional and global levels.

National level

- **Deepening accountability to women and girls.** In Uganda, the Accountability to Women Group reflected on key developments in the country and how best to encourage other stakeholders to center women and girls in their gender equality work. One area of concern was the **emergence of the Uganda Men Parliamentary Association**. The accountability group’s members agreed to engage in a fact-finding exercise to understand the association’s history and agenda and to help develop a strategy that ensures accountability to women.

Regional level

The GBV Prevention Network engages its members online and in person to build momentum and activism for VAW prevention. In 2023, the Network celebrated several key milestones:

- **Emphasizing our focus on collective healing.** In recognition of the post-COVID-19 realities and recovery phase, we developed a **short animated video** and shared it with members to encourage them to find ways of healing at the individual and organizational levels. Additionally, we partnered with Akina Mama wa Africa to organize a feminist healing festival in Kampala; more than 80 feminists participated in activities centering care and healing, including panel discussions, art, poetry and music performances.

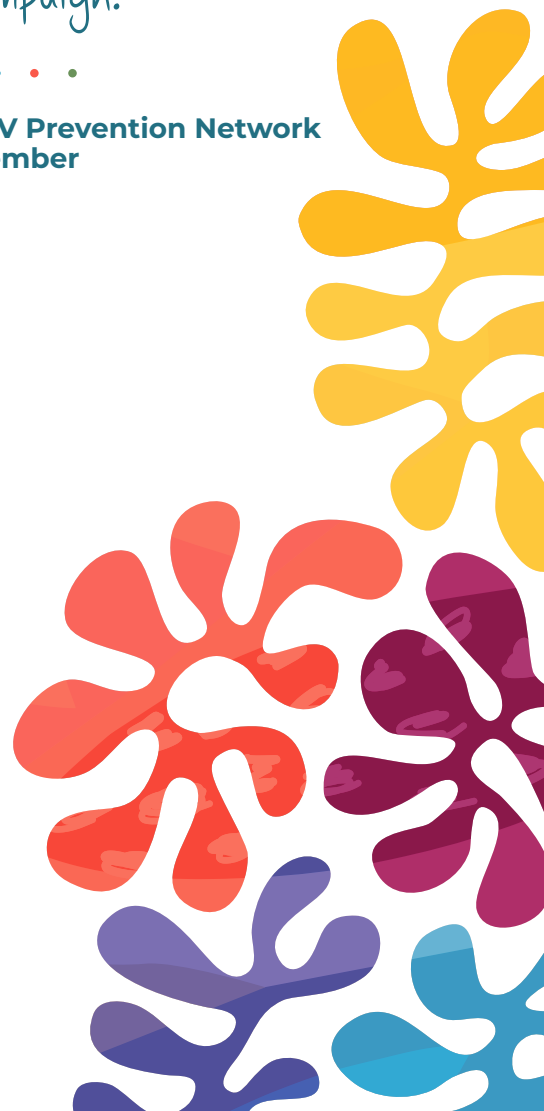


- **Leveraging online spaces for enhanced activism.** In 2023, we engaged in a rigorous, creative and collaborative process to redesign the [GBV Prevention Network website](#) and the revamped, vibrant website is now live. It features a user-friendly interface that is easy to navigate so that members can access resources and connect with other members in their countries and regions. The fabulous illustrator Christo Musinguzi captured the diversity and magic of our Network through her fresh illustrations, and we updated our resource library featuring our favorite feminist files. So far, 3,437 people have accessed the website, and we are embarking on a digital audit in 2024 to ensure all our content and resources are up to date and working smoothly. In addition, we successfully carried out four social media campaigns focused on feminism in concept and practice.
- **Expanding our Rethink & Reenergize (R&R) processes.** Given the success of the Network's R&R processes, we expanded to two new countries in 2023: Rwanda and Botswana. During our first round of engagement, we unpacked foundational concepts (power, patriarchy, values-based activism and feminism) in relation to the prevailing realities of the respective country. The processes were attended by 55 diverse members: 25 in Rwanda and 30 in Botswana. The Kampala R&R is on hold due to the sensitivities around engaging in person with members that represent diverse communities and identities.
- **Supporting a dynamic "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence" regional campaign under the theme "Solidarity, Investment and Action."** Per our annual tradition, the GBV Prevention Network created an Action and Advocacy Kit to share with our members. Encouragingly, we received 365 applications for the kit; 160 were able to receive hard copies, while the rest were

"Oh my word, you guys! You didn't mention how cool, cute and exciting the [16 Days of Activism] Campaign Kit is. My team and I are so pleased with your work that shows dedication and perfect execution. Looking forward to engaging with this campaign."



GBV Prevention Network member



granted access to the [soft copies](#). Also to commemorate 16 Days, we collaborated with the Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM) and UN Women Uganda to organize a breakfast dialogue with 28 funders and program and policy decision-makers to reflect on the state of VAW prevention and funding in Uganda. Participants expressed their interest in having such reflections more regularly.

Global level

- **Building momentum and influence.** As co-founding members, Raising Voices continued to co-convene the Community for Understanding Scaling Processes (CUSP) and deepen CUSP's exploration and learning. In 2023, we focused on feminist partnership, intellectual property and open-source materials. We are planning to share our analysis and reflections in 2024 in the form of open-source peer-reviewed articles and papers.
- **Expanding our communities.** In 2023, we launched the "CUSP Community" with 50 members who have expressed interest in joining CUSP through different avenues. The CUSP Community held three virtual convenings and discussed feminist scale and feminist partnership in 2023. At the year's end, we conducted a survey to learn more about the experiences, hopes and expectations of CUSP Community members and make the space more vibrant, useful and feminist. Members shared insightful and practical feedback, such as on the need to clearly articulate the group's role and time meetings to accommodate different time zones. This feedback will inform our actions in 2024.

2. Influencing thought, practice and funding for VAW prevention through participation in global consortiums, advisory committees and critical document reviews.

