



## NeNaMu:

### Adapting a violence-prevention curriculum in Timor-Leste

To prevent violence against women and girls in Timor-Leste, the Nabilan Programme set out to adapt, translate and implement Stepping Stones<sup>1</sup>, a well-known evidence-based model. Nabilan partnered with the Prevention Collaborative to work on the adaptation, drawing on elements from other models to complement Stepping Stones. The outcome is NeNaMu, a programme and curriculum in Tetum, one of the country's official languages. Lessons from NeNaMu offer guidance for other groups seeking to work in partnership to adapt, test and implement violence-prevention training models.

#### THIS CASE STUDY OUTLINES:

- Who was involved in the adaptation
- Their goals and how they worked towards them
- What they have achieved
- What they learned through the process

**“In the very beginning, I thought ‘This is just a curriculum that we take from the Salamander Trust and then implement in our project’, but I soon realised ‘Oh no!’ We had to look at our context and what is the problem we want to address, and also we needed expertise about transformative–affective programming. (...)The reality is that we needed the process.”**

-Helio Afranio Soares, Nabilan, Timor-Leste

## GOAL

The partnership between Nabilan and the Prevention Collaborative aimed to adapt the Stepping Stones curriculum in order to produce a violence-prevention training programme for Timor-Leste in Tetum language.

Like the Stepping Stones programme on which it is based, **NeNaMu** will involve young men, older men, young women and older women, mostly in separate groups, to work through the same materials. The groups will then come together in a structured way to listen to each other's experiences and consider changes at the community level. At subsequent meetings with the wider community, NeNaMu participants will share their learning as a first step towards collective action.

Evidence shows that gender-transformative programming does work to reduce violence against women – **Stepping Stones, SASA! Together<sup>2</sup>** and **Indashyikirwa** are examples. To be effective, however, the materials and approach must be appropriate for the context. Will the sessions be engaging, impactful and easy for implementing partners to facilitate? Will they address issues that matter in Timor-Leste? The curriculum adaptation was designed to ensure that NeNaMu will:

- Be contextually relevant
- Be understood and digestible
- Involve the right people, at the right time
- Link to services
- Connect and engage with communities
- Be delivered in appropriate and effective language, writing style and format

## ABOUT THE NAME

The team abbreviated a Tetum phrase, "Neon Nain ba Mudansa", to name the programme NeNaMu. It cannot be translated into English directly but is understood to refer to perceptions of both the heart and mind, explaining how positive change can happen.

**"Many of the evidence-based methodologies are in the English language. They are inaccessible for the majority of even NGO staff who work in Timor"**

-Lizzie Adams, Nabilan, Timor-Leste

### STEPPING STONES

The team chose **Stepping Stones** as the basis for NeNaMu because:

- Strong evidence from many countries shows that it is effective
- Positive impact on both violence prevention and sexual and reproductive health outcomes made Stepping Stones ideal for the partnership between Nabilan and Marie Stopes Timor-Leste
- Nabilan implementing partners were excited to try the group-based curriculum model
- The implementation timeline is shorter than others



The team included and adapted sessions from **SASA! Together** to complement Stepping Stones material because:

- SASA! focuses directly on violence from various angles
- Nabilan had already adapted and implemented SASA! in rural areas and in Dili, as KOKOSA!
- 'Power' concepts were particularly useful and well understood in the community



- The team included content that Marie Stopes and Nabilan already use in Timor-Leste, to enrich the material, fill gaps on sexuality and sexual and reproductive health and provide alternative training content more appropriate to the context

### Indashyikirwa

The team included and adapted sessions from **Indashyikirwa** (implemented by CARE Rwanda) to complement Stepping Stones material because:

- Nabilan wanted to understand the potential impact of the peer-group sessions on couples
- An evaluation in Rwanda found Indashyikirwa's couples-based model and activities to be appropriate and effective
- Indashyikirwa also integrated the concept of power

## PARTNERSHIP

Nabilan partnered with Marie Stopes Timor-Leste, a strong local organisation with similar values, an experienced team of facilitators, deep engagement with young people, and a focus on sexual and reproductive health. Joining as a partner, the Prevention Collaborative, contributed process design and familiarity with a rich evidence base on violence prevention. The three organisations went on to adapt, translate and test a violence-prevention curriculum for the country. Nabilan and Marie Stopes Timor-Leste will pilot NeNaMu in Dili, the capital city, before implementing in other locations.

### SALAMANDER TRUST

The organisation that developed Stepping Stones, facilitated intensive training at the start and reviewed the Theory of Change and session summaries. They continue to provide valuable advice and support<sup>3</sup>.

**SALAMANDER TRUST**  
STEPPING STONES CURRICULUM REVIEW

### NABILAN

Initiated, funded and led the adaptation partnership.

