

LEARNING FROM PRACTICE:

# TRAINING FOR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Lessons on prevention from civil society organizations funded by  
the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women



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Cover Photo: PHR partners Clinical Officer Sylvester Mesa and Senior Nursing Officer Emily Kiragu testing MediCapt at Kenya's Naivasha Hospital. Credit: Adriane Ohanesian/Physicians for Human Rights



## About the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) is the only global grant-making mechanism dedicated to eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls. Managed by UN Women on behalf of the United Nations system since its establishment in 1996 by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/166, the UN Trust Fund has awarded almost \$183 million to 572 initiatives in 140 countries and territories. In 2020, the UN Trust Fund managed a grants portfolio of 150 projects aimed at preventing and addressing violence against women and girls in 71 countries and territories across five regions, with grants totalling \$72.8 million. Grant recipients are primarily civil society organizations (CSOs). Since 2018 (cycle 20), the UN Trust Fund has been funding only CSO projects. In 2020, the majority (58 per cent) of these CSOs are women's rights organizations.

## About the learning from practice series on prevention

In this series the UN Trust Fund has prioritized engagement with what has – to date – been a fairly neglected area within research on prevention of violence against women and girls, practice based insights from civil society organizations. In 2020 it commissioned a synthesis of this knowledge emerging from 89 UN Trust Fund civil society organization grants, implemented or closed during the period covered by its 2015–2020 Strategic Plan. Findings were captured from two types of source documents from grantees: final progress reports (written by grantees) and final evaluation reports (written by external evaluators commissioned by grantees). The first step in the series was a synthesis review and identification of common approaches or thematic areas in prevention across the 89 projects, to determine the focus of knowledge to be extracted (Le Roux and Palm, 2020). Ten key thematic areas or “Pathways towards Prevention” (Box 1) were identified through an inductive process including a desk review of reports and a series of consultations with

grantees/practitioners in English, French and Spanish. The UN Trust Fund aims to analyse and co- create knowledge under each pathway. Each pathway has been analysed and the corresponding synthesis co-created by a researcher/s and ten grantees per pathway whose work generated significant practice-based insights on the particular theme and who could offer contextual and embedded best practices, challenges and useful tools on the topic that emerged from iterative learning from practice. The intended audience for this brief is threefold: (i) practitioners (ii) donors and grant makers and (iii) researchers, all working in the area of EVAWG. The learning from practice series is intended to elevate practice-based insights from CSOs as highly valuable and important to planning, designing and funding interventions and research in EVAWG. Each longer synthesis review will be accompanied by a shorter, summary brief available on the UN Trust Fund website.

### BOX 1: PATHWAYS TO PREVENTION IDENTIFIED

1. Community Mobilization
2. Engaging faith based and traditional actors
3. Exploring intersectional approaches
4. Mobilizing Women
5. **Training for behaviour change**
6. Adolescent-focused approaches
7. Resistance and backlash
8. Adaptive programming
9. Working together for a survivor-centered, multisectoral response
10. Working together for law and policy implementation and reform



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Women rallying on the streets of Bangalore, Karnataka as part of the "Asking For It" campaign demanding their safety against various atrocities against them. Credit: Mr. Bharath/Breakthrough India.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Interventions that are designed to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) are often complex in design and address multiple drivers simultaneously. In their design, **training** is commonly used to work with communities to change behaviours and shift social norms. **What is known about the role of training in VAWG prevention work?** Training in some form or other is ubiquitous in prevention interventions; therefore, it is often seen as a tool or an activity. However, is training merely a tool or does it have greater strategic value? Designing effective training takes time and effort; it requires an iterative and adaptive process that is time and resource intensive. In spite of its being widely used as a tool, there is not enough literature on why, or how, training can be integrated into different programme pathways to move from initial awareness-raising and short-term individual behaviour change to sustained shifts in social norms. From the perspective of behaviour change, training can have enormous strategic value and be a critical pathway to prevent VAWG.

**This synthesis review captures the experiences and reflections of practitioners and their practice-based knowledge from 10 prevention projects (by 7 CSOs) supported by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.** The projects used training as a key strategic activity for transformative change in their interventions. All the interventions included in this synthesis review incorporated training in different ways and to achieve different objectives, from building a foundational understanding of the causes and consequences of VAWG and of VAWG prevention to engaging participants in a process to change individual practices in the scope of their work or daily interactions.

## Key emerging themes from practice

In analysing the lessons from the 10 projects included in this review, seven key themes emerged from the practice-based knowledge gained by the civil society organizations (CSOs) on training for behaviour change.

1. **The importance of the design stage and ensuring that project implementers are themselves trained prior to project implementation cannot be overemphasized.** Designing training thoughtfully takes time and resources. Interventions need to incorporate training for trainers and facilitators at the beginning of the training programmes to ensure that these individuals are aligned with the values of the training they provide. This “pre-training” requires significant work and planning, and CSOs stated that this component needs to be built into programme timelines, as otherwise it may be overlooked or discounted.
2. **It is also important to pay due attention to the training process.** Learning and unlearning trajectories are not linear, and training programmes should support individuals through this process. CSOs have had some success in training that waxes and wanes in intensity and allows periods away during which participants can put their learning into practice. A critical aspect of training design is to plan for a training space that is inclusive and safe and does not replicate power structures inherent in local contexts. Training needs to be designed to bridge gaps between theoretical knowledge and contextually relevant learning.
3. **Ensuring that appropriate tools are designed and used (including digital tools and social media) is key.** The tools and resources used in training can help participants to articulate their experiences. Grantees used various media such as film, print, lexicons and storytelling as effective supporting tools in their training. Grantees also delivered training on using digital tools.
4. **Valorizing the intended/unintended consequences of networks and communities of practice around training activities for project benefits is also important.** CSOs noted that these networks should be supported and nurtured as effective bridges between learning spaces and what happens after the training ends.
5. **The importance of training wider sets of stakeholders for behaviour change following a multisectoral approach was emphasized by CSOs.**

Multisectoral approaches to training can help to overcome common challenges relating to collaboration between important secondary stakeholders such as law enforcement officials and medical staff. Cross-sector training can help to align the goals of different stakeholder groups around VAWG prevention, build trust and lead to better service delivery. Care should be taken to understand who needs to be trained based on the outcomes that the training hopes to achieve. For example, exercises such as power analyses of stakeholders can help to identify the stakeholders that need to be trained. When carrying out skills-based training, CSOs note, participants should also be assessed on their levels of awareness of fundamental VAWG prevention concepts.

- 6. Several lessons emerged on how to ensure that training leads to sustainable and scalable results.** Cascading training models such as the training of trainers model are time and resource intensive and need a lot of supervision to ensure their fidelity to the original training. CSOs employ a combination of trainer training and regular refresher training for trainers and supervision and monitoring to maintain the quality of the training. Any new training needs to be adapted to suit local contexts, which requires appropriate contextualisation to make sure that the approaches are relevant. Adaptations should be prepared with the participation of the local communities to ensure their buy-in.
- 7. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a strong impact on training for VAWG behaviour change.** COVID-19 affected training spaces managed by projects. Grantees with access to resources were able to adapt their methodologies to create online versions, but this also introduced new challenges such as access, inclusivity and safety in virtual spaces. The digital divide is still very much present across the world, and questions of access, agency and participation in online spaces need to be considered.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Training can be a powerful, strategic activity embedded in prevention interventions to connect the wider body of knowledge around gender and violence prevention with

a process of learning that is embedded in practice. CSOs demonstrated that thoughtfully designed training can support participants to engage in a process of change. However, it should be noted that training design needs to be revisited and reviewed periodically. And, given that training often involves challenges in implementation, a few recommendations are made on training to ensure that it can function as an important prevention pathway.

**Recommendations for practitioners include:** (i) invest in designing training that is participatory and that fosters safe spaces for participants to reflect and learn; (ii) think of training as a process of change; and (iii) create training that supports participants to work at a pace that suits them and commit appropriate resources to support this.

**Recommendations for donors and policymakers include:** (i) support adequate budgets for designing and piloting training formats, and encourage partner organizations to allocate resources and time to testing, design and training of key personnel before the roll-out of the intervention; (ii) consider funding models that are more flexible and that support the intensive nature of training, especially training programmes that are more complex and are delivered over longer periods; (iii) consider striking a balance between supporting training programmes that emerge from established evidence-based methodologies and programmes that are more innovative but less established; (iv) prioritize and encourage monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning around training, so that lessons from the work on the front line can be learned; and (v) be cognizant of the ever-increasing digital divide, and consider policies to address it as the world moves online and more and more training spaces become virtual.

**Recommendations for researchers include:** (i) address the dearth of literature on the how and why of training for VAWG prevention; (ii) support the cross-fertilization of research and lessons on training, especially across the spectrum of prevention and response; (iii) conduct more research to explore the dynamics of training, such as what makes training transformative (as opposed to transferring knowledge) and to what extent training as a strategy contributes to VAWG prevention; and (iv) study how online training could nurture the same sense of emotional safety and experiential learning as in-person training, and the limitations and opportunities of online training.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>AÇEV</b>          | Mother Child Education Foundation                       |
| <b>CMC</b>           | Community Media Center                                  |
| <b>COVID-19</b>      | coronavirus disease 2019                                |
| <b>CSO</b>           | civil society organization                              |
| <b>GGM</b>           | Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres                           |
| <b>HIV</b>           | human immunodeficiency virus                            |
| <b>NGO</b>           | non-governmental organization                           |
| <b>PBK</b>           | practice-based knowledge                                |
| <b>PHR</b>           | Physicians for Human Rights                             |
| <b>ToT</b>           | training of trainers                                    |
| <b>UN Trust Fund</b> | United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women |
| <b>VAWG</b>          | violence against women and girls                        |



Signature campaign at Lucknow, U.P with people coming forward to support Breakthrough's campaign against sexual harassment. Credit: Krati Prakash/Breakthrough India.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Using training for behaviour change in VAWG prevention interventions

Interventions that are designed to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) are often complex in design and address multiple drivers simultaneously. **In their design, training is commonly used to work with communities to change behaviours and shift social norms.** What is known about the role of training in VAWG prevention? In the broader gender equality space, training has been used as a strategic activity for decades, and has evolved over the years to become an integral component of gender mainstreaming interventions and policies. Since the articulation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, there has been a concerted effort to institutionalize and mainstream the practice of gender and development, and this has included reflections on the codification of many practices, including training (UN Women, 2016a). In an analysis of discussions at three gender mainstreaming conferences held in 2007, 2008 and 2009 (gender training was the focus in 2007), a critique has been made that the “technicalization” or “instrumentalization” of training has reduced the transformative potential of gender training, disassociating it from its political heart (Mukhopadhyay, 2014).

