



# ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

An Oxfam Guide



OXFAM



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Key Oxfam policy documents and more comprehensive resources, such as the UN WOMEN Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against women and Girls, are listed in the annex.

What is Violence Against Women? Why does it happen? What does it have to do with development? What does Oxfam do to end violence against women? What does it mean to do that work with a transformative approach?

“Ending Violence Against Women: A Guide for Oxfam Staff” is a resource for Oxfam (www.oxfam.org) staff to inform and inspire their work, and to share with partners. It can be read and consulted individually – or used for discussion with peers. The “candid question” and “exercise” boxes offer avenues for such reflexion and discussion. While the guide is directed towards internal Oxfam staff, it is available for external distribution as well.

This booklet was compiled by Michaela Raab. The guide was commissioned by the Oxfam Gender Justice Program Development and Support Group (GJ PDS), which provides operational leadership and support to the development of gender justice programming and the strengthening of gender justice perspectives and processes in affiliate, global, regional and country programmes.

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# WHY DO WE WORK ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

## A Human Rights Violation And A Barrier To Development

Ending violence against women is everyone's responsibility.

-UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON IN AN INTERVIEW ON HIS WORLD-WIDE UNITE CAMPAIGN TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (2010)

Violence against women and girls (VAW) is one of the most rampant human rights violations. According to United Nations estimates, one in three women world-wide has experienced physical or sexual violence because she is a woman<sup>1</sup>. Violence is a major obstacle to women's and girls' development, and to the welfare and development of their communities and societies as a whole.

Several binding human rights treaties prohibit violence against women. Key international treaties are:

- The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- The 1993 African Union Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- The 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of VAW ("Convention of Belém do Pará")
- The 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence
- Three UN Security Council Resolutions (1325, 1820 and 1888) address VAW in armed conflict and women's participation in peace building

In 1993, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women. There have been seminal judgements in international law that remind governments of their responsibility to protect women's and girls' rights. For example, the Campo Algodonero Judgment (2009) of the Inter-American Court found that the Mexican government had violated the rights of three young women and their family by failing to prevent their murder.

Most governments around the world have passed specific national laws to end violence against women, in particular on domestic violence, sexual assault and sexual harassment, forced and child marriage, sex trafficking, female genital cutting/ mutilation (FGC/M), "honor-" and dowry-related crimes, and maltreatment of widows. This rich and growing body of legislation has built the legal and political basis for interventions to end violence against women. However, laws are not used systematically, as societies still condone violence.

### FURTHER READING

A full overview of international and national legislation to end violence against women and girls is available from the UN WOMEN Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls [www.endvawnow.org](http://www.endvawnow.org). Click on "Legislation" for a detailed menu.

Oxfam works to end violence against women because it is a human rights violation and a major obstacle to human development. For effective interventions, we need to define violence against women and understand its main causes.

# WHAT IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

## KEY CONCEPTS

Gender is not about the biological differences between women, men and intersex persons (i.e. people who combine male and female biological features). It is chiefly about the characteristics and roles that societies attribute to women and men respectively. Gender is not “natural” – it is constructed by societies. Violence is the deliberate use of force or power to hurt someone. Hence, gender-based violence is the use of power to enforce gender norms. For example, a husband might beat his wife because his society has brought him up to believe that men must “discipline” disobedient women. In some societies, a mother might have her daughter’s genitals cut because she considers it necessary for a “decent woman”.

## OXFAM SUBSCRIBES TO THE UNITED NATIONS DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

“The term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse,

sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.”

Broader definitions include structural and cultural violence, which limit women and girls in achieving their full potential, both personally and for the whole society. For example, laws or traditions that exclude women from owning land are structural violence. The results of structural and cultural violence can be lethal: for example, girls in South Asia run a much higher risk than boys of dying before they reach the age of five years, among other reasons because their parents tend to give them less nutritious food, health care and attention<sup>2</sup>.

## CANDID QUESTION: IS THERE ALSO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN?

Yes, there is! Many men and boys are beaten, raped, humiliated and discriminated against – most frequently, by other men and boys – to make them feel powerless, or because they behave differently from the way their society imagines “proper men” or “good boys”. However, Oxfam focuses on violence against women and girls, as many more women are affected by gender-based violence than men.

The Oxfam-initiated We Can campaign found situations where men and boys were ridiculed and bullied for being “too soft on their women” or for speaking up against violence. This is why Oxfam’s approach to ending GBV includes initiatives that encourage men and boys to reflect on gender roles and to learn that a man does not need to be violent to be a “real man”.

## WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

Violence against women is an expression of unequal relations between men and women. This power imbalance is deeply rooted in our societies – in virtually all aspects of human life, women and girls are overtly or implicitly considered to be inferior to men and boys. Power imbalance tends to be closely linked to economic dependence, financial insecurity and the expectations societies have of men and women.

**EXERCISE:** Think of the forms of violence against women that are common in your own country. What do they have to do with power and with the expectations of your society from women and men, girls and boys respectively?

Depending on a woman's or a girl's situation, she may be more or less at risk of violence. Intersectional analysis examines the "intersections" of gender-based discrimination with other aspects of women's and girls' lives that may heighten or lower the risk of violence against women. Indigenous women and girls, those living in poverty or in war, and women and girls with disabilities experience different forms of violence that may increase or deepen gender-based violence, and reduce the survivors' chances to get support.