**“Working with Marie Stopes on NeNaMu was a way for us to support a really important partner to be even better and to be able to work in the prevention sector in Timor in a way that was safe and supported. It was a real collaboration – we did not just throw a methodology at a partner and say ‘do that’.”**

-Lizzie Adams, Nabilan/ Asia Foundation Timor-Leste

### MARIE STOPES

Partnered in adapting the curriculum and in training and testing sessions.

**“The Nabilan programme brings valuable knowledge and experience about violence against women and girls, as well as social and behaviour change. And from the Marie Stopes side, we bring knowledge and experience around sexual and reproductive health and service provision. For Marie Stopes, there was a learning curve on violence prevention and the linkages between violence and SRH.”**

-Helen Henderson, Marie Stopes Timor-Leste

### PREVENTION COLLABORATIVE

Contributed to process design (adaptation and testing); identifying supplementary resources; and developing a Theory of Change and M&E framework, particularly for tracking the progress of couples.

**“The relationship between the partners has been really important. It is the kind of thing that does not get documented when, actually, we know that what enables the work to happen is these continuing mutually supportive reinforcing positive relationships.”**

-Dominique Maidment, Prevention Collaborative

### TEAM REFLECTIONS

**“In the process of curriculum testing, we saw some small, positive impacts on the participants. Afterwards, online, they said they had changed some behaviours as a result. Some male participants said that they now do some domestic work in the household and also that they practise healthy communication with their partners”**

-Helio Afranio Soares, Nabilan, Timor-Leste



# STEPS

2019 | December

## PROJECT BEGINS!

### IN OUR VOICES

"As an organisation, [Marie Stopes] had to have some internal advocacy about why is it so important to invest in these long term projects because it was quite different to everything else that we do."

2020 | January — March

Familiarise team with original curriculum and core components.

Training and facilitation practice:

- with Salamander Trust on Stepping Stones
- with Prevention Collaborative on VAW

Review Stepping Stones curriculum in depth; identify adaptation needs; make changes, adding elements from Indashyikirwa, SASA! Together, Marie Stopes and TAF approaches.

Form steering group committee.

### IN OUR VOICES

"Early on, we all participated in Stepping Stones training ourselves, so we got to experience as individuals a transformational change. And that was fantastic, for us to really understand what we were doing and how valuable it could be."

2020 | April — September

Review, re-write and translate the curriculum.

Develop Theory of Change and M&E processes.

2020 | October — December

Practise facilitation skills.

Review curriculum and referral pathways.

Develop M&E processes.

Community engagement.

### IN OUR VOICES

"We had as many real-life practice sessions as possible... It gave our team the chance to practice activities and interactive skills in a safe environment, observed by a very experienced trainer from the Nabilan team. ... We would get feedback on what went really well and what we could do better next time, so we had quite a big build-up even before the curriculum testing phase."

2021 | January — February

Facilitator Training of Trainers.

M&E Training.

### IN OUR VOICES

"We made a big investment in documenting the testing: we engaged M&E teams who observed and took notes for every session, and conducted group and individual interviews weekly, to learn about the curriculum from many perspectives: Does it make sense? Are the participants learning? Are facilitators meeting their objectives?"

2021 | March and October

Curriculum pre-testing (interrupted for six months by Covid).

2021 | March — October

Update the curriculum.

Facilitator discussion sessions (online).

## OUTCOME

The adaptation process yielded a culturally appropriate violence-prevention training curriculum in Tetum that has been carefully pre-tested. Along with this primary outcome, the process resulted in:

- Strong national and international partnerships
- Real buy-in and ownership by Timorese organisations and facilitators
- New and strengthened facilitation skills and methods, enthusiastically adopted
- New (in addition to adapted) content and activities
- Anecdotal and observed impact on both the team of facilitators and on the testing cohort
- Rich questions for M&E follow-up
- Insights to inform final pilot design

## KEY CHANGES

### Overall

WHAT?	WHY?	SOURCE
Integrating the concept/language of power consistently throughout the sessions	Recognising the importance of a gender-power analysis	Inspired by SASA! Together and Indashyikirwa
Integrating VAWG content more explicitly than in original Stepping Stones	Including carefully designed activities that cover VAWG content gives facilitators confidence in delivering sensitive sessions and ensures increased knowledge outcomes	SASA! Together, Indashyikirwa, Nabilan
Integrating self-care, referral pathways and support	To ensure participant psychosocial health, safety and wellbeing is prioritised.	Nabilan
Adding take-home activities	To provide opportunities for practice and reflection	Inspired by Indashyikirwa
Shifted the flow of activities, moving self-care to the start, for instance, and moving a fairly intense session on power to later in the sequence.	To begin more gently and develop skills to manage the harder material.	N/A
Integrating cross-cutting themes across all sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links between VAWG, HIV/STIs and unwanted pregnancy</li> <li>• LGBTI/sexuality</li> </ul>	Low levels of understanding of basic SRHR in the community	Marie Stopes Timor-Leste
Extending duration and time frame <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50–62 hours (4 extra full-time days)</li> <li>• 2 weeks of training facilitators in content</li> <li>• 2 further weeks for training in facilitation &amp; implementation</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A