**Much of the literature on training in a VAWG prevention context validates its contribution to prevention strategies.** Training in some form or other is ubiquitous in prevention interventions; therefore, it is often seen as a tool or an activity. Studies have examined its efficacy as a tool (or as part of a group of activities, since it is often grouped with and designed to be implemented as part of a combination of strategies such as community mobilization and advocacy efforts); for example, it has been identified as one of 10 critical elements for effective VAWG prevention programmes (Kerr-Wilson et al., 2020). In VAWG prevention programmes that focus on community activism, socioeconomic and economic empowerment or interpersonal relationships, training (including longer, more extensive training) has been found

to be a critical driver in reducing VAWG (Kerr-Wilson et al., 2020). When used across the spectrum of VAWG prevention strategies – from community mobilization to training of service providers and internal staff training – the evidence points to its effectiveness as a strategic activity that empowers women, helps them to build equitable interpersonal relationships and improves the delivery of critical services (UN Women and Social Development Direct, 2019). Yet there is less of a focus on how training has worked.

**In addition, most of the existing evidence comes from high-income countries and is largely quantitative in nature.** There is some focus on the design of training. For example, when it comes to training facilitators and front-line activists to support their communities and to foster a critical reflection on processes to end VAWG, a systematic review by Bartel (2018) found that group training (where participants are trained in groups and not individually) was useful in increasing the collective ability to bring about change that is critical to preventing violence against women (Bartel, 2018). There is also some promising evidence from interventions in low- and middle-income countries in which group training to empower women and girls was the primary approach, and in which group training was given to mixed groups of men and women on social norm change (Arango et al., 2014). On the other hand, the evidence on the efficacy of group training for just men and boys on social norm change was mixed and training given to service providers was ineffective (Arango et al., 2014). Another category of training – self-defence training – was promising, especially for women and girls in university and college spaces, but it was not as effective with younger girls in schools (Kerr-Wilson et al., 2020). Again, the literature focuses largely on the operational aspect of training – the evidence does point towards training as an effective pathway for change but does not necessarily dwell on the details.

**Is training merely a tool or does it have greater strategic value?** Designing effective training requires an iterative and adaptive process. In spite of its being widely used as a tool, there is not enough literature on

why, or how, training can be integrated into different programme pathways to move from initial awareness-raising and short-term individual behaviour change to sustained shifts in social norms. From the perspective of behaviour change, training can have important strategic value in preventing VAWG. Again, there is little discourse and reflection around the process of training and its contribution to VAWG prevention. Is this lack of evidence perhaps because training is seen as having a dual role – as a tool and strategic activity – and sits at the intersection between theory and practice? Does its ubiquity render it invisible? Taking note of existing trajectories of gender training that recognize its transformative potential (Milward et al., 2015), is it possible to design training in VAWG prevention so that it becomes an effective pathway that uses the process of learning in practice to contribute to violence prevention, to further feminist knowledge generation and to challenge traditional models of power?

**This is where practice-based knowledge (PBK) can contribute to the evidence on training for VAWG prevention. Many of the decisions taken by civil society organizations (CSOs) on how they utilize training in their methodologies are based on their years of experience in the sector and their knowledge of what works on the ground in the specific contexts they work in.** The roll-out of training is therefore dynamic, dependent on the community and constantly evolving, owing to the “living, breathing” nature of working in this space. The PBK provides critical insights into how training can be used as a strategic lever to prevent violence against women. In specific contexts, this knowledge can become powerful evidence to support the observed learning that comes from sector experience. Evidence in the form of PBK can make a significant contribution to the wider study of VAWG prevention.<sup>1</sup> Often, projects are good at raising short-term awareness but have mixed success in longer-term behavioural or norm change.

**Therefore, this synthesis review will explore how training is embedded as a strategy within the scope of VAWG prevention interventions, and how CSOs have deployed training in VAWG prevention projects, particularly to change behaviours around VAWG.** Training for behaviour change has emerged

as an important pathway for violence prevention (Le Roux and Palm, 2020). How does that happen? What can practitioners and PBK contribute to this pathway? Making an effort to understand the details can give rise to insights into the step-by-step process of changing behaviours and working with participants to move from increasing initial awareness and short-term individual change to deeper, more sustained social norm change for violence prevention. All the interventions included in this review incorporated training in different ways and to achieve different objectives, from building a foundational understanding of the causes and consequences of VAWG and of VAWG prevention to engaging participants in a process to change individual practices in the scope of their work or daily interactions.

**This synthesis review is structured as follows:** a rationale for the selection of the cases used in the review is presented, and this is followed by salient findings from the PBK from these cases. Finally, some recommendations from practice are shared.

## 1.2. Case study rationale

**This synthesis review is based on PBK from 10 projects (by 7 CSOs) to end VAWG.** Using a set of reports submitted to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) as part of their monitoring and evaluation requirements, 10 interventions were identified as containing rich PBK on training. Seven of these interventions were shortlisted during the first phase of this exercise (see Le Roux and Palm, 2020), and the remaining three were selected after discussions with the UN Trust Fund. Although it was impossible to achieve full representativeness based on all criteria, care was taken during the selection process to make the final set of projects as representative of the UN Trust Fund’s extensive portfolio as possible and to ensure global representation.

**First, the selection process ensured the geographical diversity of the projects.** The projects included in this selection are from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin and South America, and the Middle East. There is one project each from India, Guatemala and the State of Palestine, and two

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<sup>1</sup> This is an emerging area of work that values the rich, textured knowledge that can come from the field (Faris and Jayasekara, 2019). PBK prioritises learning from the field where organizations (especially those working to end VAWG) have to navigate complex contexts and adapt to constantly changing circumstances. Much of their experience is built on years of “learning by doing”.



projects from Turkey (both projects were implemented by the same CSO). The five remaining projects were implemented in Africa and cover several countries: Madagascar, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda).

**Every grantee in the selection used training differently in its interventions.** Some are small organizations, such as the Community Media Center (CMC) in the State of Palestine. CMC operates in the Gaza Strip and is a Palestinian non-governmental advocacy and human rights organization that works to bridge the gap between the media, the decision makers and the community to end violence against women and girls. CMC trained women journalists and media graduates on gender and human rights and mechanisms to combat VAWG, and imparted technical skills to the participants. They were taught how to write, how to use photography when reporting on VAWG, and on the use of social media and advocacy campaigns.

ECPAT France is a French CSO with a mission to end the sexual exploitation of children in Madagascar. ECPAT worked extensively with girls, with young adults in schools and with men in the community. Social workers were trained on protocols to be followed in cases involving child sexual exploitation. ECPAT also trained local journalists on VAWG prevention and on reporting on the sexual exploitation of minors; at the end of the training, journalists had a better understanding of their roles in preventing violence in Malagasy communities. Breakthrough Trust is an India-based human rights organization that takes a media-first approach to change cultural norms and makes extensive use of media, art, culture and technology in its interventions. Its campaigns were driven largely by youth activists who were trained on the media and gender. The project also trained women's groups and other CSOs, the police and law enforcement agencies, and the media on VAWG prevention.

PHR is a global evidence-based human rights organization that uses forensic documentation and science to advocate for human rights and justice. Survivors of sexual violence were placed at the heart of its approach and the project worked with three critical stakeholder groups: clinicians who performed forensic medical examinations, police officers who responded to crimes and legal professionals (judges). The project theorized that effective training

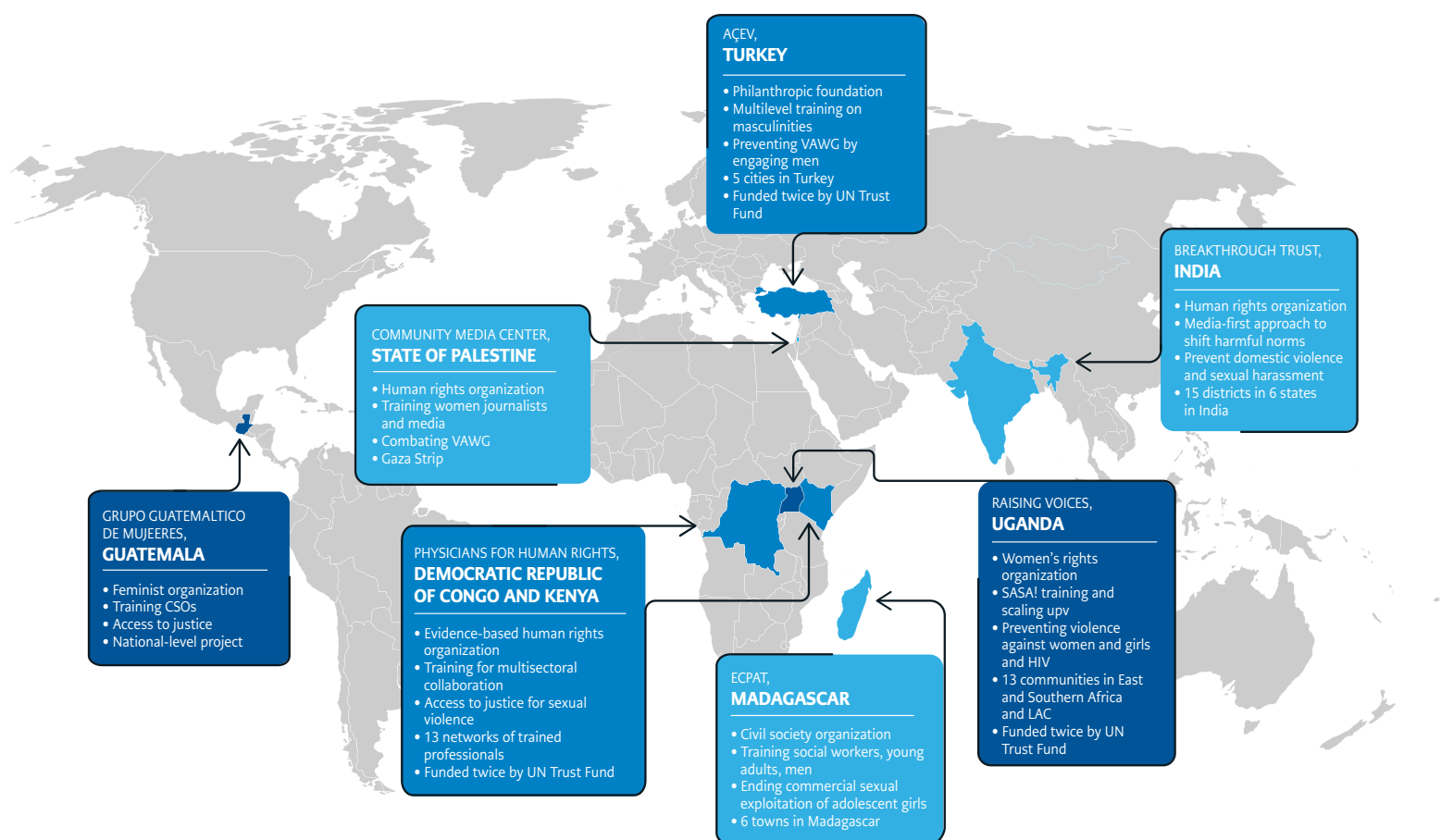
could enhance multisectoral collaborations and assist in justice and recovery for survivors. Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres (GGM) is a feminist organization deeply embedded in the political and feminist movement in Guatemala that worked to promote a legal framework to end VAWG in Guatemala.