**EXERCISE:** Think of the female population in a place that you know well – it could be an area (for example a district) where Oxfam works, or simply the neighborhood that you live in. Look for differences: who are the women and girls that face more discrimination than others, and what are the reasons? Who are the women and girls that are the least visible, and why? Are there any women who are privileged in some respects, and why?

List the different sources of discrimination or privilege you have found (e.g. "income", "marital status", "age", "skin colour", "caste", "physical ability"). Which of them may increase or reduce the risk of violence, or the chances women and girls can obtain appropriate support in case they experience gender-based violence?

Every woman is unique in terms of her economic situation, history, ethnicity, age, body features, health status, religion, and other aspects of her own identity and the society she is part of. Gender-based discrimination takes different forms for different women, in different contexts, and is not the only source of power imbalance and violence.

## EXAMPLES OF "INTERSECTIONAL" WORK IN OXFAM PROGRAMS

**Indigenous women:** Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres (GGM) employs staff from indigenous groups in their centers, to ensure indigenous women who seek support are well understood and can obtain the services and solidarity they need.

**Women who are in police custody** often face harassment and abuse by male staff. The Yemeni Women's Union (YWU) obtained the establishment of the country's first ever detention centre staffed exclusively by women. Thanks to YWU's legal aid for female detainees, 450 women were released from prison in 2004 and 2005.

**Migrants:** The Southall Black Sisters' campaign aims to protect minority and migrant women in the United Kingdom (UK) who experience domestic violence. It achieved a victory when the UK government announced that from April 2012 women who can demonstrate they have suffered domestic violence would be protected as refugees and allowed to stay in the UK.

**Sex workers** face many risks. The African Sex Worker Alliance informs sex workers on health and human rights, and conducts research and advocacy for sex workers' rights. The alliance also supports sex workers who are members of sexual minorities – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex, men having sex with men, and others.

# WHAT DOES OXFAM DO TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

## A PRIORITY THEME FOR OXFAM

Oxfam envisions a safe and just world where women and girls are in control of their lives and live free from violence. Violence against women must end, because:

- It violates women's and girls' right to a life in safety.
- It causes physical and psychological harm that reduces women's and girls' ability to lead a normal life, obtain the education they need, earn a living, develop their own future and participate in public life. Most survivors of violence against women do not get support in their efforts to overcome the consequences of violence. Dedicated psycho-social, health and legal services tend to be few and far between. Social norms often "blame the victim", i.e. they hold survivors responsible for their ordeal. As a result, many survivors find themselves socially marginalised and debilitated by crippling health conditions such as chronic pain, fistula, severe injuries, or depression.
- It deepens the unequal power relations between women and men, girls and boys. Violence against women, described in the United Nations Declaration (DEVAW) as "one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men", is an obstacle to gender justice. It keeps women and girls from shaping their own future and from contributing to wider social development.

Oxfam has supported a wide spectrum of efforts to end violence against women, including:

- Advocacy for better laws and better enforcement of laws and policies, so that women's rights are enshrined in national legislation and women can safely take legal action. Oxfam supports women's organisations and networks, as well as other organisations that support women's rights, to undertake such advocacy.

- Services to support survivors of violence against women in ways that enable them to take their lives in their own hands. Oxfam funds such services throughout the world, and provides capacity building and networking opportunities.
- Campaigns for change in social norms and behaviour condoning violence against women (for example the norm that husbands and fathers must "discipline" their wives and daughters). Sensitisation meetings, peer education by community volunteers, community theatre, "educational entertainment" on TV and radio, and other mass communication are commonly used in such campaigns.
- Girls' empowerment through dedicated projects and as part of education programs that strengthen girls' capacity to protect themselves and claim their rights.
- Engaging men and boys so that they contribute to ending violence against women.
- Preventing violence against women in Oxfam's humanitarian work. Women's rights are central to Oxfam's protection work in humanitarian crisis response. Oxfam also makes sure women participate in planning and implementing humanitarian interventions.
- "Mainstreaming" VAW prevention into development work, for example by minimising VAW risks in women's economic empowerment programs and in primary education, and by promoting gender equality in all development work.
- Promoting women's leadership for change towards greater equality between women and men ("women's transformative leadership"), to ensure women obtain equal access to resources and opportunities.

All these interventions are based on Oxfam's rights-based and transformative approach.

## A RIGHTS-BASED, TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

Oxfam believes that all human beings are of equal value, and that everyone has fundamental rights that must be upheld at all times. All our work should aim at the universal realisation of human rights; violence against women, like poverty, is a denial of these basic rights.

Oxfam considers a multi-layered approach to be transformational, in that this approach promotes change at individual and collective, legislative-political and social levels.

Oxfam also recognises that there is no simple “one-size-fits-all” solution to end violence: What is appropriate for some women may not be appropriate or sufficient for others. Oxfam has to be careful and flexible to support the best possible solutions in each context.