- **Influencing through the global What Works 2 program.** In 2023, we continued to advocate for feminist funding and practice through our leadership role in What Works 2. This is a seven-year global program funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office that aims to build evidence through support for innovative/new programs and scaling up effective approaches. As a member of the What Works 2 Implementation Consortium, we participated in technical reviews (and selection) of concept notes and full proposals for the "Window 1" funding. By the last quarter of 2023, What Works 2 had awarded eight grants related to: supporting innovations (four grants), mainstreaming scale (three) and full scale-up (one). We are encouraged that 75% of those awards were made to women's rights organizations, and we provided TA to three organizations in their codesign process. Looking ahead, consortium members are documenting and integrating learning with the hope of facilitating a smoother and more efficient Window 2 grant-making process. The request for Window 2 applications will be released in the second quarter of 2024.



In partnership with [Breakthrough](#) and [Samya Development Resources](#), Raising Voices co-leads the What Works 2 Accountability Pillar and is working to strengthen the integration of feminist principles into the global program. In 2023, we developed several tools and guides to support consortium members and our grantee partners in upholding accountable practices. For example, we conducted the second round of the “reflection card” process, in which consortium members reflected on the extent to which individuals, organizations and the consortium were practicing the feminist principles we aspire to uphold.

- **Joining aligned committees and working groups.** We take great delight in engaging with like-minded organizations that lead key initiatives geared toward strengthening the VAW prevention ecosystem. In addition to our role in What Works 2, we have joined several advisory committees and working groups: Raising Voices is an advisory group member for the initiative (led by the Sexual Violence Research Initiative, UN Women and ESARO) that developed and launched the [Africa Shared Research Agenda for Ending Gender-Based Violence](#). In addition, we joined the “What Counts?” technical working group led by the Accelerator for GBV Prevention; in 2023, the Accelerator produced [a powerful report](#) critiquing the current state of VAW funding that launched during the 16 Days of Activism.
- **Participating in high level policy fora.** 2023 provided us with the opportunity to influence policymaking in person at five strategic forums. During the Women Deliver conference, we joined the high-level plenary session on accountability “[Maputo@20: Bridging the Gap Between Policies and People](#).” In November, we attended a side event panel at the [Feminist Foreign Policy Conference](#) and the [Wilton Park](#) event that reflected and strategized on the pathways to preventing violence against women at scale. We also participated in a regional convening and consultation process organized by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and UN Women ESRO. Finally, we took part in several virtual panels. Overall, these virtual and in-person events provided us moments of connection with partners, opportunities to share our perspectives and learn from each other, and a space to collectively envision ways of strengthening the VAW prevention ecosystem.



Preventing Violence Against Children





VAC Prevention Practice

The global movement for preventing VAC in and through schools is gathering pace. In our 2023–2027 strategy, we remain committed to meaningfully engaging the whole-school environment as our primary entry point for transforming the operational culture and preventing violence.

The changes we are working toward with our VAC Prevention practice include:

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

1. Supporting and deepening the impact of GST implementation at scale.

- **Transitioning to sustainability.** In March 2023, the VAC team successfully transitioned over 1,000 schools from our first cohort of Good Schools toward sustainability, the majority of these schools having reached or surpassed the transformational Step 4 of GST implementation. Importantly, a majority of these schools reported reductions in acceptance of VAC, increased the use of positive discipline approaches, established school policies for student safety and created opportunities for student participation and voice. These schools represent 34 districts in Uganda. Having walked with them for over four years, we convened district officials from all 34 districts to discuss local government’s role in sustaining this important transformation within schools.
- **Scaling across secondary schools.** We continued to scale our GST-Secondary adaptation in 2023. Drawing from emerging insights from our GST-Secondary pilot study and practice-based learning from previous Good School cohorts, we conducted in-depth consultations and collaborated with district leadership in early 2023 to identify, recruit and mobilize a new cohort of secondary schools to expand GST-Secondary implementation. In May 2023, we trained a pool of 500 secondary school headteachers and 800 teacher protagonists, as well as linked schools across cohorts through our Peer Learning Network. Peer learning opportunities included online dialogues on positive discipline, promoting gender fairness at school and online safety, as well as essay competitions and SMS campaigns. We reached 3,448 adults, including teachers, and 716 students.



2. Adapting and innovating the GST and delivery models.

- **Adapting new GST modalities.** We are working to ensure that the GST remains responsive to evolving needs in VAC prevention. To this end, we developed a six-session module on mental health. This standalone module seeks to help teachers, learners and education stakeholders destigmatize the topic of mental health, provide language to discuss it, and strengthen their capacity to identify mental health challenges and provide support. A pilot of the module is ongoing in two primary and two secondary schools to assess relevance, usability and acceptability, as well as to gain implementation insights to refine the module and develop guidance for schools. Pending positive results, we plan to roll out the module more broadly in the second quarter of 2024.
- **Developing the long-awaited GST Agile.** This lighter, streamlined and responsive adaptation is intended to facilitate our efforts to scale. This work has taken longer than expected, reminding us that quality adaptation takes time, a willingness to question our assumptions, and intentional collaboration and diverse feedback. At the end of 2023, GST Agile was in its final stages of external review, with plans to pilot in 10 primary and secondary schools in 2024.

3. Strengthening capacity for VAC prevention activism.

- **Expanding online trainings.** As part of our Violence Learning Prevention Center, we expanded our online training content through three new modules on VAC prevention to enable more practitioners in the field to strengthen their understanding of how the GST approaches peer violence and sexual violence (and specifically, sexual harassment).
- **Centering strategic collaborations.** We established and maintained key partners in 2023, such as with the Forum for African Women Educationalists Uganda and HakiElimu Tanzania (both GST implementers). Through What Works 2, we collaborated with Right To Play Pakistan on a partial adaptation of GST alongside existing play-based interventions to support and learn from their respective adaptations of GST and its ideas.