Raising Voices is a Ugandan NGO that works on the prevention of violence against women and violence against children. It trained community mobilizers and offered technical assistance that included training to its partner CSOs to support it in the implementation of its SASA! programme in communities. Finally, AÇEV (Mother Child Education Foundation) is a Turkish foundation that works closely with fathers (and their spouses) to make their relationships more gender-equal and to address questions of masculinity. AÇEV designed a multi-layered training programme that trained programme staff, male trainers and the participants in the programme.



**FIGURE 1:**

**The seven UN Trust Fund grantee organizations included in this Synthesis Review**



### 1.3. Conceptual framework

**Descriptions of training in the literature vary:** from “programs that use training to improve awareness, knowledge, and/or skills related to VAWG among a group of individuals” (Arango et al., 2014) to “a series of educational meetings or workshops with targeted groups of individuals” (Ellsberg et al., 2014). Definitions of training can describe the nature of the programme, such as a workshop, or skills-based training.<sup>2</sup> This focuses on

the practical aspect, the activity, which is rolled out to an individual or a group, with expectations of outputs and outcomes from the activity.

**Training is much more than the activity if we think about its intent.** A second group of definitions focus on training as a strategy, thus highlighting its strategic characteristics, such as training to achieve a change in behaviour, a transformation of mindsets or a shift in social norms. These are associated with a range of objectives,

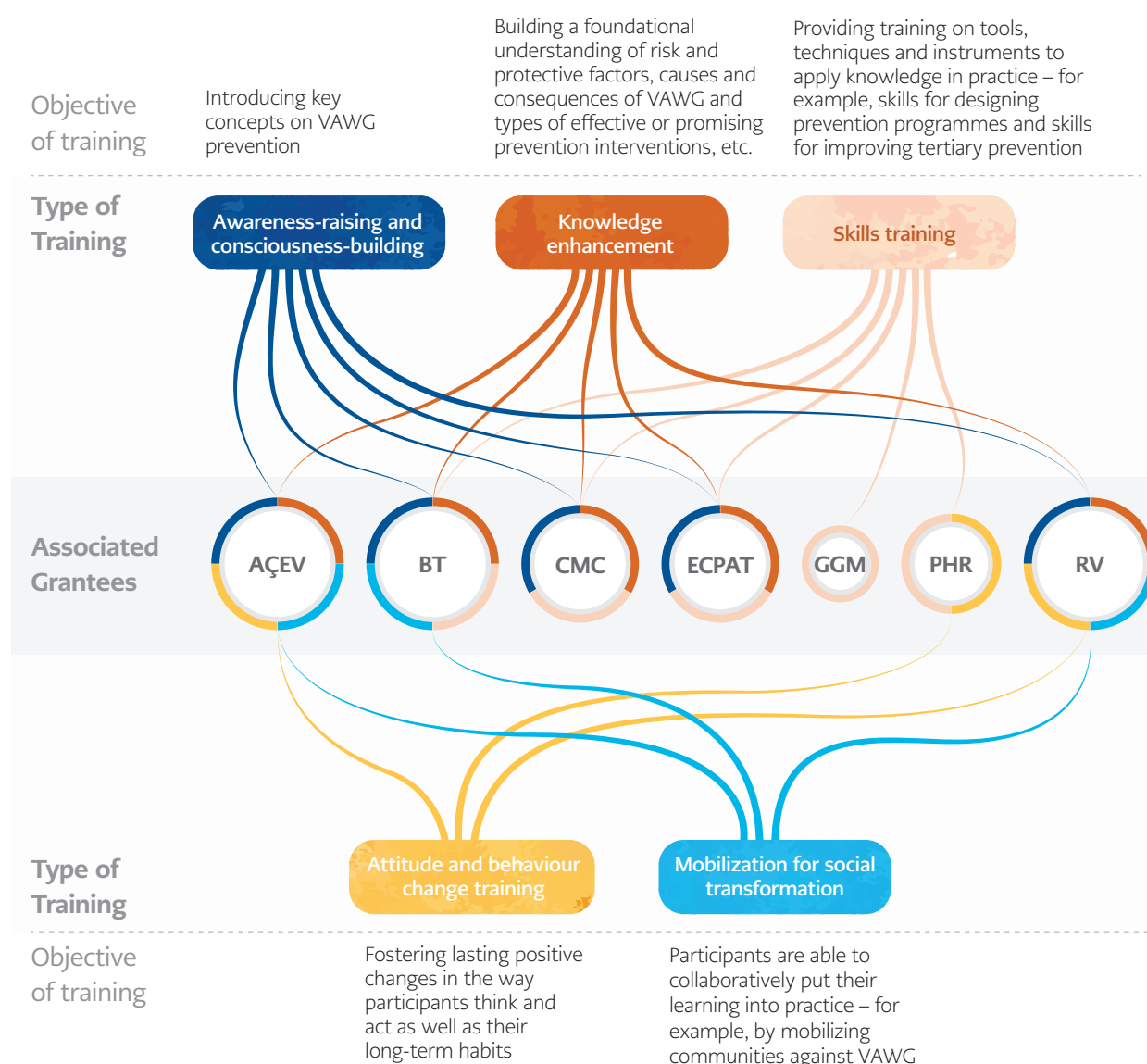
<sup>2</sup> Often, project plans include training under terms such as “sensitization” and “awareness-raising”, and what is involved depends on how organizations describe the various training-related activities in their intervention plans. In discussions with grantee organizations, one pointed out that “capacity-strengthening” is commonly used to refer to components in which training is the core approach. Perhaps, to strengthen the case for training as a strategy, it would help to create a broad lexicon to encourage more consistent use of these terms.

such as “capacity-building”, “awareness-raising on VAWG” or “competency building” and can be either focused on organizational/staff development or embedded as a programme component. Training therefore has a dual utility; both as a tool and as a strategy.

**Training on VAWG prevention that seeks to change behaviours should be designed to nudge participants to be self-critical as they unpack what gender and violence mean to them and examine what kind of violence plays out how around them and in their society.** This process allows them to engage and develop skills to take

action with empathy and solidarity with their peers and community as the process of change unfolds (Bartel, 2018). The UN Women Training Centre identifies **five categories of training**. These trace the trajectory of learning and unlearning, beginning with awareness-raising and progressing to skills-training that can unlock a certain sense of agency and short-term changes in behaviour that can then be amplified into shifts in norms (see Figure 1). This typology is presented below and includes examples of how it could map onto the VAWG prevention interventions included in this synthesis review.

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Mapping training typologies to the interventions**





Adapted from UN Women, 2016b. BT, Breakthrough Trust; RV, Raising Voices.

**The following section presents the findings from practice based knowledge (PBK) of these seven CSOs and practitioners on training.** These findings emerged from the PBK embedded in project documentation and through discussions with the grantees on their

perspectives on training in focus group discussions. Therefore, it is the PBK that has guided the framework and structure of this review. A rich picture has emerged of certain facets of trainings across their lifecycle that have been strengthened and improved by practitioner experiences.



Forensic training being undertaken to document sexual violence evidence. Credit: Claudia Rader/Physicians for Human Rights (Kenya and DRC)

## 2. FINDINGS

Seven themes emerged from the PBK and are presented in this section. The first highlights the importance of designing training appropriately so that it is effective. The second focuses on making the training process inclusive and safe so that it supports learning. The third pertains to training tools and resources that support training and how CSOs train their teams to effectively use multimedia. The fourth examines the unintended and intended consequences of creating networks and communities of practice around training activities for the benefit of projects. The fifth covers the importance of training wider sets of stakeholders for behaviour change following a multisectoral approach. The sixth theme describes lessons on how to ensure training leads to sustainable and scalable results, and the final theme presents findings on training in the context of COVID-19 and how CSOs have adapted their training to respond to the circumstances of the pandemic.

### 2.1. The importance of design in training for VAWG prevention

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on training offers evidence on a few important design aspects that can make training more effective in VAWG prevention. Recommendations from existing evidence focus on the importance of designing training that is **intentional and context-appropriate** (in relation to the real-life conditions of participants), and one way to achieve this is by involving key stakeholders in the design of the training or training material (Bartel, 2018; CUSP, 2018; Biradavolu et al., 2020). In fact, the World Health Organization and UN Women RESPECT framework identifies four important steps that are crucial for building context-specific training: (i) beginning with clear and in-depth contextual analysis and research on the specific contextual norms and attitudes, (ii) ensuring the support of key organizations, (iii) taking a positive approach to norm and behaviour change that can be effected at a societal level and (iv) working on

activities that are transformative and that do not rely on stand-alone or single activities (UN Women and Social Development Direct, 2020).

Training is not just given to external stakeholders; it can also be provided internally to CSO and programme staff. Indeed, in evidence on what works in VAWG prevention, staff training was a consistent feature in the more effective programmes (Jewkes et al., 2020). The literature further emphasizes the role of project implementers: in this case, the trainers and facilitators who give training. Trainers and facilitators need to understand the goals of the training (including the larger goal that the training hopes to achieve) and they need to understand the methodology used (why the approach has been chosen) (Bartel, 2018). Training staff or activists who represent the programmes serve two purposes: they trigger an internal reflexive process, so that they can critically deepen their understanding of the issues of violence against women, gender and human rights, as well as deepening their understanding of the pedagogy, and the use of supporting materials and toolkits in the projects and building their own skills so that they can effectively practice their work in their communities. The literature on the practice also advise that effective trainers are those who have experienced the training as participants first (UN Women and Social Development Direct, 2019).

Much of the PBK on the effectiveness of training programmes highlights the importance of the design phase. All the grantee organizations pointed out that the design and deployment of training in VAWG-prevention-focused projects is complex, and CSOs like them need to have a deep understanding of how to adapt training methodologies to the local context and the communities in which they work. In the evidence on the design of training, recommendations focus on training that is intentional and context-appropriate (in relation to the real-life conditions of participants). All these complexities, when unpacked, affect the choices that CSOs make in designing their specific interventions.