Transformation means fundamental, lasting changes – not just temporary improvements in some women’s lives. Oxfam believes that ending violence is possible if:

<p>Women and girls learn to end violence in their own lives and to claim their rights</p> <p>= <i>individual empowerment</i></p>	<p>Policies, laws and their implementation prevent and punish VAW, and ensure survivors obtain the support they need</p> <p>= <i>well implemented laws and policies</i></p>
<p>Associations, movements and other social groups defend women’s and girls’ rights to a life in safety</p> <p>= <i>collective empowerment</i></p>	<p>Societies say no to gender-based violence</p> <p>= <i>change in social norms</i></p>

## OXFAM’S TIME-TESTED RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

- Is participatory, recognising that all people, including those living in poverty, have a right to shape their own development and the public decisions that affect them
- Recognises that Oxfam and other development actors are accountable
- Promotes equality and non-discrimination
- Is holistic, recognising that poverty has economic, social, cultural and political causes and effects
- Recognises that rights involve responsibilities by those whose duty it is to enforce laws
- Makes use of existing legal systems, and links up development goals and international human rights law

## EXAMPLE: SURVIVORS WHO PREFER NOT TO USE THE LAW

- World-wide, many survivors of violence against women do not seek police intervention or a court trial, because:
- They are economically dependent on their intimate partner
- Social norms may make it difficult to divorce or to have the violent partner arrested
- Police and judges are corrupt
- In rape cases, the survivor might be rejected by her society if her ordeal is known

Oxfam and its partners respect the survivor’s right to make her own, informed choice.





Sirjana Karki, who has been a Change Maker for 2 years  
*Laura Eldon/Oxfam*

## WHAT DOES “RIGHTS-BASED AND TRANSFORMATIVE” MEAN IN PRACTICE?

### THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS PRESENT KEY ASPECTS OF OXFAM’S WORK TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Oxfam’s rights-based, transformative approach strengthens women and girls in their efforts to end violence, by mobilising their own power and that of others. The examples below show that Oxfam supports women’s empowerment at two levels – individually and collectively.

### EXAMPLES FROM OXFAM PROGRAMS

**Women monitoring the justice system:** In El Salvador, Oxfam supports associations called “ventanas ciudadanas”, whose female members monitor violence against women and women’s rights in their communities. They develop specialized knowledge of the justice system. As local community experts on women’s rights, they advise local authorities on strategies to end violence against women, and follow up on specific cases.

**Women’s organisations advocating for change:** The women’s network Forum Mulher in Mozambique trains community-based organisations on awareness-raising and advocacy on women’s rights, so that they can influence local institutions and participate in national campaigns.

**Women ending harmful practices:** The Ending Harmful Traditional Practices and Violence against women and Girls project by the ORDA (Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara, Ethiopia) has established community conversation groups. Among other topics, these groups discuss female genital cutting (FGM/C) and its harmful consequences for young girls, including the spread of HIV/AIDS. These conversations have convinced women to stop working as traditional “excisors”, i.e. cutting girls’ genitals. An example is Alemitu, a widow who made her living carrying out genital cutting. Alemitu gave up cutting after the community conversations, with the financial support by other group members that enabled her to start a trading business.

Oxfam builds on its long history of supporting women's organisations to strengthen the capacity of women's organisations, their leadership and movement for change through multi-year institutional funding that supports them as a whole, not only specific projects. Oxfam diversifies its partnerships, to include newly emerging and young women's organisations with a rights-based and transformative approach. In parallel, Oxfam develops strategic alliances with other organisations that aim to end violence against women – including organisations led by men, or by both women and men.

**EXERCISE:** Think of a woman or a girl whom you know. If she experienced violence, how could she stop it? Think of her own life history, her special characteristics, her household, her community or communities, her work place or school, government administrations, and the society she lives in: what obstacles would she face at these different levels? And where could she find support and opportunities to take her life in her own hands?

Then, think of a survivor of violence against women who lives in a different situation. Are any of the obstacles and opportunities she faces same as in the previous example? Are there any differences, and why? And how can Oxfam programs help to overcome the obstacles survivors face, and offer opportunities for change?

## TRANSFORMING THE QUALITY OF WORK WITH SURVIVORS

Women's organisations around the world have developed empowering ways to support survivors of violence against women. Yet, specialised support centres and shelters for women and girls are still few and far between. Teachers, medical staff and others who are in contact with VAW survivors often do not know how to deal with violence against women – or do not even recognise it as a problem. Police and justice personnel may be reluctant to take up cases. As a result, many women lose opportunities to escape violence and to rebuild their lives.

Oxfam believes survivors of violence can transform their situations. Therefore, Oxfam:

- Supports organisations that help survivors of violence in empowering ways.
- Supports advocacy for more and better public services, e.g. health clinics and schools, that are safe for women and support survivors in a respectful manner.
- Supports advocacy for better laws that prevent and prohibit VAW, and their enforcement.

## EXAMPLES FROM OXFAM PROGRAMS

**Empowering survivors:** Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres (GGM, in Guatemala) offers counselling, legal aid and shelter to survivors of violence against women. In parallel, GGM has successfully advocated for better government policies to end violence against women.

**Improving police services:** In India, Oxfam has negotiated with police departments to allow trained counsellors to sit in police offices. The counsellors make sure the police officers actually accept and file domestic violence complaints, and advise survivors on support services.

**Legal aid:** The Nigerian organisation BAOBAB for Women's Rights uses customary, statutory and religious law (e.g. Sharia) to find the best legal support and defence for women and girls who experience violence.

**Securing economic support to survivors:** The Palestinian Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) has successfully advocated for the establishment of a national fund to support divorced women and their children. WCLAC is currently a Board Member of the Alimony Fund, as equal partners with the Ministries of Justice, Finance, Social Affairs and Women's Affairs, the highest Sharia Court, and the General Union of Palestinian Women.