“For us to effectively address mental health problems at school, everyone needs to discover his and her power within. This helps one to have self-esteem, make better choices and take action. We also need to use our power to help those experiencing mental health problems.” –

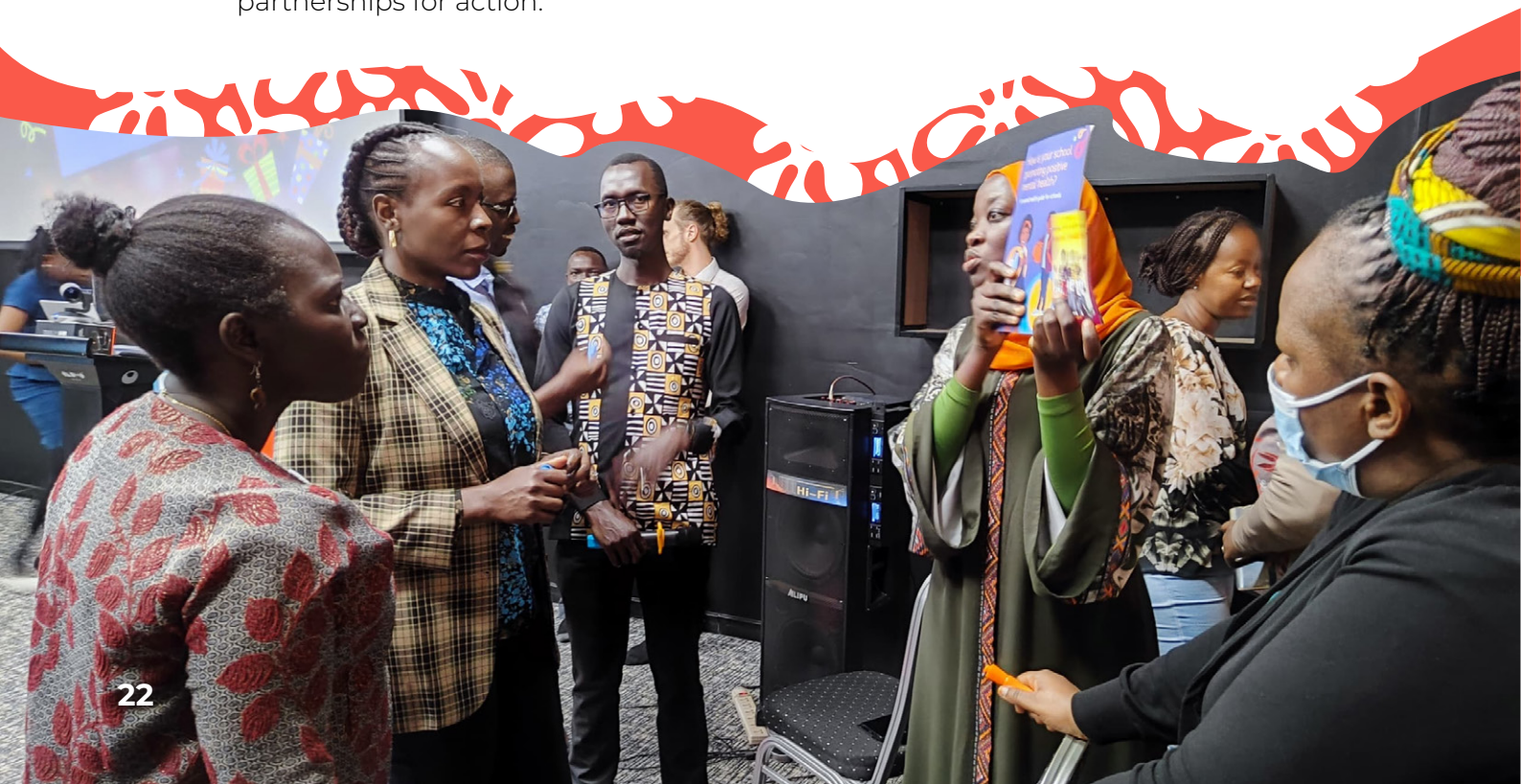
Female student, Wakiso



- **Evolving our approach to scale-up.** Our regional resource person (RRP) model continued to grow, but not without its challenges. 2023 saw five RRPs leave our cohort, leading to us moving quickly to train replacement activists and some schools losing out on support in the short term. We learned that the RRP model's agility is only an asset if we have trained RRPs available who can stand in when necessary, and we are working to extend training to a broader pool of RRPs to mitigate similar occurrences going forward.

4. Engaging communities surrounding Good Schools to support GST implementation and promote nonviolence in homes and communities.

- **Creating a new community activism strategy.** Raising Voices has implemented community activism work for over a decade through community-based organizations and activists to create an enabling environment for our work in schools and engage school-surrounding communities on VAC. As we work to document this journey, a new five-year community activism strategy seeks to strengthen activism through Good School teacher protagonists working closely with parents' committees, ensuring that they participate in both onsite and offsite TA, and identifying community protagonists to provide leadership at the community level. We enhanced community dialogues with our ViVi Mobile Cinema, through which we engaged 1,250 students and 220 local opinion leaders and community-based service providers in discussions on VAC.
- **Publishing and launching our *Community Activism Toolkit to Prevent Violence Against Children (CAT)*.** The CAT includes many practical tools to guide community-based organizations and individual activists on how to mobilize communities for action to prevent VAC, how to identify and use resources more productively for this work considering their unique circumstances and needs, and how to form effective partnerships for action.



VAC Prevention Learning

In our current strategy, VAC Learning aims to contribute to the following field-wide changes:

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

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

- **Learning from implementation at scale.** We invested our time in triangulating four sources of Good Schools data collected from more than 1,000 schools: outcome-tracking data from school observations, surveys with teachers, in-school activity logs and staff observations of our RRPs. We were encouraged to learn that the GST structures (such as the students', teachers' and parents' committees) were actively putting GST ideas into practice. The GST scorecard data showed that 61% of students' committees in 876 primary schools were considered "very active" by our RRPs. This was even higher in secondary schools, with 88% of 117 secondary schools having "very active" students' committees. Additionally, schools largely adopted zero-tolerance policies on corporal punishment and anti-sexual harassment and anti-bullying policies, with about five in every ten schools creating a zero-tolerance policy and similar trends for others. Policies were more common and active in secondary schools than in primary schools (see table).