For example, depending on the desired outcome of the strategy (skill development, outreach, building social capital, strengthening the agency of survivors, awareness-raising, etc.) and the specific community or subgroup that is being targeted (men, youth activists, survivors of violence, the media, service providers, etc.), CSOs stated that training can take different forms. These can range from training of trainers (ToT) models to working closely with specific community groups and using mentoring as a supplement to training. CSOs may also choose to use different mediums or platforms for communication. Some training components have effectively integrated the use of multimedia and digital platforms; others require in-person engagement.

Individuals who carry the implementation of VAWG prevention projects on their shoulders, be they community activists, community members, programme stakeholders or trainers, typically receive some form of training to assist them in their work. Their understanding of what success means and how to get there is important and is a pertinent theme that also emerges from the PBK.

**In discussions with grantees and in the PBK in project documentation, there was a clear emphasis on the importance of ensuring that the project implementers are themselves trained prior to project implementation.**

Some of the interventions studied in this synthesis review highlighted the challenges that programme staff or programme representatives from the community may face when implementing projects that question social norms in society. This is especially important when working with individuals who are embedded in their communities, because many of the individuals (if not all) in this group come from a community in which they are expected to both work and drive processes of change. They can at first have the same normative expectations and have been socialized in the same context, so if they are to engage with their peers to encourage social norm change, they themselves need to be supported in their own internal processes of reflection. Grantees pointed out that these facilitators need to be seen by the communities as upholding the values they are committed to imparting. For more information on the qualities of a skilled facilitator, see Bartel (2018).

For example, in community mobilization projects such as the SASA! project by Raising Voices, training was delivered to support and accompany the community activists so that they were empowered and had the skills needed to do their work. Their training followed the SASA! methodology:

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*It tries to be aspirational. It tries to really promote and prompt critical thinking and consciousness-raising. So in a way it is like the community activists staying a step ahead of the community itself. [They] need to really understand the SASA! materials, but also go through their own kind of change process so that they can better facilitate and support that work at the community level. Because the community activists ... are women and men who live and work in and are part of the communities where they are facilitating activities. (Raising Voices, interview, 18 February 2021)*

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A similar important lesson that emerged from AÇEV's experience in Turkey was that the values of individual trainers do not necessarily automatically align with the values of the institution or the project. If trainers are appointed to design and deliver training, and then support and mentor the participants, they need to be brought on board. According to the grantees, **this onboarding and ToT and training of staff may often be overlooked (especially in the case of staff), or it may fall under human resource management and not necessarily be seen as an issue that programme management should be concerned with.** Yet this onboarding is critical to ensure alignment with the values of the project and emerges as an important first step. This is a reflexive process akin to what is expected of participants and can take time as individual trainers go through the steps from awareness to internalizing gender equality and then being able to apply it in their work. In AÇEV's case, the programme staff and trainers had to be trained on gender equality and human rights. Recipients of previous training were administered refresher training to ensure that this alignment was consistent.





Survivors of sexual and other violence at Kenya hearing, April 2016 under the PHR project. Credit: PHR

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*Initially, the trainers learned the concepts related to violence against women and gender issues and legal rights. They started to perceive violence and inequalities as unacceptable and changeable. They started changing their own attitudes and behaviours within family and towards their students. In company with the internalization of being equal and nonviolent, they reached the messages of [the] Father Support Programme to the fathers and the mothers. (AÇEV, final evaluation report, p. 2).*

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**In addition to training directed at the particular agents of change in each project, sensitizing secondary stakeholders is critical.** Their willingness to “get on board” can significantly affect the outcomes of these projects. Achieving this alignment is also relevant to other stakeholders in the project. Several of the grantees stated that the process of change that begins with awareness and ends with action to prevent violence against

women was complex and not linear. Various external factors were determinants of this trajectory, such as the responsiveness of service providers or how supportive the larger environment (from the family to the community) was to survivors of violence, the agency of survivors, etc., which in their view posed challenges. For example, Breakthrough Trust noted that the apathy of the service providers vested with responsibility for preventing and responding to violence was particularly challenging.

**This alignment is particularly important when innovative approaches are being introduced.** Raising Voices’ SASA! programme required the programme staff to build relationships with the community activists and to strongly support them in their activities. Staff were expected to invest deeply in the development and support of the community activists, offering continuous feedback and meaningful support. This required them to develop equal and respectful mentoring relationships with the community activists. Many staff members were not used to this way of working. They were used to more formal relationships where they would train

community activists and then take a step back. Partner organizations required technical assistance from Raising Voices to understand this different approach to training, mentoring and relationship-building. A real win is where staff from implementing organizations undergo a personal transformation that makes them more committed and champions for ending VAWG, as reported by Raising Voices in its project documentation.

#### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- CSOs emphasised that before embarking on training activities for behaviour change, project implementers such as trainers and facilitators (especially when they come from the communities they work in) need to receive training to ensure that they uphold the values they are committed to imparting. This also helps build trust with the communities they are embedded in.
- CSOs point out that this training for project implementers may often be overlooked (especially if it concerns programme staff), or it may fall under human resource management and not necessarily be seen as an issue that programme management should be concerned with.
- In addition to training directed at the particular agents of change in each project, training secondary stakeholders to ensure that they “get on board” is critical, because their support can significantly affect the outcomes of these projects.

## 2.2. Designing training to support learning and unlearning trajectories

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The UN Women Training Centre definition of training for gender equality<sup>3</sup> (and by extension, the prevention of violence against women) emphasizes the process of training as “transformative”, because it engages people in the active pursuit of gender equality, step by step, navigating the arc of behaviour change from active awareness to empowerment and action (UN Women, 2016b). It identifies three attributes that training needs to have to be effective: it needs to be **participatory**, and engage participants in an exercise that is **reflexive** and **self-critical** (UN Women, 2016b; Ferguson, 2018).

When viewed through this lens, the attention is focused on the process, favours longer, more extensive and deliberate engagement with participants, and points us to a paradigm of continuous learning, self-questioning and reflection by trainers and trainees alike (UN Women, 2016b).

A longer training period better suits the process of change. While there are a number of behaviour change theories, all map out a phased process of change in individuals and societies. There is some (but growing) literature on behaviour change specifically in some contexts and areas of VAWG, such as interpersonal violence (Chang et al., 2006; Burke et al., 2009). Broadly, all theories describe the process as linear, as individuals move from increased initial awareness to increased agency and action. However, they emphasize that the real process itself is not necessarily linear and that the progression towards change and social norm shift is complex and gradual, as individuals navigate back and forth between stages. Many factors determine shifts in norms, both internal and external (Chang et al., 2006). Therefore, training

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that not all VAWG interventions define their training as training on gender equality. However, PBK from the CSOs included in this brief reflects that they all included some training for gender equality. This definition is presented here because its basic tenets can help in understanding the role of training even in VAWG interventions that focus on prevention.

needs to reflect this fluid process and create spaces for participants to learn at their own pace. A review by Jewkes et al. (2020) of VAWG prevention interventions offers some lessons on the duration and intensity of training that make them most effective. In their study, the more successful interventions **followed a regular schedule of engagement** over a period (longer training components introduced other complexities such as managing and supporting facilitators over a longer period (Jewkes et al., 2020)). In terms of the nature of the training, storytelling has emerged as a way to address VAWG, create agency and encourage self-expression (Ali, 2014), and can be an effective training strategy for VAWG prevention. The use of media such as photography, film and even song to communicate can be transformational, challenge power inequalities and give voice to marginalized women's experiences (Lewin, 2010); yet spaces that use storytelling can also reproduce and reinforce social norms (Brickell and Garrett, 2015).

### *Creating inclusive and safe training spaces*

The literature emphasizes that training should be participatory, but how does that occur in practice? How do CSOs ensure that the training modules they deliver encourage participants to fully participate and engage with the process? A primary lesson from grantees' experiences of training in VAWG prevention **highlights the need to ensure that training spaces do not replicate the power dynamics present in society** – the very power dynamics that prevention of violence efforts aim to shift and dismantle. In the context of training, an important first step is therefore to ensure that the training space does not explicitly or implicitly replicate power inequalities between participants or participants and trainers. This includes **creating training spaces where participants feel safe and feel able to contribute and engage. This can involve aspects ranging from the design of the physical space** (including matters as mundane as the way chairs are placed) so that it is inclusive and safe and makes participants feel comfortable **to the nature of the group of participants, which can either support or stifle participation.**

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*And also asking folks what they might need to feel more comfortable. Do we need translators? Is there someone who is hearing impaired or visually impaired who is going to be in this space that we need to really do our due diligence before setting it up so that when people come, they're welcome, they're included and they're able to participate and we're not inadvertently recreating spaces of power in our spaces. (Raising Voices, interview, 18 February 2021)*

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In the State of Palestine, CMC's original intervention included a series of mixed group workshops with the local community. However, it found that participants were not comfortable participating and sharing their experiences with a group that had both men and women in it. In the mixed group, the men were emboldened, and spoke dismissively of VAWG and the possible experiences of women in their lives, while the women were not comfortable speaking out and preferred to remain silent. It was only after the groups were split by gender that more honest conversations were possible. Participants felt more at ease and were able to ease out of the roles – as mothers, wives, husbands, fathers, etc. – that they felt they had to play.

**At a personal level, training outcomes have documented individual transformations among participants.** These outcomes are reflected in the changes in the way that participants think; for example, this was the case for media graduates in the State of Palestine who were able to understand how gender inequality and instances of VAWG play out in their society. Some participants were able to identify instances of violence in their own lives because of the training.

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*I used to live in peace with my husband. But one day my child was infected by severe illness and stayed in the hospital. While I was so worried about my child, my husband started abusing me. He yelled at me and at home he beat me. I could not recover. I have been abused physiologically. After I received training at CMC which was on women rights, violence*

*against women, and mechanisms of combating it, I have been encouraged to share my experience in violence with CMC project staff who referred me to the trainer. The trainer supported me so much and guided me on how to tackle my problem. I had a calm discussion with my husband and consequently he apologized to me and said he was under a lot of stress due to our child's illness. He said that he will never abuse me again. I do recognize that I became stronger than before and my life has been changed for the better. I learned never to waive my rights at all. (Participant, CMC year 1 annual monitoring report, p. 30)*

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The way in which training is designed also needs thought, particularly to ensure that the process helps participants to engage critically with the subject matter and apply it to their lives. Some grantees used **storytelling as a training strategy**, and they reported **that it was a way to bridge theoretical knowledge to contextually relevant learning**. During workshops with men and women in the State of Palestine, CMC commissioned a documentary that presented the stories of two survivors of violence. The film was screened at workshops held for men and women separately. It immediately captured the minds of the participants and many women spoke about their personal experiences, which led to a fruitful dialogue.