Pictures from workbooks of the “We Can” campaign – “patriarchal” (left) vs. “equal” (right) scenes

## TRANSFORMING ATTITUDES AND SOCIAL NORMS

To prevent violence, women and men must know about women’s human rights and treat each other as equals. To support change in attitudes and social norms, Oxfam and its partners:

- Build alliances that bring together men and women from many sectors of society
- Convince traditional leaders and other opinion-makers to support work to end violence
- Combine mass campaigning with person-to-person discussions

Oxfam supports both women’s organisations and organisations that focus on the role of men and boys in ending violence against women.

## EXAMPLES FROM OXFAM PROGRAMS

**Building social movements to prevent violence:** The We Can End All Violence against women Campaign in South Asia, replicated in several African, East Asian and “Northern” countries, has encouraged millions of women and men, girls and boys, to become “change makers”. “Change makers” pledge to stop violence in their own lives, and to convince their families, their colleagues and others to end inequality and violence.

**Violence prevention with youth:** The El Salvador Campaign to Prevent Gender-Based Violence recognises young women and men as important agents of change. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the campaign organises regular events at schools, such as discussion sessions and performances. Students and teachers reflect on the power relations between girls and boys, women and men, teachers and students, and how power is linked to violence.

In addition to its work with young people, the campaign conducts research and advocacy that reminds the government of its responsibility to protect women’s rights, and proposes concrete measures to prevent and address gender-based violence.

**Working with traditional leaders:** The Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations of Sierra Leone trains Imams (Muslim preachers) to inform Muslim communities of the problems of violence against women. Southern Africa’s Red Light Campaign against the trafficking of women supports traditional and religious leaders to record radio messages in local languages on the dangers of human trafficking.





## WORKING WITH MEN AND BOYS

Many men and boys are perpetrators of violence against women, but that does not mean that all men are violent. Arguably, most men and boys would prefer to live without violence, and can play an important role to change social norms. They are important allies for Oxfam. Therefore, Oxfam and its partners encourage men and boys:

- To develop non-violent ways to be “real men” and to respect women as equals
- To support women survivors of violence against women
- Invite men and boys to participate in the struggle to end violence against women, as equals and allies to women’s organisations

## EXAMPLES FROM OXFAM PROGRAMS

Oxfam and the Lebanese women’s rights organization Kafa developed a training manual, “Women and Men... Hand in Hand against Violence”, through consultations with over 70 organizations in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen. It explores the norms that influence violent attitudes, and underscores the positive roles that men can take to end violence against women and promote greater equality.

In Chile, Red de Masculinidad (Masculinity Network) has run series of workshops where boys and young men discussed gender roles and how they related to violence. The workshops were a safe space where young men could discuss their dreams and worries, and learn violence-free ways of dealing with conflicts.

In Peru, the Centro Mujer Teresa de Jesus works with men who are violent towards their intimate partners. In group work, the men critically examine the construction of gender norms and analyse power imbalances. They learn together to adopt and promote non-violent, equitable relationships.

Oxfam’s work to end violence is grounded in clear ideas as to how change happens. The following chapter offers guidance and examples for building such “theories of change”, and for monitoring and evaluating work to end violence against women.

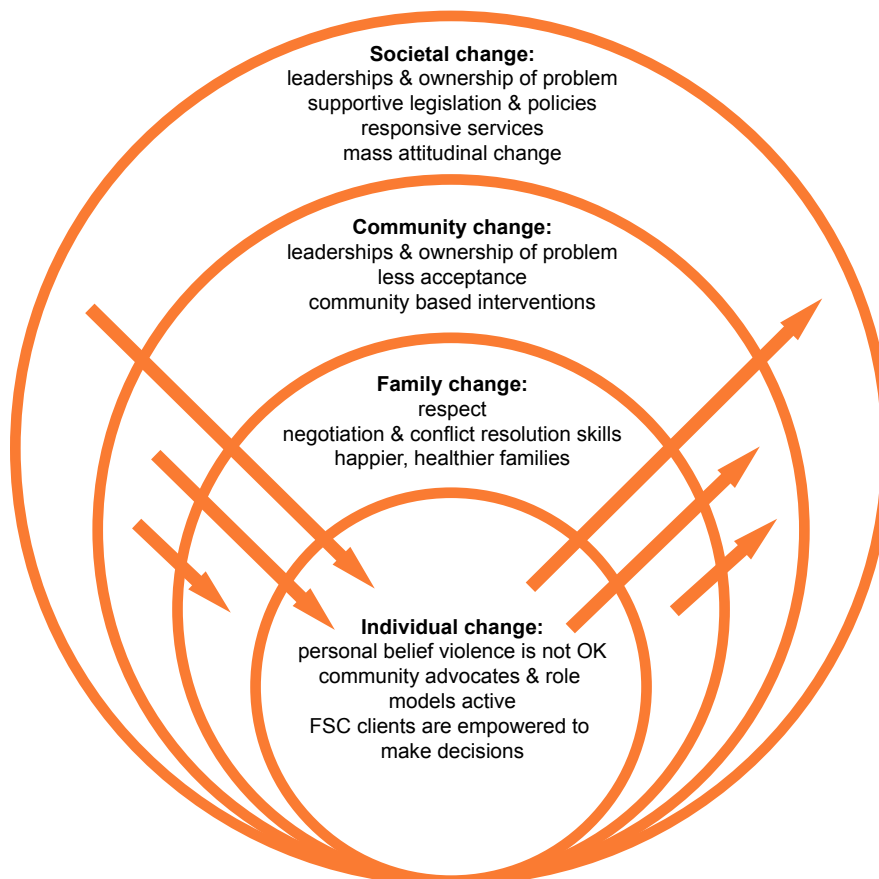
# TRACKING CHANGE

## THEORIES OF CHANGE

Since violence against women is deeply rooted in our societies, many different initiatives are needed to eradicate it. To ensure Oxfam makes the best possible use of its resources, we must be clear as to what we want to change and how – i.e. have theories of change. We must verify whether our theories of change really support women and girls, keep learning, and document our experience and insights for others.