Primary (n=665 schools)	Policy description	Secondary (n=89 schools)
49%	Anti-sexual harassment policy	68%
46%	Anti-bullying policy	64%

Source: Term 1 2023 TA tool

- **Streamlining our L&A.** We prioritized the creation of a Good Schools L&A Guide to support partners and RRPs in learning from GST implementation more systematically and to make our own long-cultivated learning framework accessible to more potential partners. We started this process by reviewing and refining our GST outcomes and in-school monitoring tools. We will finalize and pilot the L&A Guide in 2024.

- **Co-hosting an annual learning convening on VAC prevention.** We co-hosted the seventh annual Impact and Innovations Development Centre regional learning convening on VAC prevention in East Africa. This was our second time co-hosting, and we focused 2023's deliberations on learning from systemic interventions for social and gender norms change in the region. In total, 91 participants from 25 learning partners convened from Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and the United States to explore the Good School program; this included visiting five schools and sharing learning around social norms measurement and how we could collectively strengthen our approach to practice-based learning. Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports officials attended, including the state minister for primary education, as did other notable allies throughout the ministry and also the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

2. Engaging in research collaborations to explore important questions arising from our VAC prevention work.

- **“Good School Toolkit for Secondary Schools Pilot” study.** This collaboration with LSHTM and AfriChild assessed the feasibility and resonance of GST ideas and materials adapted for secondary schools. In July 2023, we collected endline data in the seven study schools. Emerging findings are positive, suggesting that the program was acceptable and understandable to students and staff; it was delivered with fidelity; and progression to a phase III trial was feasible. In 2024, we will synthesize and disseminate the study findings and carve out next steps in our learning from GST-Secondary impact, particularly regarding new content that addresses the increasingly gendered dynamics of experiences of violence in adolescence. Data collection for another study with LSHTM and AfriChild assessing our RRP modality for scaling the GST wrapped up with endline surveys involving 1,208 teachers in 95 schools and in-depth interviews with 20 teacher protagonists and 20 RRP. Analysis is ongoing, and findings will be shared widely in 2024.

“Now, I think everybody is receiving a conducive environment to learn; there is a mutual understanding between the students and the teachers.”

• • • •
 Boy student, Wakiso

- **“Adolescent Mental Health and COVID-19 in Uganda” study.** In partnership with the University of Alabama, this qualitative study is looking at the impact of school closures on adolescents. In 2023, we analyzed data and held workshops with staff to interpret findings and discuss program implications. Thematic analysis revealed that the pandemic significantly affected participants' mental health, highlighting elevated levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and substance use. For many adolescents, the extended school closures accelerated their transition into adulthood, leading to greater involvement in work for survival. In line with global trends, we also noted disproportionate violence and hardships for girls—for example, with a rise in teenage pregnancies. Results will be widely shared with schools and other stakeholders in 2024.
- **“Contexts of Violence in Adolescence Cohort” study (CoVAC), also known as the Footprints Study.** This longitudinal cohort study follows 3,431 adolescents and young adults, who were first interviewed in 2014 in Luwero as part of the initial randomized controlled trial assessing the GST. Partners include LSHTM, the Medical Research Council, Makerere University and University College London. In 2023, we unpacked findings from this extensive study through four workshops focused on mental health, teacher sexual violence and the GST's long-term effects. Analysis is ongoing and will be published in 2024.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, we grew up.”

• • • •
 Girl student, Wakiso



VAC Prevention Influencing

Our current strategy prioritizes the following outcomes for our VAC Prevention Influencing:

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

1. Expanding our long-term communications work through our annual multi-media communications campaigns.

- **Implementing “My Violence-Free School, My Future!”** We implemented a three-month communications campaign on VAC airing on 15 radio stations spread across four regions of Uganda under the theme “My Violence-Free School, My Future!” This new campaign theme built off our previous annual campaigns’ success, with bold new content including six new public service announcements, six new stories about children’s experiences of diverse forms of violence, 85 one-hour talk shows, four opinion articles and four social media campaigns on mental health in schools, sexual harassment and positive discipline.
- **Engaging journalists for ethical coverage of VAC.** Existing VAC-focused workshops with talk-show moderators have become common in our campaigns. In 2023, we built on this by engaging the Media Challenge Initiative in our quest to sustain a national dialogue on understanding VAC and the possibility of preventing it at school. As a Kampala-based multi-media hub that trains and nurtures upcoming journalists, the Media Challenge Initiative was well positioned to collaborate with Raising Voices to conduct a two-day workshop on VAC prevention with 25 young journalists, 10 of whom went on to document 10 total feature stories on VAC (including one run on the national **UBC TV**). These engagements reminded us that journalists can be activists, too, and are interested in telling VAC stories when guided with information and inspiration. We continued to strengthen these relationships by conducting more capacity-building workshops, sharing synthesized reports on VAC and directing them to VAC-related stories.

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

National level

- **Formalizing government partnerships through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).** After several years of deep engagement, we finally formalized our relationship with both the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development by signing a MoUs with each ministry. This hard-won milestone enhances our credibility as leaders in the field, and we plan to benchmark these relationships to align our ideas with national priorities and realize sustainable outcomes. We committed to sharing our analysis through regular communication materials and sharing programmatic experience through inputs on policy and curricula reviews, and we are working with our contacts in each ministry to solidify actionable support for the GST rollout in Uganda’s schools.
- **Advancing national coalitions.** We also built momentum in our national work by supporting our coalition members’ leadership in convening and executing coalition activities, with some committing budgets to critical activities in the pipeline. For example, the Kampala Capital City Authority committed to securing a budget to convene all headteachers in the greater Kampala area to address concerns like the use of corporal punishment. Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Sports requested that the **Positive Discipline Coalition** lead the process of revising its guidance on alternatives to corporal punishment—a strong indicator of the coalition’s credibility alongside the ministry’s consistent commitment to being part of the coalition activities. With Raising Voices continuing to lead the **Positive Discipline and Sexual Violence Against Children coalitions**, it was challenging to promote and sustain shared leadership from other members. We learned to create opportunities for leadership, such as shared hosting roles, and promoted a sense of shared responsibility among members within joint influencing spaces, which yielded some results.