### THEME 1 Key Changes

#### Group co-op

New session on power.	To introduce and integrate the concept of power	SASA! Together
New activity on self-care	To introduce self-care practices into the curriculum and as part of participant wellbeing	Nabilan
New activity on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression	Limited awareness of SOGIES in the community	ISEAN <sup>4</sup>

## THEME 2 Key changes

### HIV, STIs and safer sex

#### WHAT?

New activity on sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

New activities on SRH, specifically pregnancy (menstruation, contraception, early pregnancy)

#### WHY?

Low levels of understanding about STIs in general

Low levels of SRH knowledge; high rates of teenage pregnancy and low acceptance of contraception for unmarried women

#### SOURCE

Marie Stopes Timor-Leste

Marie Stopes Timor-Leste

## THEME 3 Key changes

### Violence against women and girls

New introduction to VAW session, including consequences of VAW

New session on the root cause of VAW

To strengthen the VAW prevention content

SASA! Together

Nabilan

## THEME 4 Key changes

### Why we behave in the ways we do

New exercise on gender, sexuality and power

New activity on sexual consent

New activity on alcohol

New activity on traditions

New activity on money

New session on healthy relationships

New session on communicating effectively in a couple

To strengthen the VAW prevention content

Low levels of awareness about sexual consent

Alternative to the original activity which used a video

To strengthen the VAW prevention content with a focus on couples

Indashyikirwa

Nabilan

Indashyikirwa

Nabilan

Nabilan

SASA! Together

Indashyikirwa

## THEME 5 Key changes

### Ways in which we can change

New activities on managing conflict

New activity on norm change and VAW

New activities on referral network and help-seeking

To strengthen the VAW prevention content

To provide referral pathways and knowledge about help-seeking and supporting those experiencing violence.

Indashyikirwa & Nabilan

SASA! together

Nabilan

## TEAM REFLECTIONS

**“This approach is much more than just a curriculum. All this work trickles down to everything else that we do. So when we talk about our team having transformational change, that is rolled over to our organisation: our clinical services; the way our nurses, doctors, midwives and counselors interact with people day to day; how our educators plan an education session in the community.”**

-Helen Henderson, Marie Stopes  
Timor-Leste

## LEARNING

For the partners, the process of adaptation and testing proved to be a rich learning experience. The team drew on self-reflection, internal documentation, responses from the cohort of participants and reporting by the external monitoring and evaluation (M&E) group.

The resulting lessons shaped the curriculum adaptation along the way and will continue to guide programme implementation.

### Partnership

It takes work, energy, and time to bring together different partners with different skills and experience but, according to team members, this was a great strength of the adaptation process. The sustainability of a values-based programme such as NeNaMu will depend on continuity in the values of partner organisations when new leaders and staff join. Funders are partners too, and understanding donors (like those of NeNaMu) make it possible to tweak work plans and extend grants in line with real-time learning. The capacity to adapt is essential to success and impact.

### Responsiveness

In 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic required everyone, globally, to respond to fast-changing circumstances. Unable to continue face-to-face activities mid-way through the intensive testing phase, the NeNaMu project shifted online, with the additional challenge of unreliable internet connections. However, the team took advantage of the opportunity to focus on M&E frameworks, rework sections of the curriculum in line with M&E feedback and communicate with the testing cohort. As soon as it was possible, the team finished testing over an intensive six-day schedule. Participants and facilitators took COVID tests and went into 'lockdown' accommodation to limit risk of transmission.

More broadly, the team made adjustments as they went along. The most significant shift was the decision not to recruit facilitators from the community during the pilot phase, as planned, but rather to deepen the skills and confidence of the facilitators from Marie Stopes and Nabilan in delivering NeNaMu.

Preparing facilitators for the testing process took longer than anticipated. In future, training of trainers (ToTs) for peer facilitators will last several months.

### Accessibility

It is tempting to load written materials with ideas, evidence and guidance, but the team was alive to the self-defeating risks of including too much reading and analysis for facilitators to manage. Short text, videos with subtitles and audio tracks are effective alternatives to dense text.