Advocates have developed theories for policy change; psychologists have elaborated theories of behavior change, and there are many other theories of change. We can build on existing theories to develop theories of change for Oxfam programs, and develop new models for specific purposes.

## EXAMPLES FROM OXFAM PROGRAMS



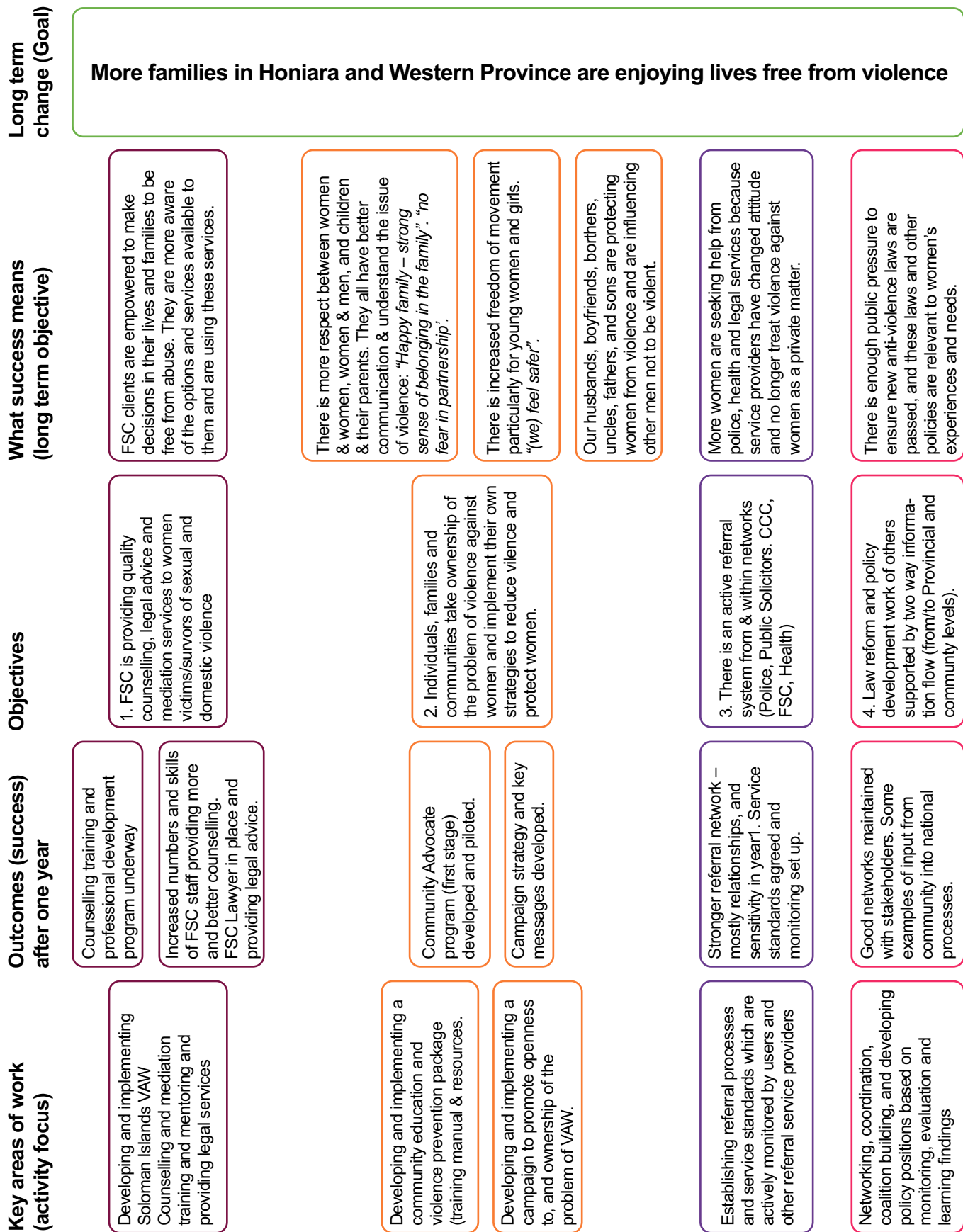
The Standing Together Against Violence (STAV) program in the Solomon Islands builds its theory of change on the well-established ecological model of partner violence.

This model reveals how a woman's experience of partner violence is embedded in her family situation, her community and the wider social context. (For more detail on the ecological model, see the Heise/DFID publication listed in "further reading".)

The STAV diagram shows the overall changes STAV aims to bring about at the different levels.