“Violence prevention starts with you as a leader from your home and village of residence before you take it elsewhere.”



Probation officer, Lira



Regional level

- **Strengthening a community of practice on VAC prevention in schools.** Through the sub-Saharan Africa regional hub of the **Coalition for Good Schools**, alongside HakiElimu, we convened 54 members in a webinar to deliberate on whole-school approaches to VAC prevention. In addition, we conducted side events in the Forum for African Women Educationalists' regional education conference in Nairobi and the International Quality Education Conference in Dar es Salaam that brought together over 60 stakeholders comprising academia, cultural leaders, civil society organizations and United Nations agencies. Coupled with inroads with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, these leadership opportunities via the Coalition for Good Schools have expanded our regional and global influencing in the VAC prevention space and positioned us to deepen global conversations on the power of schools as an entry point for preventing violence and promoting positive gender norms.

Global level

- **Engaging at the global level.** The Coalition for Good Schools took on new life in 2023. Coalition core members convened in Istanbul and reflected on key achievements, including a **brief on corporal punishment** coauthored with Safe to Learn, End Corporal Punishment and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children; increased membership in our three sub-regions; and engaged with key allies (including Safe to Learn and the Global Partnership for Education) at Wilton Park. Additionally in 2023, the Coalition agreed that to achieve its full potential, setting up an independent secretariat with dedicated leadership was the best way forward.



Organizational Learning & Communications





Organizational learning

In 2023, we continued to nurture and build an organizational culture of continuous learning, with an emphasis on knowledge exchange and uptake to enhance our overall work—including personal and professional growth—while providing opportunities for critical reflection and skill development.

1. Deepening internal reflection

With a focus on nurturing a culture of reflective learning and knowledge integration, we engaged in four staff development sessions, three tutorials and eight “Unpacking Research” sessions. The staff development sessions and tutorials included topics such as creative writing, intersectionality, artificial intelligence and retirement planning; for key sessions, we developed short briefs documenting highlights and staff feedback. We organized the eight “Unpacking Research” sessions to share back findings from our different research collaborations, which led to helpful discussions around data interpretation and the implications for programming.

We learned that having a tentative plan for the full year, and scheduling sessions in advance, sets us up for success. Staff feedback on sessions also helps us iteratively improve session after session, building the quality of the different spaces in which we work. Additionally, spaces where we discuss research findings with a focus on the “so what” are both important and fruitful in integrating knowledge into our work and enriching our research processes. We built great momentum this year, which we will continue in 2024, with more reflection on what a vibrant learning culture looks like at Raising Voices.

2. Engaging with the field

Across external spaces, we noticed a lack of feminist analysis in the way VAW/VAC learning and research were happening and being communicated. This prompted us to look back at our “feminist approach to learning” that the team had developed back in 2018. In the 2023 Learning Team retreat, the team re-engaged with these principles and agreed on revisions. We decided to bring renewed intention to discussing and applying these principles across all our learning work. We developed a [one-page overview](#) of the seven principles we use to guide our learning to prevent violence and how we bring each to life in our work.

We also shared our thoughts on [elevating practice-based learning](#) and equitable research collaborations with diverse audiences (including researchers, practitioners and donors) in five external spaces. This included a lecture with LSHTM students, a collaborative symposium at the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) Congress, and a participatory session in the Impact and Innovations Development Centre convening in Uganda. In all these spaces, we prompted thinking on the need to prioritize practice-based learning and how different stakeholders can play a role in doing so. There is a growing demand



to learn about how to be a learning organization, and that is an area we aim to deepen and share our articulation on in 2024. It is meaningful to witness our advocacy around practice-based learning—now nearly 10 years running—bearing fruit and contributing to growing visibility, discussion and action in the field.

3. Learning frameworks

As we entered the new strategic period, we also put together our new organizational learning framework. This framework aligns with our strategy and contains structured mechanisms for staff to track progress toward our strategic aims. Based on learning from the previous strategic period, we spent time this year reconceptualizing the organization-wide learning frameworks to be robust yet simple. This required intentionally focusing on fewer things to track while deepening the reflection process.

This included a new way of categorizing our indicators to cover a full cycle of learning (output, quality, outcome, learning and action indicators) and bring depth to our reflections. The Learning Team collaborated with each team to develop four integrated frameworks and related “journals” for different areas of our work: VAW Prevention, VAC Prevention, Organizational Learning & Communications, and Operations Support. These journals provide a creative template in which teams enter relevant information monthly. Following analysis of this information, we are convening biannual Reflect & Act (R&A) sessions, where each team reflects on progress, asks critical questions, shares feedback and identifies actions based on collective learning.



Offsite annual Reflect & Act (R&A) and Gallery Walk



In 2023, we experimented with a new approach to our all-staff R&A sessions. For the first time, we held the R&A offsite and made it a half-day process, including a gallery walk that allowed teams to showcase their materials and innovations—going beyond the traditional presentation format we have used in the past.

Teams celebrated by sharing their proudest moments from the year, as well as reflected on core challenges faced, what learning these led to and how that changed our teams’ work. Each team committed to certain actions in 2024 emerging from these reflections. The session was vibrant and participatory, prompting cross-team knowledge exchange and learning. We wrapped up the session on a high note with an all-staff Zumba practice. >>



Communications

In 2023, we recruited a new team member to lead and coordinate our organizational communications, including assessing prior work and creating a clear strategy to leverage our various communications platforms. This section describes highlights from the year.



1. Website

We continued to maintain an up-to-date, accessible [website](#) that showcases our work; provides open access to our violence prevention resources; and helps communicate Raising Voices' approach, our intention to uphold values in our work and our visual identity. The website highlighted several key news posts and resources from our work in 2023, leveraging social media to amplify our efforts!



2. Social media

In 2023, we kept harnessing the power of social media to share our activism and newly published resources, as well as share relevant external resources and news. Our X (formerly Twitter) account also serves as a key platform to strengthen our engagement with partners, amplifying their work and the voices of women's rights organizations across Africa and beyond. As of December 2023, we managed to grow to over 3,500 followers on X.