Similarly, Breakthrough Trust offered training on video-based storytelling in its training sessions with youth social change activists. The sessions elicited a good response from the participants and Breakthrough Trust disseminated the films that were made through its channels. In Madagascar, ECPAT worked to create 12 “tales”, stories that carried messages about gender equality, sexual violence and the rights of women and girls and that countered stereotypes about sexual violence. These stories were written and tested in the community before being produced. They were then read out in schools, youth and social centres, and libraries.

**The process of storytelling can also be used to challenge accepted social norms in society.** ECPAT worked closely with the writers and faced pushback from them when they perceived that the stories were “going against Malgache culture”. The first versions of the stories contained narratives that were acceptable:

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*It was often the story of a young girl who dreamed of marrying a prince, who had to be beautiful at all costs, whose happiness lay in sewing and preparing meals with her mother, whose role was to serve her king ... Another anecdote that illustrates the challenges of escaping clichés was the original cover art that the graphic designer suggested for the book on new masculinities. It was a man in a suit and tie with a bossy air of a traditional man! It was only an illustration and could be seen precisely as a way to reach more traditional men and their imagination of men in society, with roles of power and dominance, which could be interesting. At the same time, for some people on the technical committee it seemed like the vision of a “new strong man” who was successful but was not of a man who respected women. (Translated from ECPAT, year 1 annual report, p. 60)*

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ECPAT worked closely with the writers on rewrites, changing the gender of certain characters and navigating around the local sensibilities so as not to offend, but to arrive at a product that was satisfactory to all. The cover artwork was changed.

### ***Aligning the training process with the learning process***

**An important lesson that CSOs shared was that the learning and unlearning process is not linear.** In practice, this process is much more complex. **Training programmes need to support individuals through their learning trajectories.** CSOs stated that individuals oscillate between stages slowly and incrementally and that programmes must be designed to support individuals as they reach turning points in their learning trajectories and move from one stage to another.

One way in which organizations achieve this is by **designing phased training, where the intensity waxes and wanes and the training is combined with support and mentorship.** One of the CSOs asserted that training budgets need to be designed accordingly, because, although it can appear to be more cost-effective to deliver training in one session, it may be less effective. Thus, **the intention should not be to transfer knowledge in one session,**



**but to incrementally work with participants so that the process is sequenced and iterative: participants learn, practice, experience, and build and reinforce their skills.**

There are other ways in which the intensity of the training can be maintained over longer periods, especially when the training needs to reinforce skills over time. In the case of Raising Voices, the community activists would regularly meet and would often participate in practical sessions with role-playing and simulations. These sessions also serve as continuous forms of training and reinforcement of critical skills, such as facilitation skills.

In this regard, PHR also offers a unique model that **encourages deep engagement on a specific issue related to VAWG over broader, multifaceted engagement.** Its programme is designed to engage very deeply with local multisectoral stakeholders on a single issue: the forensic documentation of sexual violence (rather than more generic training on best practices). This deep focus also enabled PHR to do a lot in one specific field, from capacity development to research, advocacy, building networks, and developing tools and resources. The combination of innovative techniques that work in the local context coupled with a commitment to support trainees over longer periods was essential to ensure that the outcomes of the training were sustained over time. **PHR's training was designed to reinforce skills over time through experiential sessions interspersed with periods away during which participants could put their learning into practice in the sector concerned.** This cycle, coupled with expert mentoring, was repeated over a period, allowing PHR to work with the participants to build new skills. One of the innovations of this model was

in its design; the training was not just didactic but applied. PHR made extensive use of experiential training sessions, recreating as far as possible scenarios that the participants would experience in real life. Therefore, participants learned through simulations of potential scenarios with standardized patients; the use of case studies and hands-on learning helped them to go through the steps and motions repeatedly until they mastered the skills needed for forensic documentation.

**While skills training can be carried out in a short time, for participants to address misconceptions, absorb new techniques and methods, and practice them in real life, an intensive, repetitive process was required in which skills were taught and continually reinforced.** In PHR's case, the clinicians, the police and justice professionals had to master a vast amount of new information, highly skilled procedures and techniques, and unlearn certain practices that had become entrenched over time. There is always a limit to an individual's capacity to absorb information; the training was spaced out with enough time for participants to reflect, figure out what they had learned, apply it and return with questions on the practice or feedback. This loop was essential, particularly since PHR worked in resource-constrained contexts. Of course, the use of innovative and novel training techniques must be managed and adapted to local contexts. In many cases in Africa, there are patchy internet connections, poor connectivity and limited resources. From this, another important lesson emerged: **skilled training does not have to be dependent on specific supplies, tools or resources; training is effective when it is adapted to the resources and limitations of local contexts.**



Gender Training. Credit: Samar Abu Al Auof/  
Community Media Center (State of Palestine).

### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- CSOs stress that training spaces should not replicate the power dynamics present in society.
- At a personal level, positive individual transformation has been achieved through training, as documented by CSOs.
- Storytelling is used as a training activity across CSOs as a way to address VAWG, create agency and encourage self-expression. It can challenge self-representation, push back and break down hierarchies, and challenge accepted social norms in society.
- CSOs point out that training programmes should be designed so that they can support individuals as they achieve turning points in their trajectories and move from one stage to another. One way in which organizations achieve this is by designing phased training, where the intensity waxes and wanes and the training is combined with support and mentorship. In particular, where skills-based training is provided, training could be designed to reinforce skills over time through experiential sessions interspersed with periods away during which participants can put their learning into practice in the sector concerned.
- CSOs also stated that training programmes should have a regular schedule of engagement.

## 2.3. Training tools and resources

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There is not enough evidence on how training tools and resources can impact prevention programmes, perhaps reflecting the fact that training tools and resources are ubiquitous. It has been established that the nature of the training – how the training is designed to be delivered – is also important. Existing evidence shows that **training modules need to be structured and have enough supporting resources, such as manuals and toolkits** (Jewkes et al., 2020). Generating documentation and creating resources such as toolkits are important because they can help to scale intervention activities to new partners, new geographies and new stakeholders.

**Creating documentation and generating knowledge are especially important in advocacy contexts, where they can “become the campaign material of tomorrow”** (Breakthrough Trust, Interview). In the interviews, CSOs said that they had developed tools and resources to support their training components. This finding was also supported by the PBK. In this section, some of the salient lessons from practice on the use of these tools in interventions (from stories and films to manuals and documentation, digital apps and social media) are considered. The first subsection addresses the use of toolkits, manuals and documentation. The second covers CSO training in using multimedia and social media.

### Toolkits, manuals and documentation

Documenting the content of training programmes helps to institutionalize training. Lexicons, procedural manuals and documents are institutional mechanisms that can sustain project results beyond the scope of the intervention, as these documents create a standardized language that professionals can follow and use in their work.

**The experience of many of the organizations has been that all these assets – toolkits, manuals and lexicons – are effective when they are not designed to be ancillary to the training or capacity-building but rather are placed at the heart of the intervention.** An example would be assets that are created with the objective of



knowledge management and are distributed in parallel with the provision of training sessions; **it is better and more effective when these training tools are central to the training process itself and when the resources that are created are tied to the training** – they should be introduced in the sessions and participants should be shown how to use them and include them in their work. In PHR's experience, it received feedback from its participants that a lexicon of forensic and medical terms assisted them as they presented and submitted forensic documentation. This lexicon, *Common Medical Terms Concerning Sexual Violence*, was originally drafted in French (for professionals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo); it was then translated into other national languages (Swahili and Lingala) and then into English (for stakeholders in Kenya). Individuals from all the different sectors – clinicians, law enforcement officials, judges and magistrates – had access to this document, and this improved the willingness of legal professionals to engage more deeply in the prosecution of sexual violence crimes and improved cross-team relationships between doctors, law enforcement and legal professionals.

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*One magistrate described, “... we don’t bother them much because when we don’t understand the document we just open – we open the lexicon, and we are clarified and we don’t call them for that.” Legal professionals in DRC [the Democratic Republic of the Congo] demonstrate their commitment to behaviour change by teaching lessons learned from PHR trainings to other colleagues, one DRC attorney said: “We’ve since organized a workshop with 30 magistrates and invited one of our local medical colleagues from the workshop to speak to us about medical evidence and psycho-social care of victims of sexual violence.” (PHR, results and activity report, p. 15)*

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**A further lesson that emerges is on adaptation.** As pointed out earlier, all training material has to be adapted to local contexts. This is vital but time consuming because it necessitates testing, revisions and feedback at every step. These have associated real-time costs and need to be considered.

### **Training civil society organizations to use multimedia and social media**

Some of the CSOs included in this synthesis review also trained their project implementers on how to use social media as a tool to initiate conversations with communities on violence. The use of media (and now social media) is an effective tool to raise public awareness and generate momentum around certain issues. For example, mass media has been very effectively used in public health campaigns (Wakefield et al., 2010).

Community sensitization campaigns, social marketing campaigns and “edutainment” use mass communication media (television, radio, advertisements, posters, etc.) to raise awareness in the community on VAWG and to inform the wider population on services and processes (medical, legal, etc.) that are available to survivors of violence. Most of these campaigns are **broadcast** in nature, a one-way method of disseminating information. Digital interventions (e.g. social media campaigns), on the other hand, are not necessarily one-way. They offer the broader public ways to engage with social themes and can encourage people to actively participate in the cause. The widespread use of smartphones and cheap data in many countries makes social media an attractive platform for campaigns. WhatsApp, for example, is one of the most popular free messaging services (it had 340 million users in India in 2019, and over 97 per cent of smartphone users in Kenya had the app) (Iqbal, 2021). There are many ways in which social media can be leveraged for development campaigns, including bloggers’ meets to blogathons, tweetathons, hackathons, closed Facebook group discussions with specific community groups, online social media competitions, newsletters, social media storms and trending hashtags, among others. They have the potential to capture the minds of a large audience.

**The use of digital and social media is growing in the gender space, but there is insufficient evidence on their impact, effectiveness, and their ability to encourage reflection and empowerment on the ground.** However, even grantee organizations pointed to the fact that mapping the impact of a digital media strategy to the impact of interventions is still a challenge. There is also scepticism as to their ability to effect behaviour change, and there is still insufficient evidence on their impact on preventing violence against women, particularly when delivered as stand-alone interventions (Kerr-Wilson et al., 2020).



Nevertheless, many CSOs train their teams on using social media effectively to communicate on VAWG prevention. The use of multimedia and social media is at the heart of many of Breakthrough Trust's interventions in India, and **multimedia training** is a central component of its mobilization strategy that mobilized youth activists across the country. For example, its youth activists were given two types of training: training on fundamental concepts of gender, human rights and violence, and training on running online campaigns. This proved to be effective, and the trainees contributed significantly to online campaigns and were able to participate in global movements such as One Billion Rising.