The STAV strategy combines this model of change with a project framework (see following page) that presents the different STAV areas of work, the expected results (outcomes), what success means for STAV and how successful work will contribute to the overall aim of reducing family violence.

STAV Project Framework from the Solomon Islands, dated 2009 (Draft)



## THEORIES OF INDIVIDUAL CHANGE



The Standing Together to End Violence against Women strategy includes this specific theory of change that shows how family support centres empower women to make new choices



The We Can End All Violence against Women Campaign uses the “Stages of Change” theory which is grounded in social and clinical psychology.

To provoke a transformation in gender norms, it is necessary for people to recognise existing norms as social constructs, i.e. as man-made things that can be changed. Then, they can come together to take action, to create and support new, more equitable attitudes and behaviour so that social norms change for the better – and don’t return to inequitable habits. As such change must happen in many aspects of people’s lives, the theory is expressed in a spiral – not as a straight line.

## HOW TO BUILD A THEORY OF CHANGE

Basically, a theory of change explains how change – in our case, an end to violence against women – will happen. One can build the theory around a few questions:

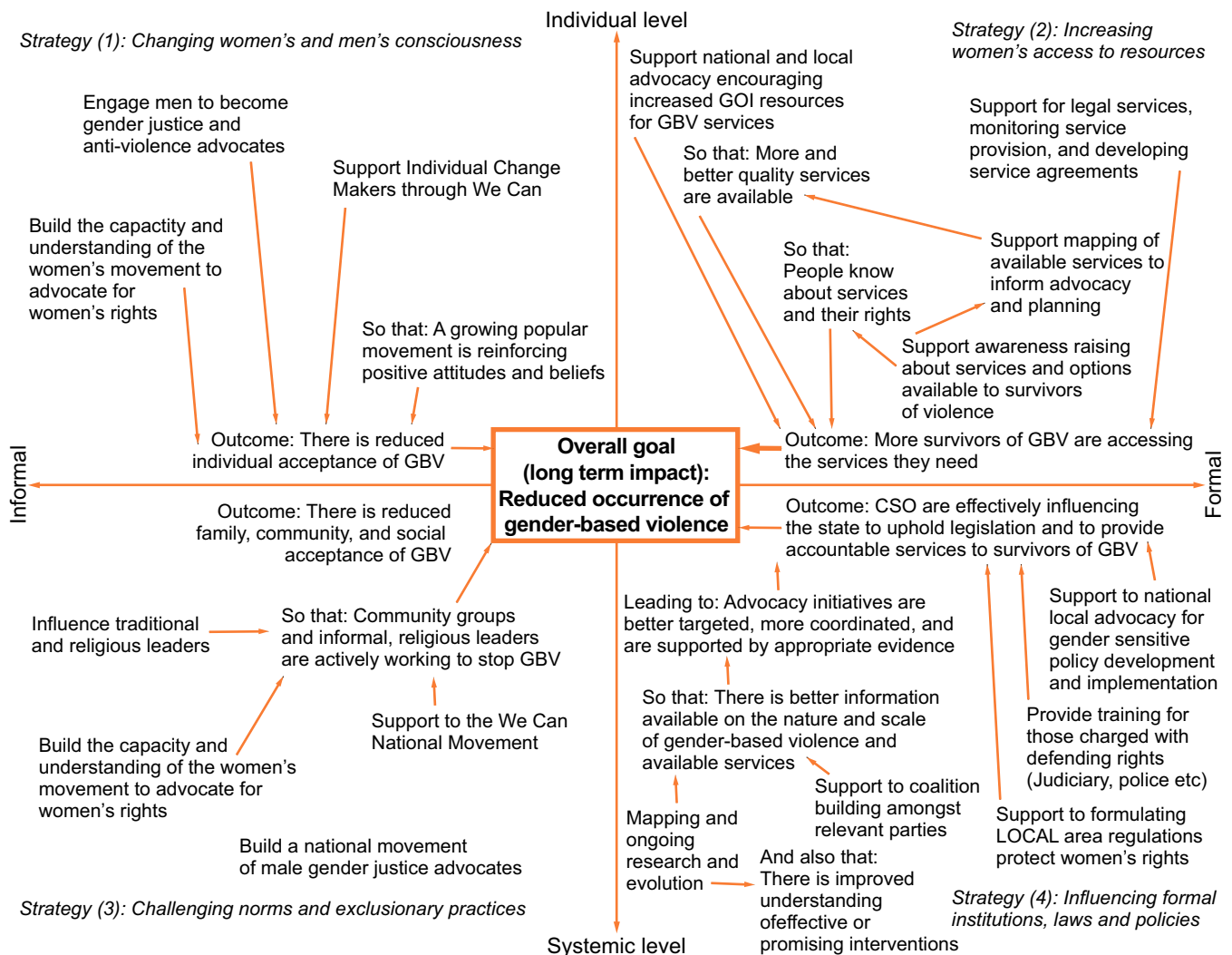
1. What is the specific change that we want to see, i.e. the result we want to obtain?
2. What is known about the ways in which this kind of change happens? Experience from other projects and existing research can help answer this question.
3. Who can make the change happen, and how? For example, judges can apply anti-VAW laws more systematically so that survivors obtain justice. Girls can stop sexual abuse and harassment at schools by building their self-esteem and learning to denounce offending teachers.
4. What needs to happen so that the agents of change do what is needed? In our example with the school children, the children need to know that sexual abuse is not acceptable, and that it is fine to denounce teachers. School principals also need to be prepared to receive and deal with students' complaints so as to end violence.