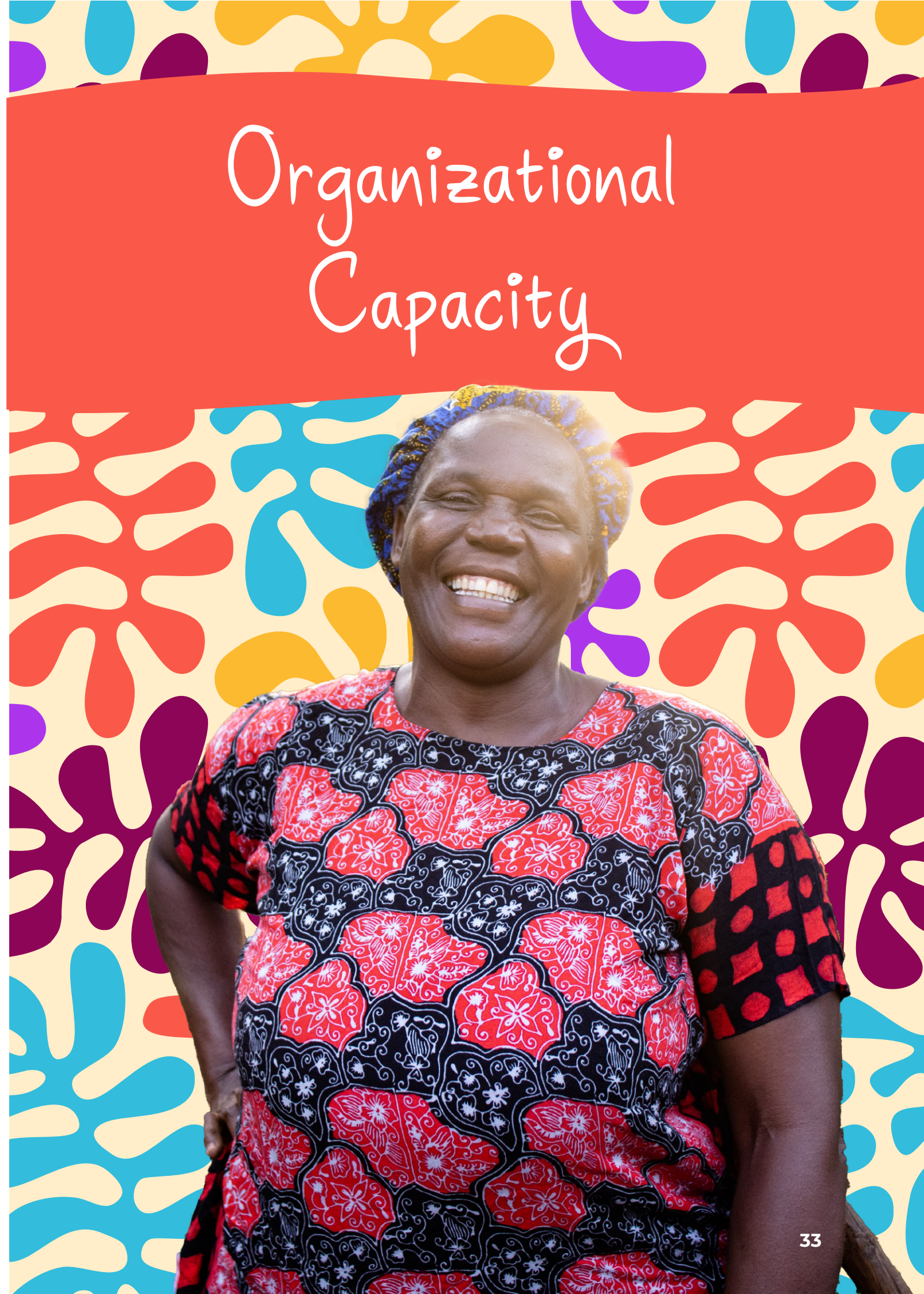
Across our platforms, we deepened the solidarity and sisterhood of the violence prevention community and engaged in key topical discussions in 2023. This included hosting interactive campaigns promoting our advocacy agenda and facilitating live conversations on our X page.

Additionally, we closed our VAC prevention-specific X page to ensure a cohesive flow of our social media engagements. We migrated the content and followers to our main X account, which now serves as the go-to place to share content across our VAW and VAC Prevention teams. In addition, we are experimenting with an exciting approach via our monthly team spotlight, with dedicated campaigns and content to showcase their previous, current and upcoming efforts and to celebrate the people behind the work.



3. Other media

In 2023, we developed several short animations and creative videos for our social media and YouTube pages. Alongside this animated content, we continued to develop print and online publications to elevate our practice-based learning and the collective voice, priorities and experiences of activist organizations (see our list of 2023 publications at the end of this report). In addition, the GBV Prevention Network leveraged diverse digital media platforms (website, X, Instagram and Facebook) to facilitate cross-learning and strengthen prevention initiatives across the East, Horn and Southern Africa.



Organizational Capacity

Organizational strengthening

Our journey to becoming “truly digital” kicked off in 2023 alongside the five-year strategic plan. So far, this experience has been both thrilling and challenging, resulting in the need for increased investments and safeguards. 2023 gave us the opportunity to lay the foundations for what would become our journey and destination for the next five years. An in-depth, all-staff organizational mapping tool process, guided by an expert facilitator, provided deep insights into how we could prioritize growth in the coming years. We look forward to concluding the work plan and reporting on this process in early 2024.

Information technology

Raising Voices invested in a cloud-based human resources management system, a cloud-based calling system, a cloud-based accounting system, and a hybrid server and backup system, among other innovations. This digital journey came with increased potential security threats, which led to significant investments in safeguards to ensure that we had a safe organizational technology space with zero successful intrusions or data loss. Some of the measures we put in place in 2023 were upgrading our on-premises servers, creating new security policies within the network infrastructure and conducting staff awareness sessions on cybersecurity. Looking forward to 2024, we will continue our digital transformation by enhancing risk management, maintaining and enhancing basic information technology infrastructure and utilities, and optimizing the use of our 2023 investments.