In discussions, CSO staff also said that training individuals to create spaces for engagement on VAWG prevention online has been a successful strategy to bolster their on-the-ground (offline) strategies. For example, the online space can be extremely useful for knowledge management to support VAWG prevention, and information that is collated online can bring visibility to critical issues that are not capturing the attention of the public. In Guatemala, one of GGM's innovations has been to publish information online to support its on-the-ground activities. A set of videos that it produced was very well received. It also created an online database documenting cases of violence. GGM reported that there was a vicious cycle of poor reporting on sexual harassment and violence against women and a declining interest in these issues in the country and that the state was not being held accountable. GGM also reported that the state was implementing misinformation campaigns to deflect from the severity of the issue. Guatemala also did not have a state registry system that monitored this kind of data. There was clear lack of available data (e.g. data on causes of violent deaths and femicides). GGM's strategy was to collate all the gender-based violence data that was available and create data narratives that demonstrated these alarming trends in a manner that could be easily consumed by the public. In Breakthrough Trust's case, it trained its activists to run innovative online campaigns (e.g. a campaign using the hashtag #askingforit) that were central to its intervention and ran in parallel with the activities planned on the ground.

However, CSOs also cautioned that the use of social media is not a silver bullet and cannot replace work

on the ground. Connecting the online campaigns with the on-the-ground campaigns was a real challenge for many organizations, and training for online activities ran in parallel with training on the ground and did not necessarily bridge this gap.

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*I think what we got as a learning is that on-ground programming or activities can be broadcast online with the sole purpose of informing your online audience. But if we want to engage an audience online on a specific issue then we have to create specific communication which is targeted at them to motivate them for engagement. (Breakthrough Trust, interview, 22 February 2021)*

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There are two important lessons that emerge from the PBK: (i) that online platforms cannot do everything; there are certain attributes (awareness-building, reaching and engaging specific audiences and developing certain kinds of conversations) that are distinct to each platform and (ii) online messaging has to be designed specifically for an online audience and cannot simply be replicated from what is used on the ground. Nevertheless, one gap that CSO staff identified was in measuring the impact of digital tools on VAWG prevention. CSOs should be trained in measuring the impact of digital tools and, although there may be little research in the VAWG prevention space on this, CSOs can take inspiration from methodologies that have been developed for social media and marketing. One CSO realized that it had not allocated specific resources to training any of its staff or paying for a service to monitor online impact.

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#### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Grantees argued that manuals, lexicons, toolkits, apps and websites help codify best practices, streamline procedures and create an institutional history, but that they should be put together collaboratively with stakeholders and should be embedded in the training sessions.
- CSOs train their project implementers on using digital tools effectively, but there is a lack of training on measuring their impact.



## 2.4. Networks and communities of practice

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The contributions of formal and informal learning spaces to an individual's learning pathway have been extensively studied (Wenger, 1998; Boud and Middleton, 2003; Oblinger and Lippincott, 2006). The act of learning is a social one, and communities of practice help to generate shared knowledge and shared professional identities (Wenger, 1998). However, although learning spaces (e.g. training spaces) are present in most prevention programmes, there is not much literature on the impact of the informal spaces that appear during VAWG prevention interventions. This is where PBK can offer significant learning.

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*I think as an organization we really just think that for the work to become embedded, and for people to feel supported, [training] is more of a process of accompaniment, mentorship, training and mutual learning. (Interview with one of the grantee organizations, 22 February 2021)*

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**A common result of training programmes is the network effects that they create.** When people and organizations train together, they invariably create small spaces for practice where shared learning is fostered. These shared experiences are valuable because they create spaces for co-learning, for sharing of experiences and for building a support network. One CSO found that great value lay in networking “sideways” with peers. Many of the CSOs in this synthesis review echoed this learning. By bringing together diverse groups of individuals or organizations committed to a common approach to VAWG prevention, CSOs can create small communities of practice whose diverse approaches are brought together by the one model they all practice. **Yet a challenge for many training interventions is the temporary nature of these spaces**, as they can quickly die out at the end of the training programme.

For phased training – that is, training sessions that are split up and delivered over a period – breaks between sessions can affect the flow of the training programme. For example, these gaps can break the flow of the learning process. On the other hand, as one partner organization pointed out, when designed well, these breaks offer opportunities for participants to go out and practice what they have learned.

**This is where these spaces and networks can be of value. If these spaces can be nurtured, participants can continue the processes of learning and sharing their experiences beyond the end of the training sessions – they can serve as effective bridges between sessions that are staggered over time.** The networks also become venues for feedback, which are useful for practitioners and CSOs to be more responsive and to learn. For example, these feedback loops in the PHR projects resulted in the MediCapt app development process, in demand for advanced training (e.g. paediatric training), and in the development of tools and resources such as the lexicon on forensic terminology.

These spaces can be resource intensive, and not all CSOs may have the capacity to run them. How can organizations set up these spaces to operate independently? Some of the CSOs included in this brief reported that **instant messaging and social media tools can be especially useful in creating peer learning networks**, especially in situations where multi-sector participants or a diverse group of participants train together. However, social media is a big bucket of platforms and apps, **and the platform or app chosen needs to be the most appropriate one for the objectives** (in this case, networking and peer support). Facebook, for example, is a useful tool for sharing and discussing issues; in Breakthrough Trust's project in India, at the end of training provided to journalists in the state of Uttar Pradesh, a participant created a Facebook group for information-sharing and connecting post-training.

Keeping in mind the limited access to data and internet connectivity in some field sites, PHR worked with the training participants to set up communication groups on existing and commonly used platforms: WhatsApp, Facebook and Google Groups. In Kenya, participants in a PHR training programme set up a WhatsApp group where they took their lessons online: they subsequently used the group to share information on their cases and

investigation techniques, check on procedures and discuss collectively. This group proved to be quite successful, and peers were able to support each other remotely and instantly. Members of these groups were more amenable to communicating online, expressing “a far greater willingness to pick up the phone and ask for support or information from colleagues in other sectors that they were prior to joining the network”.<sup>4</sup>

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*One clinician explained: “Now, I can go see the prosecutor, or the First President, the boss of the court here, without being frustrated, because as a doctor, we have been members of the same team, partaking in the same training. This network helps us to deepen our relationship.” (PHR, narrative report 2019, p. 6)*

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**Online networks such as those mentioned previously also address another concern.** Given the high level of investment of a training programme in its trainees, training them over months, there is always a risk that people will move on or leave their positions (e.g. if they are posted elsewhere or if they take up other opportunities). In PHR’s project, people who physically left the intervention sites were still able to support their peers through these WhatsApp groups.

**Social media and messaging apps work on a very personal level because the individual is the “unit”.** People are connected to each other, not the organizations they belong to. When creating spaces for institutional peer learning, these apps may not be as effective. For example, in Raising Voice’s case, where over 65 organizations use the SASA! model, communities of practice have organically emerged around groups of organizations. Continuing to support organizations beyond the in-person training is important. As the nodal organization, Raising Voices connects partners to shared online resources and supports discussions on practice. In PHR’s intervention, support was provided for participants to improve their work in the context of their professions or careers and it was specific and skills-based. Motivating

community volunteers who may need broader support can pose different challenges.

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#### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- CSOs found that maintaining momentum given the temporary nature of the training spaces was a challenge.
- CSOs found that the networks and informal shared spaces that emerge around training can be valuable spaces where participants can continue the process of learning and sharing their experiences beyond the end of the training sessions. These spaces serve as effective bridges between sessions that are staggered over time.
- CSOs pointed out that social media and messaging apps and platforms can create effective virtual spaces for learning and sharing, but the choice of app or platform should be made based on the objectives of the group or space.
- The CSOs included in this brief also pointed out that social media and messaging apps work on a very personal level because the individual is the “unit”. People are connected to each other, not the organizations they belong to. When creating spaces for institutional peer learning, these apps may not be as effective.

## 2.5. Training wider sets of stakeholders in the intervention ecosystem

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#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Evidence from various prevention programmes points to the effectiveness of strategies that engage multiple stakeholders in changing behaviours (Bott et al., 2004; Keesbury et al., 2012; Arango et al., 2014; Ellsberg et al., 2014). In particular, community mobilization approaches tend to involve a wide range of communities and sectors (Arango et al., 2014;

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4 PHR, final evaluation report (2019), p. 6.

Ellsberg et al., 2014). Multisectoral training approaches can help to bridge gaps and ensure alignment between different stakeholders (Delage and Perrier, 2020). Some stakeholders can affect the way in which communities understand VAWG. In particular, the press and the media are important stakeholders because their framing of VAWG can greatly influence public perception (Easteal et al., 2015; Sutherland et al., 2016). However, effective training can improve VAWG reportage (Easteal et al., 2021).

### **Multisectoral approaches to training**

While many of the training programmes described in this section come from projects that are more focused on service delivery or tertiary prevention (e.g. the PHR interventions) and may appear to be less relevant to violence prevention, their experiences can inform primary prevention training, for example by offering insights into how to manage multisectoral training, account for turnover and changes in staff, manage expectations and build trust within teams. In addition, even for prevention work, as mentioned earlier, getting other stakeholders (e.g. stakeholders who provide services) on board is critical, and their willingness to support the project can affect the outcomes of projects. For these reasons, training with these stakeholders for improved responses is included.

In some of the projects included in this section, participants had to first build a sense of trust in the process before they could begin any training. In the project implemented by PHR in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Kenya, the different groups of stakeholders – doctors, law enforcement and legal professionals – entered the programme with a sense of antagonism towards each other, which could be the result of insufficient opportunities and incentives for prior collaboration between the three groups. Often, managing the dynamics between different stakeholders who need to work collaboratively, but in practice are professionally siloed, can be a challenge.

One of the innovative ways in which PHR approached this was to train all stakeholders together. This cross-sector training helped to break down these barriers and hierarchies and create a more conducive space for support and learning. The focus of the training also became the

work that all the groups shared – dealing with forensic evidence on sexual violence cases.

**PHR reported changes in power dynamics between the different service providers** (e.g. instances of increased communication between professionals, such as doctors and legal professionals), and a willingness to engage with their peers “across borders”. Earlier, stakeholder groups were more defensive of their responsibilities, and the shift from a fractious relationship to a more collegial one helped to ensure that sexual violence cases were systematically documented, that procedures and terminologies were understood by all parties, that cases were not dismissed in court and that all stakeholders worked collectively to see the cases through all the procedural steps.

**This training also equipped participants with tools to put their learning in action and participate more effectively in their work and in their communities.** Clinicians who participated in training were able to conduct better medical examinations of survivors of violence in accordance with the standards of practice; this helped them to participate better in the legal process and give testimonies in court. The judges were equipped with a lexicon for forensic examination, understood the process of evidence collection better and were able to adjudicate the cases that came to their court. All this decreased the overall friction between the three groups of service providers: clinicians, the police and legal professionals.