Summarise your theory of change in a few sentences, and draw a map showing the relationships between the aspects and agents of change. If you find it too complicated to do that on the computer, just draw the map on a piece of paper and scan it!

A theory helps to explain complex processes – but it is “only” a theory, and not real life. The theory of change depicted below was created for a gender based violence program proposal in Indonesia.

The theory of change encompasses the strategies that we are adopting in our work, and those strategies may or may be effective. That is why it is important to watch, throughout the duration of our different efforts, whether the strategies are effective and help us to get to the change we want – or whether some questions need to be asked again, and answered in the light of new facts.

**PROGRAM THEORY:** Oxfam’s proposal to reduce gender-based violence in Indonesia (2012-2014) uses a program theory – i.e. a model that combines the theory of change with a visualisation of the planned activities – inspired by a model for gender mainstreaming by Aruna Rao and David Kelleher.





## MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL):

Oxfam is committed to learning and to sharing insights and lessons from its work. We will use and develop monitoring and evaluation to:

- Determine the degree to which Oxfam programs are achieving their objectives over time;
- Analyze the reasons behind the achievement (or not) of objectives (eg if a program is not achieving objectives, whether the problem rests in the theory of change or with difficulties in implementation, and whether these are leading to unintended consequences);
- Gauge whether or not the objectives are ultimately contributing to the realization of Oxfam’s mission;
- Identify Oxfam’s contribution and value-added; and,
- Determine whether the program has offered value for money.

The changes Oxfam supports to transform unequal power relations take time. As violence against women has many forms and causes, many changes are needed to end it. There may be reversals; for example, rising religious fundamentalism might prevent women from claiming their full human rights. But there may also be unexpected opportunities. An effective monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system needs to take into account time, and unintended consequences that may occur.

### AN EFFECTIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM:

- Is defined together with partners and the people who are participating.
- Collects information that is useful for planning, decision making, assessing progress, sharing with others, ensuring and demonstrating accountability, and linking to policy agendas. Any MEL process should make sure to protect the privacy and physical safety of the women involved.
- Uses tools and formats that can be adapted to or used throughout the program, including in contexts with low literacy.
- Is integrated for the most part into day to day work (with the possible exception of major evaluations).
- Brings people – from partners, stakeholders, and communities – together to build relationships, allows space for discussion and sense making, and builds understanding of the needs and interests at different levels.
- Can communicate the lessons learned to other NGOs, women’s organizations, mixed organizations, governmental authorities and others.

Adapted from the Oxfam STAV proposal, Solomon Islands

Oxfam acknowledges that the women and men, girls and boys who participate in Oxfam programs and campaigns should be in charge of their own situations. We use participatory methods in monitoring, evaluation and learning that enable them to reflect on the effects of Oxfam’s work and help us understand how we contribute to change.

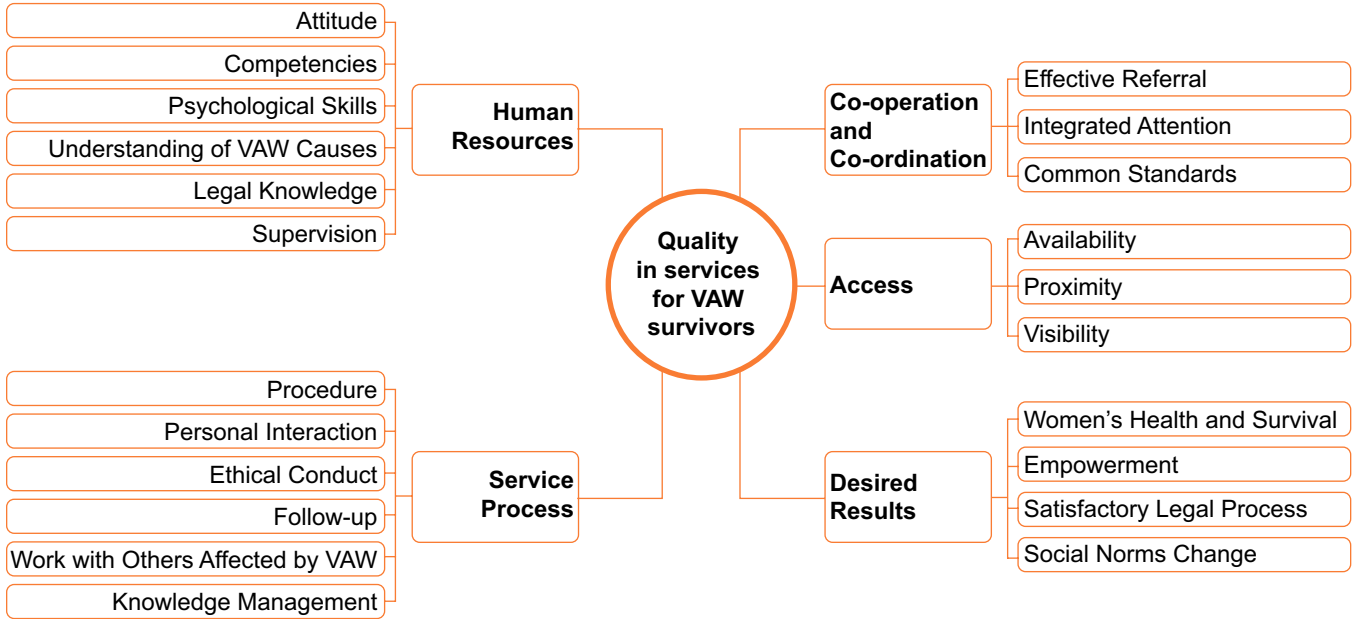
At all stages of its interventions to end violence against women, Oxfam seeks the advice and leadership of those who work to end GBV, as well as feed-back from women and girls who have survived violence against women. This is not only a good way to verify whether the Oxfam intervention meets people’s needs – it also ensures proper accountability.