Administration and procurement

In 2023, we also put significant attention and intention into the overall working environment at Raising Voices, including new seating spaces, beautification, increased cleanliness protocols, and enhanced security of our office premises and assets. Well-planned procurement functions largely met our quality and timeline requirements. In 2024, we will continue improving the timeliness of procurements and enhancing administrative functions.

Human resources

In 2023, we greatly augmented our human resource systems—beyond our intentions for what Raising Voices’ human resource management would achieve by 2027. This deliberate investment in systems, thought processes and service delivery offerings (such as staff welfare initiatives like resuming Zumba and aerobics classes) laid the groundwork for significantly deepening our gains in 2024 and beyond.

Finance

In 2023, we made great strides in improving our payment processing time, the quality of reports we produced for internal and external use, and our audit report results. We also commenced an optimistic journey to upgrade our accounting system in a way that would revolutionize how we do our accounting functions.

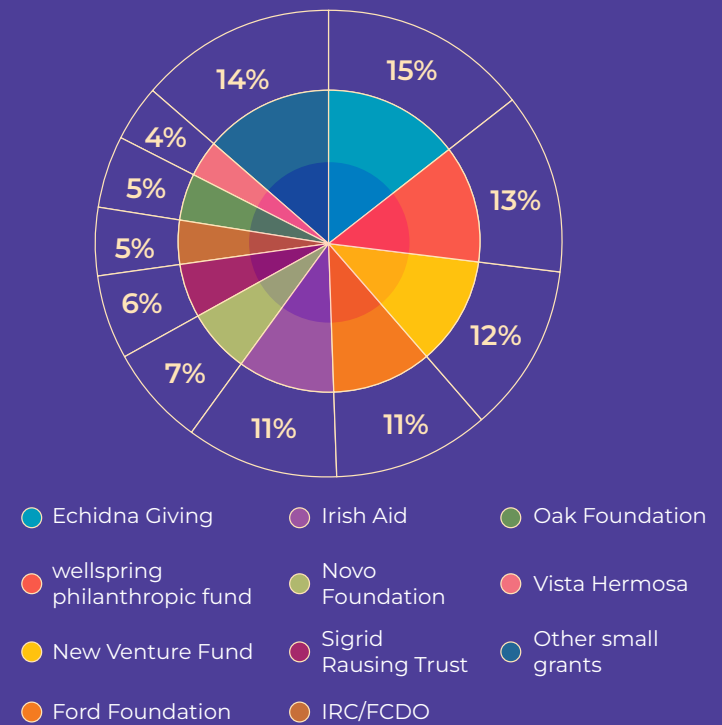
Financial summary

In 2023, the total funds available remained slightly below US\$5 million—consistent with 2022 available funds—to support our prevention work in 2023 and beyond. Our income remained intentionally diverse: 15 donors financed our work in 2023, with 10 donors accounting for 91% of our overall income and five grants accounting for the remaining 9%. This gave us solid ground for rolling out our 2023–2027 strategy.

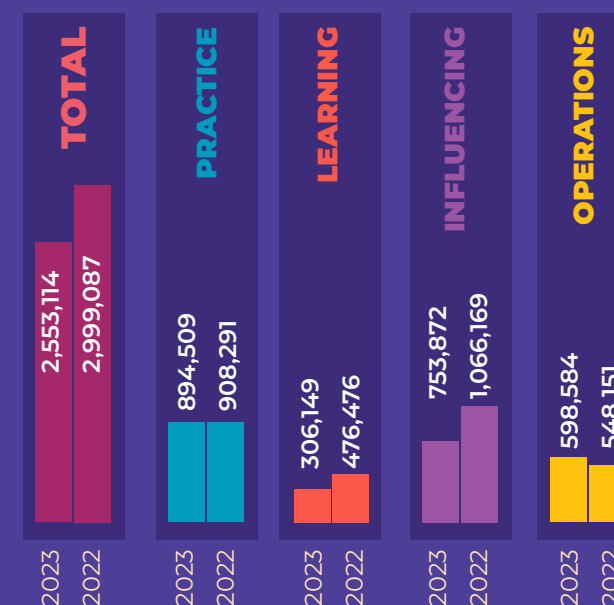
Effective spending in 2022 (linked to our previous strategy) allowed us to concentrate fully on our new 2023–2027 strategy. Consequently, compared to 2022, our 2023 spending was lower in all areas of our work because we only concentrated on implementing our new strategy. As is our standard practice, we carried 43% of the funds available in 2023 into 2024, mainly due to several grants arriving late in the year for financing the 2024 budget. 2023 set the ground for us to thrive in the new strategic period and dive deep into realizing the goals set out in our strategy. We expect more spending in 2024 across all the thematic areas of our work.

Expenditures and funding

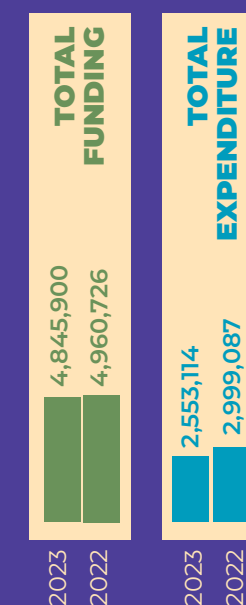
Funding contributions in 2023



Comparison of expenditure by program area over the past two years



Total funding and expenditure comparisons over the past two years



The Year in Numbers

Practice

1,500

Schools in Uganda currently implementing GST (primary and secondary)

4

Organizations receiving onsite training and TA support on the GST

29,794

Learners, teachers & parents reached by our RRP supporting GST schools

53

SASA! partner organizations supported across 23 countries

1

SASA! Together adaptation completed and 15 tools, & guidance notes produced to support ethical & effective **SASA!** programming.