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*The best thing that I can say that I received was to work in team. This teamwork was not done before. We were working like a medical body and we knew that this was how it had to be done. But they trained us with police officers but also magistrates and lawyers and we understand that for the collection of proofs regarding forensic data it needed us and these other bodies to work together ... to collect things which are more powerful. (A physician who participated in the PHR training, PHR year 3 narrative report, p. 16)*

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**Such multisectoral training can lead to more trust between stakeholders and better service delivery.** Overall, improving multisectoral service delivery has

a positive effect on VAWG prevention, for example by protecting women and girls from further institutional violence as a result of poor service delivery.

### **Training the media on gender-sensitive reporting**

Working with the media to acquaint them with and **train them on gender-sensitive reporting is a common practice**, and many of the CSOs in this synthesis review worked with journalists. Projects can offer direct training for journalists or can create toolkits on gender reporting that journalists can use to inform their work.

In Madagascar, ECPAT ran sessions with representatives from the media on gender-sensitive reporting. At the end of 10 sessions organized for journalists, ECPAT reported positive changes in its work with respect to VAWG. There was a willingness among the journalists to collectively take on the issue of VAWG and as a result a network of journalists for human rights called the Tsaike Network was formed. For journalists, these training sessions also offered valuable upskilling and specialization in their metier. For example, a journalist from the CMC programme in the State of Palestine was recruited by a radio station to establish a women's programme.

However, care should be taken to assess how familiar the media and journalists are on issues of gender, power and violence. CSOs found that **delivering only skills-based training to them may not suffice if they are not familiar with concepts of gender**. For example, when CMC began training female journalists and media graduates in the State of Palestine, it found that the participants were not familiar with these concepts, and as a result, CMC had to train them on gender and human rights as well as media skills and gender-sensitive reporting.

**Working with the media also requires consistent engagement from the beginning (through training and toolkits) until the end of the process** (when gender stories are published in various media) and with the different stakeholders in a newsroom (journalists, editors and desk heads) who are responsible for articles at various stages of their production. This can be challenging because, while an article may be written by one journalist, it passes through many people before it is published. One experience from Breakthrough Trust illustrates this: during its intervention, it ran workshops for journalists on gender-sensitive reporting, and a media toolkit was developed

and distributed widely among the media fraternity. The toolkit received a good response from journalists, who were able to write articles on violence against women. However, there were reports that their stories were being edited at the management level before they were published. This highlights that, although gender-sensitive toolkits offer a language and data for journalists to use, often challenges can remain at the management level. **Training and outreach must be targeted at all levels in the media, including editors and senior management, and it does not suffice to work only with journalists and reporters.**

#### **KEY TAKE-AWAYS**

- CSOs emphasise the need for greater cross-sector training that can help bring together different sectoral teams who work on cases related to gender-based violence. Such training can build trust and lead to better service delivery.
- It is important to analyse who is to be trained based on the outcomes that the training hopes achieve. For example, conducting a power analysis of stakeholders can help to identify the stakeholders that need training in an organization.
- CSOs also emphasize that, when training the media on gender-sensitive reporting or supporting them with gender toolkits, care should be taken to assess their level of gender awareness. It may not suffice to work only with journalists and reporters. Organizations should try to engage with the management of media houses as well.

## **2.6. Using training to achieve sustainability and scale**

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Cascading models of training, or ToT, have been used in health interventions (Orfaly et al., 2005; Toure et al., 2010; Mormina and Pinder, 2018) and are often deployed to replicate interventions across geographies or to significantly scale up interventions. However, cascading models have been found to be resource



intensive because they require a lot of support and oversight to ensure that they stay true to the original training. ToT that is used in VAWG interventions is not simple to implement, particularly in interventions that target social norms change and/or VAWG prevention (Karalis, 2016; Le Roux and Olivier, 2020).

### Training of trainers

Several CSOs in the sample used ToT as a strategy to expand the geographical reach of the project. In one instance, police officers who were trained by PHR and were then posted out of the project circumscription requested ToT sessions with other police training institutions to mitigate this geographical dispersion. Even in the case of community mobilization programmes, such as the Raising Voices project in Africa, the ToT model was found to be useful in responding to the demand for SASA! Training.

**One of the challenges for many CSOs is in seeing the projects through well after the funding for the initial programme has been exhausted.** The ToT allows local trainers, and in some cases the participants in training, to take ownership of the programme and become trainers. As projects see success, the demand for their programmes grows in intensity and the ToT model allows projects to meet these demands, by scaling beyond the scope of the initial intervention area. This model can also be used to embed training in existing curricula. Over the course of their interventions, both PHR and AÇEV developed a curriculum for certain participants of their programme to train as trainers. The curriculum included subjects such as ethics, human rights, gender, teaching skills, the use of networks and technology, thus teaching them to teach (in the case of PHR).

However, CSOs also echoed the evidence and reported that **even the ToT model has to be closely monitored to ensure that trained partner organizations are able to stay faithful to the original methodology in their contexts.**<sup>5</sup> The training needs to impress on partner organizations the intensity of the engagement, many of the organizations may not be accustomed to specific approaches and some level of monitoring by the parent organization is required and advised. In AÇEV's interventions, it relied on various

combinations of trainer training, and regular refresher training for trainers and supervision and monitoring of trainers during sessions are ways in which projects can maintain levels of quality over longer periods. AÇEV regularly included refresher training for its trainers and followed a method of observation of their sessions to ensure that the training was delivered properly.

### Scaling by training partner organizations

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*One of our organizational values is to be agile and responsive, and we try to hold to that truth in the way we work with partners. (Interview with a grantee organization, 22 February 2021)*

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Training also becomes useful when projects are to be scaled. When projects scale across geographies and settings and with a diverse set of partner organizations – that is, **organizations that partner with the core CSO to scale the project to new contexts or geographies** – it is inevitable, and essential, that the core model is adaptable. Finding this balance between the adaptation and the core model is important, whether it is the SASA! approach (in the case of Raising Voices) or forensic documentation (in the case of PHR); the adaptations depend on the local context.

**While some VAWG prevention projects are designed from the beginning for their specific context, many others are adaptations of existing models from other countries or regions, and this “legacy” can influence the way in which they are locally adapted.** Training can serve as an effective bridge between the original intervention and its local adaptations.

For example, the first level of training may be delivered by the parent organization in a centralized location. The second level of training would then be delivered in local hubs that focus on local adaptations and can be tailored to needs: whether partner organizations need intensive training on the themes and concepts of the programme, or whether training can focus on specific aspects, such as

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5 The question of adaptation is addressed more deeply in a separate synthesis review.

deepening understanding of VAWG prevention, or skills-based training on particular topics.

**As models of interventions evolve and adapt, one aspect of the project design that should remain consistent is the “pre-training”.** This phase lays the foundation for the work and carrying out the methodology, and a lot of this is predicated on the internal organizational culture of the CSO. Therefore, staff development and making sure that all programme staff are on board and aligned with the values of the methodology is particularly important. “Change starts from within” is a commonly used phrase, but it still holds true, especially when organizations must manage adaptations that stay true to the essential values of the original methodology. In that sense, while different organizations bring their own approaches and lenses, achieving alignment between them is imperative to ensure that the adaptations are successful and meaningful.

For example, the SASA! projects adapted the original model from Uganda to different geographies across Africa, providing technical assistance to partner organizations. Many of their partners, while working in the VAWG prevention space, were new to the SASA! approach; each also had their own approaches – some focused on community mobilization, others were response oriented and worked less on prevention, or worked on other aspects of prevention. The annual training and visits given to partner staff were useful in fostering a shared understanding of violence against women through the lens of power and enabled them to work more effectively in their communities. Raising Voices utilized a mix of remote technical assistance, visits that included centralized, intensive training at Raising Voices learning centres and exchange visits. A third layer of training on the toolkit and materials, on how to monitor and evaluate the model was also given.

**The objective of training partner organizations remains similar to the objectives of training individuals: to use the training process to provoke a reflexive experience for participants** (here, as representatives of their organizations) that encourages them to question, unpack and engage with the core themes and concepts of the programme. Much like training individuals, creating networks is important for ensuring sustainability of learning, even with organizations. By bringing together diverse organizations committed to a common approach

to VAWG prevention, parent organizations can train their partner organizations to serve as spokes, while they remain the central hub for the model. In this way, the CSOs can support the emergence of regional hubs that can then become subnodes in the network for support, training and knowledge dissemination. In the SASA! project, there was an increasing demand for technical assistance in adapting the SASA! approach to other African contexts. Adaptations of this kind are resource and time intensive, can be complex and need to be planned from the outset. Training (and programme material) needs to be adapted to suit local contexts, and this includes not just translation but appropriate contextualisation to make sure that the approaches are relevant. In addition, CSOs point out that adaptations should be prepared with the participation of the local communities.

In the SASA! example, Raising Voices was able to connect its new partners to existing ones – for example, an international NGO in a francophone country shared its SASA! training material in French with other francophone organizations in the region. These unexpected connections highlight how these communities of practice can encourage partner organizations to support one another, and how partner organizations can potentially take leading roles in sustaining further adaptations down the road.

#### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Using cascading models of training to scale up training in VAWG interventions is complex and requires intense monitoring to ensure fidelity to the original training.
- CSOs use a combination of ToT and refresher training to monitor and supervise the quality of the ToT.
- Training partner organizations on intervention methodologies can be an effective pathway for scaling up interventions, and hub and spoke models have been used to adapt training to diverse geographies and contexts. However, CSOs caution that there must be care and continuous engagement to ensure that adaptations of projects stay faithful to the core original methodology.

## 2.7. The impact of COVID-19 on training

### LITERATURE REVIEW

COVID-19 has significantly affected prevention programming; in particular, training of key tertiary prevention personnel has been negatively affected (Majumdar and Wood, 2020). The retreat from physical spaces has also given rise to other forms of violence against women, in particular violence in digital spaces and violence using internet technology have been documented during the pandemic (Jatmiko et al., 2020). It is known that face-to-face training has been affected because of the pandemic, and many of the interventions included in this review had to adapt their programming significantly. Some of their learning from these recent experiences is shared below.

While the UN Trust Fund support for the partner organizations in this synthesis review ended prior to the pandemic, they shared lessons on how they have had to adapt their training during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the grantee organizations were forced to halt or temporarily suspend their work when the COVID-19 pandemic began. With no indication of when the pandemic would end, the early months of the pandemic were challenging for them, especially those that ran in-person programmes.