### Services and support

The team discussed in depth the possible risks – for both participants and facilitators – of disclosing violence. It was important to ensure that there were people in the room to provide immediate support as well as referrals to services. The core facilitation team had appropriate training, social work accreditation and access to external psychosocial support, as well as daily team debriefs, self-reflection, and care.

#### TEAM REFLECTIONS

"At the end of this, most folks will have implemented a violence-against-women prevention intervention and learnt a lot. In the future, they will be able to do that without us, and that is really important and exciting."

-Lizzie Adams, Nabilan,  
Timor-Leste

#### TEAM REFLECTIONS

"Before, I always facilitated about sexual and reproductive health but through this curriculum I can now facilitate on violence against women and also power."

-Silvina Amaral, Marie Stopes  
Timor-Leste

#### TEAM REFLECTIONS

"The self-care activities we developed included factoring in time in the workday for debrief, reflection, expressing feelings and time alone. Setting aside an hour to talk is important."

-Helen Henderson, Marie Stopes  
Timor-Leste

#### TEAM REFLECTIONS

"Being a facilitator is not a new deal for me but being a facilitator of NeNaMu is so interesting. Why? Because of the reflection. It is not like we give the information in talks but in how we reflect on it, how we are thinking about it."

-Helio Afranio Soares, Nabilan,  
Timor-Leste

#### IN OUR VOICES

"We really have to make sure that we are not doing harm through the process and that we ensure the physical and emotional safety of everyone taking part."

-Lizzie Adams, Nabilan, Timor-Leste



## Participant and facilitator identification

Large numbers of young men and women were keen to join the testing cohort as individuals, in part because they know about other youth programmes that NeNaMu partners run. To test the adaptation, the team proceeded with younger participants, noting that to identify older and cross-generational participants will require new strategies.

The programme included various incentives for participants: allowances for travel and phone top-ups, to enable participants to attend sessions and keep in touch with the team, as well as hygiene packs after an activity on menstrual health and free access to various services at the Marie Stopes Timor-Leste clinic.

The partners could draw on many skilled female facilitators inspired by feminist values but finding male facilitators of a similar calibre was a distinct challenge. To address this ongoing risk, Nabilan will run intensive NeNaMu courses for facilitators and for specific target groups.

## Documentation

Working on something complex with many different partners over a long period of time requires thorough documentation. This aspect of the process improved over the course of the project but, early on, rich discussions, conclusions and plans were not always captured, leading to confusion and repetition. The take-away for the partners is to document even small things.

## M&E

For the testing phase, the NeNaMu team engaged an external organisation to undertake M&E, working in Tetum. The M&E group observed every session, taking detailed notes; interviewed participants in a group and facilitators every day, plus individual participants once a week; and debriefed with the internal team daily. The results were rich in data and detail, but thin on analysis and interpretation – a blow-by-blow rather than filtered account. How to strike the best balance between observation and analysis? This remains a question for the team.

### IN OUR VOICES

"We would like to involve male facilitators that work on violence-against-women prevention and sexual and reproductive health, but it is not easy to find a person that has the same feminist values as we do. As men, we can support each other to become good facilitators for NeNaMu."

-Helio Afranio Soares, Nabilan Timor-Leste

### IN OUR VOICES

We take notes in meetings and share them within our group. We are quite visual so we like to draw things on a really large flip chart sheet and stick it up on the wall. Whenever we make any decisions or changes, we physically mark them on the wall. We might take a photo and then share it on our WhatsApp group. So we are communicating in so many different ways – verbally, email, WhatsApp – covering all our bases."

-Helen Henderson, Marie Stopes Timor-Leste

## Notes

1. Welbourn, A. (2016) Stepping Stones and Stepping Stones Plus: A training package on gender, generation, HIV, communication, and relationship skills, Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3362/9781780448916>
2. Also see: Raising Voices (2020) Guidance Note 5: How can SASA! / SASA! Faith / SASA! Together programming adapt? Series on Preventing Violence against Women during COVID-19. Kampala, Uganda. [https://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/VAWCOVID\\_5.pdf](https://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/VAWCOVID_5.pdf)
3. Salamandar Trust have developed some guidelines for adapting Stepping Stones: Gordon G. with Welbourn A., Trust (2017) Guidelines for Adapting the Stepping Stones and Stepping Stones Plus Training Programme on Gender, Generation, HIV, Communication and Relationship Skills. Salamander Trust. Accessible here <https://steppingstonesfeedback.org/resources/adaptations-adaptaciones/>
4. ISEAN (2015) Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Assessment Tools. Jakarta, ISEAN.



Prevention Collaborative works to strengthen the ability of key actors to deliver cutting-edge violence-prevention programmes informed by research-based evidence, practice-based learning and feminist principles. For more information go to [www.prevention-collaborative.org](http://www.prevention-collaborative.org)

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