97%

Respondents agreeing that Raising Voices TA aligns with our principles of quality TA

Learning

5,700

Interviews completed as part of our research: 1,918 women, 2,559 men, 617 girls & 606 boys

5

External presentations on elevating practice-based learning, engaging 208 diverse participants

25

Regional learning partners on VAC prevention in East Africa convened in the annual Impact and Innovations Development Centre learning convening

8

“Unpacking Research” spaces created to internalize research findings and discuss program implications

29

“Reflect & Act” spaces created to share our practice-based learning and exchange knowledge

22

L&A trainings held to support partners with the *SASA! Together* database & the Good School mobile app

Influencing

1,701

New followers to @Raising Voices' X account and many new followers of the GBV Prevention Network on X (4,360), Facebook (651) & Instagram (798)

2

Memorandums of understanding signed, with the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in Uganda

25

Journalists trained in collaboration with the Media Challenge Initiative to strengthen coverage of VAC stories and infuse content into their training curriculum

300

New members in our networks: 250 new GBV Prevention Network members and 50 new CUSP community members

365

16 Days of Activism kits distributed to GBV Prevention Network members via hard and soft copies.

75%

of What Works 2 awards made to women's rights organizations



Reflections

In many ways, 2023 felt like a leap forward for our work and how we operate as an organization. There were some ways, however, where it felt like a difficult step backward. Internal growth and strengthening were met head-on with restrictions in the landscape in which we do this work, and our resilience cultivated through years of disruptions continued to be put to the test. Overall, we banded together as a family to navigate difficult terrain and closed the year in celebration of all we had accomplished—and all that is yet to come.

1. Our collective leadership model has reached its final form.

We continued to iterate with the right balance of collective leadership and streamlined decision-making to ensure full strength for Raising Voices going forward. After careful deliberation, we landed on a model that our organization—as well as our Board and funders—feel confident is the strongest way forward: returning to much of what made our leadership so effective for so many years, our co-director model. This approach—two co-directors (with VAW and VAC technical focus, respectively), sharing executive oversight and working closely with the operations and finance director—is both familiar and accountable to our values, offering a satisfying conclusion to a beautiful and intentional leadership transition journey.

2. An ever-shifting landscape requires a balanced approach.

As we celebrated progress and gains in many areas, we noted some backlash in the national operating environment, with the introduction of new legislation and misogynistic public discourse. These developments infused uncertainty at different levels and limited our ability to exercise solidarity for diverse movements. The act of balancing organizational safety with our value of spirited activism made us feel conflicted and constrained at times, but we knew that our long-term vision for this work requires patience now more than ever before.

3. A new five-year strategy offers fertile ground for innovations.

Few words can describe the satisfaction of successfully launching a new strategic direction. Maintaining the core components of our approach to violence prevention gave us a new lease on our innovative spirit in 2023 through new adaptations and translations, ventures into mental health work, new collaborations with media partners and new ways to engage the movement both at home and across the Global South. We were validated in knowing the time invested in 2022 to carve out our new five-year strategy was well placed and well worth it, and we continue to attract more potential for partnerships and funding at a time when this work is needed more than ever before.



Final Word

All the unique moments in 2023 - in our operating environment, programs, and throughout the organization - enabled us to gain clarity and discover new dimensions of our resilience, that propels us further towards our strategic goals for VAW and VAC Prevention.

A feminist informed stronger ecosystem is our northern star to move forward with practice, learning and influencing. In 2024, we will be intensifying our focus on creating platforms to connect activists and build communities of practice for violence prevention. Practice-based learning remains core to our learning agenda, and next year we will leverage the growing momentum around this to create practical resources that unpack “how to” document practice-based learning across activist organizations. Within influencing, our steady presence in collectives at national, regional and international levels will deepen our thought leadership and collective activism. Through it all, we will always maintain our intentional journey to further strengthen our organizational health and resilience.

Publications

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Our Funders

We appreciate the quality of support we receive from all our funders.

Echidna Giving

Ford Foundation

Imago Dei Fund

International Rescue Committee/Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

Irish Aid

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

New Venture Fund

NoVo Foundation

Oak Foundation

Sigrid Rausing Trust

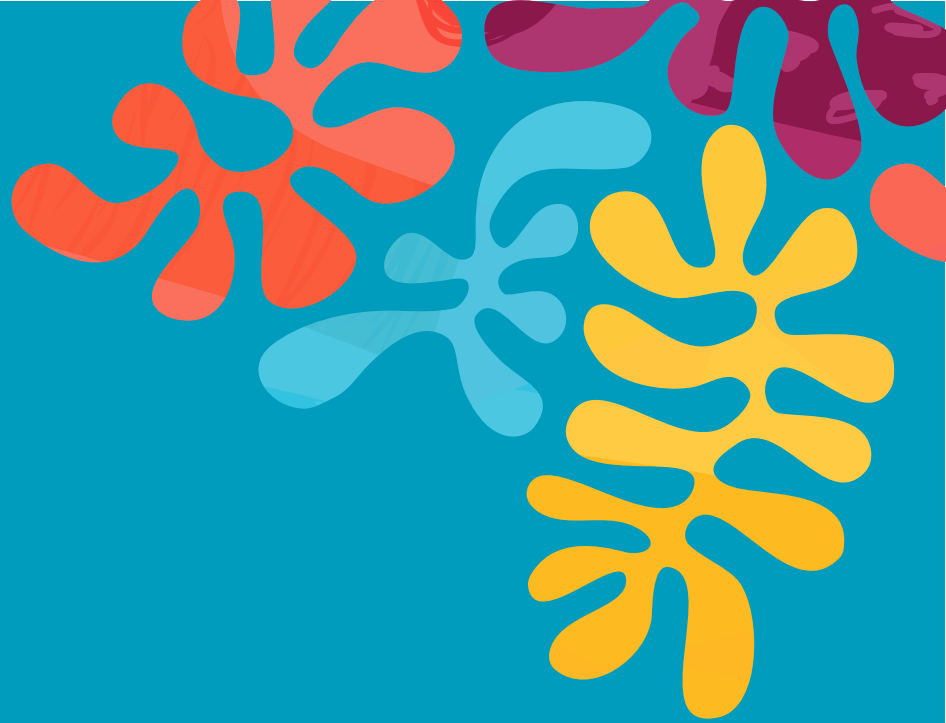
University of Alabama

UN Women Uganda

Vista Hermosa Foundation

Wellspring Philanthropic Fund





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