### Virtual support and online adaptation

Some of the grantee organizations were able to keep their communication channels open with their stakeholders (many of whom were halfway through programmes that were being run). The lengthy duration of the pandemic pushed organizations to adapt their programmes to semi-online/remote methodologies and bring digital tools into the core of their work. They used a diverse range of technologies to continue their work: some set up Zoom, Google Meet or Skype sessions; others made videos and resources that could be shared remotely or through communication apps, and others even used group or conference telephone services to reach out to their stakeholders. **In most cases, training continued**

**online.** Significant resources were required to adapt their programmes (including training) to virtual spaces.

PHR's experience of working in public health and in crisis contexts was an advantage in that it was able to understand the public health consequences of COVID-19 early on. Several of its training sessions were moved online, and where it was constrained by internet connectivity, it was able to make videos that were shared through its networks.

AÇEV leveraged WhatsApp groups and the trainers were able to support their father cohorts remotely, sending them activities and weekly summaries to do. This generated a new online dynamic between the father participants, who began sharing photographs and videos with each other.

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*And then we started to think about a more sustainable way to support fathers, because COVID was not going away and it was getting worse and worse. So we came up with a new implementation model called “father meetings” that we are currently implementing. It serves the purpose of strengthening the households that are in need, maintaining the well-being and supporting the development of children in needy households. Held over a package sent to the participant fathers, father meetings are carried out with weekly video-sharing meetings over WhatsApp or Zoom. In the package, along with content that reinforces parenting skills with texts and activities, there are other materials like games and books that will support both the conversation and interaction between parents and children. Fathers also receive a weekly internet package to cover their requirement of internet data to ensure their participation. COVID has been hard, but we have tackled this period. Feedback coming from the field has been very positive. (AÇEV, interview, 22 February 2021)*

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**Some of the organizations pointed out the advantages of the online model during the pandemic.** Online

sessions were more cost-effective because they could bring together many participants at a very low cost. Had there been physical sessions, there would have been greater costs: rental of space, catering, supplies, travel and accommodation, and per diems. The online sessions were also able to “get more people in the same space”, because participants were not necessarily restricted by their access or their mobility. This meant that more people who typically would have faced obstacles in physically attending the sessions (e.g. women who may have faced limitations on their ability to travel) were able to join in. Some sessions were more gender equitable, in this sense.

**On the other hand, the online sessions introduced new challenges.** In particular, the stark digital divide that still exists in society. There are still significant barriers to internet use, including differential access to the internet, varying levels of mobile/internet penetration across geographies and lack of use of local languages online. This divide is an emerging area of research, and it highlights the varying levels of confidence people have about acting and participating online, as well as the different cultural experiences of the internet (Omidyar Network India, 2019).

**Nearly all the organizations spoke about the new dynamics that occur online. One of the big disadvantages of conducting online or remote training has been that it is harder to foster a sense of shared learning between participants.** In physical training sessions, a lot of the bonding happens on the sidelines during tea and coffee breaks when people come together to learn, converse and build relationships. It is also harder to train on practical aspects such as medical examinations online. The experiential element of the training is lost because, when delivered online, training can lose some of its dynamism and become more didactic. Organizations need to have – and may not have – the resources and support to design effectively for this space.

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*We spend so much time trying to foster and promote a brave space or a safe space ... that is very hard to do online. And so people, even if they're physically present, aren't always, you know, engaging to the same extent. And I think honestly it takes a much, a much larger amount of*

*effort and consideration to ... make it participatory and interactive and inclusive and safe than doing that in a physical space, which is hard too. (Raising Voices, interview, 18 February 2021)*

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### **Hyper-local hubs for programmes**

One of the unplanned outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was that participants of some training programmes took the initiative to support the programmes themselves. For example, AÇEV reported on local fatherhood initiatives that emerged from the WhatsApp groups of the Father Support Programme cohorts. Fathers in the programme and fathers who had graduated from the programme and wanted to continue passing on what they had learned formed local groups in their neighbourhoods with other fathers and trainers. These groups evolved by themselves and AÇEV offered support where it could (e.g. in providing training from time to time).

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*And during COVID these formations were kind of doing social media challenges and advocating for fathers to become more involved in the housework and helping out with their spouses ... so basically, they are another voice for us on social media. (AÇEV, interview, 22 February 2021)*

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### **Digital security**

Crises can also provide unexpected opportunities for new avenues of engagement. For example, during the COVID-19 crisis, CMC in the State of Palestine moved its engagement online, and created a programme on digital security for women. Breakthrough Trust reported a similar shift in focus. It stated that, although this is a very new space of engagement for them in VAWG prevention, as more and more people shift to interacting online, it could become an important area of work for it.



### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- CSOs pointed out that strong, deep relationships with the communities proved to be vital for organizations to continue their engagement and support during the pandemic.
- Partner organizations with access to resources were able to adapt their methodologies to online versions. However, partner organizations also stated that challenges still remain in ensuring the participation of all potential participants in online versions of training. There is a digital divide; issues of access, agency and participation in online spaces should be considered.
- As a result of working online and remotely, some organizations were able to adapt and talk about violence against women online and not just in a physical space, and they offered new programmes on digital security.



Murat Kantarcioglu (group leader) and participant fathers to his group at a Father Support Program session. Credit: Olcayto Ezgin/Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) (Turkey)

# 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Training can be a powerful strategic activity in prevention interventions to connect the wider body of knowledge around gender and violence prevention with a process of learning that is embedded in practice. CSOs demonstrated that thoughtfully designed training can support participants to engage in a process of change. However, it should be noted that training design needs to be revisited and reviewed periodically. And, given that training often involves challenges in implementation, a few recommendations are made on training to ensure that it can function as an important prevention pathway.

Rich PBK was gained throughout the training life cycle, with important lessons learned about the impact of carefully designed training modules. CSOs reflected on the nature of interactions, **how training needs to be valued and championed by project implementers**, and how training can create safe spaces for participants to fully engage with the training process. **It is vital for participants to feel that their trainers and these spaces nurture a sense of learning that matches their pace.** Longer-term engagement can therefore be more impactful than short or single-session training.

CSOs reported that one of the highlights of the training programmes was the informal spaces that emerged on the sidelines. These are spaces where networks are forged and relationships are built; however, these are also spaces that tend to be devalued because of their informality. Yet much learning and sharing takes place in them. In discussions, many of the CSOs considered that, as much as **the training itself was important, so were the communities and networks that emerged from being and learning together. They acknowledged their responsibility in nurturing these spaces and relationships.** One of the challenges of the new virtual way of interacting (resulting from the pandemic) has been in replicating these spaces online.

It also emerged that **when training is carried out effectively, the sustainability of the interventions**

**truly rest on the shoulders of the participants.** These stakeholders become the protagonists of the next phase, either in their institutions or in their communities. Especially at times when organizations have to scale back their interactions, such as during the pandemic, which forced a rollback for many, these individuals become the faces of the interventions.

The recommendations are divided into three categories: (i) recommendations for practitioners, (ii) recommendations for donors and policymakers, and (iii) recommendations for researchers in the field of ending VAWG.

## Recommendations for practitioners:

1. Invest in designing training that is participatory and that fosters safe spaces for participants to reflect and learn. Being cognizant of power dynamics is important, as they influence the shape and design of training, from whom to include to how to lead the sessions and where to hold them. Designs should be tested, and facilitators, trainers and programme staff should first be trained themselves so that there is an alignment of values between these key individuals and the programme. These resources and time frames should be built into programme calendars.
2. Design training that works with the resources available in the local context. For example, training programmes designed for high-income countries must be adapted to be suitable and effective in the specific contexts where the training is taking place, and must be designed to work with what is available locally.
3. Design training programmes that support the participants to work at a pace that suits them. Think of training as a process of change. No transformation can happen overnight, and training programmes need to be designed to run at a pace that suits the participants and allows them to build knowledge and develop skills.

Training cycles are effective when they are structured (even free-flowing sessions can be systematic) and create a learning rhythm for the reinforcement of skills over time; ideally, they should be followed up with sustained relationships and mentoring.

4. Organizations should ensure that regular refresher training is conducted, especially for facilitators and trainers.
5. Build in space for feedback from participants. This is especially important, as it offers opportunities to learn, revise, reflect and tailor the programme to the needs expressed. This cycle of feedback also builds trust between communities, key stakeholders and their institutions, and the implementing organizations.
6. Build relationships with key training stakeholders and communities (e.g. government institutions). These relationships can help in championing training, which can sometimes be overlooked.
7. Nurture and build networks that emerge from training: networks of individuals, of partner organizations and of institutions. Collaboration and synergies are important and can help to sustain the outcomes of training.
8. Encourage communities of practice that emerge from training sessions.

## Recommendations for donors and policymakers:

1. Support adequate budgets for designing and piloting training formats and encourage partner organizations to allocate resources and time to testing, design and training of key personnel before the roll-out of the intervention.
2. Support networks of partner organizations and communities of practice that emerge from training. Funders may also consider funding models that are more flexible and that support the intensive nature of training, especially those training programmes that are more complex and are delivered over longer periods.
3. Consider striking a balance between supporting training programmes that emerge from established,

evidence-based methodologies and programmes that are more innovative but less established.

4. Consider funding the capturing and documentation of lessons on training. Although organizations include budgets for training, there can be less of a focus on consolidating lessons from the training itself. Donors should prioritize and encourage monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning around training, so that lessons from work on the front line can be learned.
5. Consider investing in bridging the digital divide, particularly given that the world is increasingly moving online and more and more training spaces are going virtual.

## Further areas of research for the wider research community:

1. More research is required on the how and why of VAWG prevention training. There are several how-to tools, training manuals, etc., available that capture the work of practitioners, and these offer valuable cross-cutting lessons.
2. More research that could support the cross-fertilization of research and lessons, especially between primary and tertiary prevention, is going to be critical going forward.
3. More research is required that explores the dynamics of training, such as on what makes a training programme transformative (as opposed to transferring knowledge); to what extent training as a strategy contributes to VAWG prevention; and if and how online training can nurture a sense of emotional safety or experiential learning.
4. Metrics and measurement of online engagement and activities need more research and study. They cannot be bundled with metrics and measurement methodologies that are used for more typical on-the-ground interventions. Measuring online engagement is a growing area of study, and many market research organizations have a good understanding of social media engagement and reach. What is needed now is a more nuanced understanding of these media and



their effectiveness both in the gender space and in the prevention of violence sub-area of work.

5. As more and more interactions become virtual, there is also a need to explore how VAWG can occur in these online spaces. There is a risk of the same power dynamics replicating themselves online, and therefore more research is needed to understand first the digital divide and how it affects women and girls – the internet is not egalitarian – and second how violence can play out in these virtual spaces.



Social media training. Credit: Samar Abu Al Auof/  
Community Media Center (State of Palestine).



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