Where it is difficult to count (“quantify”) important information, balance with assessing the quality of Oxfam’s and its partners’ work, and of the change participants experience.

## EXAMPLES FROM OXFAM PROGRAMS

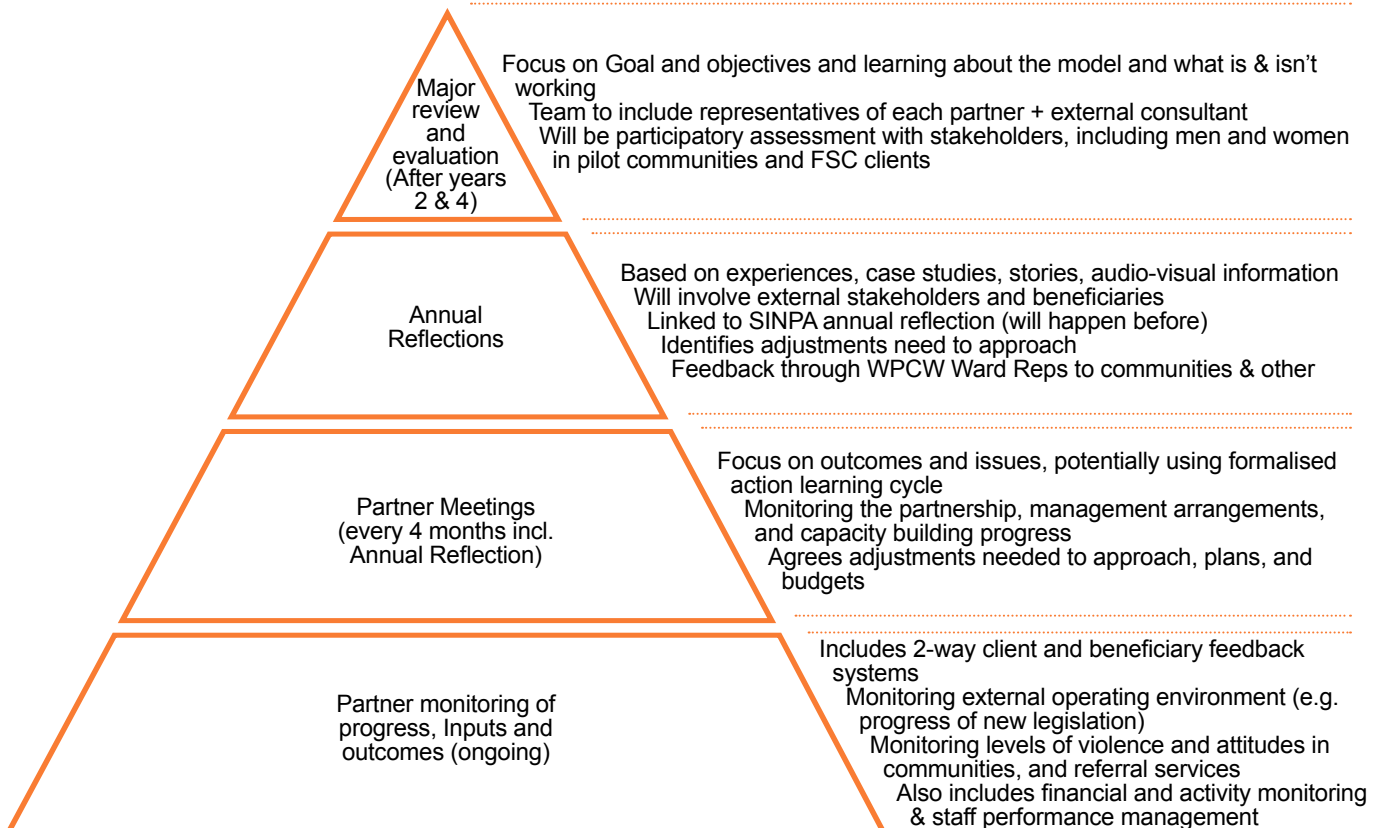
### An analytical tool to assess quality in work with survivors of violence against women:

Research with Oxfam partners in Mozambique, Guatemala and Nicaragua has revealed common dimensions and components of quality in work with VAW survivors. The analytical framework developed by M.Raab and J.Rocha can serve as a basis for quality monitoring, evaluation and advocacy:



### A MEL system for a program to end violence against women

The Oxfam STAV Program in the Solomon Islands has visualised its MEL system (draft):



# WHAT CAN I DO TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

## OXFAM PROGRAMS

Oxfam's gender mainstreaming policies promote equality between men and women – a key part of any work to end violence against women. Furthermore, Oxfam mainstreams VAW prevention into humanitarian work. This work must be deepened to ensure women and girls gain control over their lives, in emergencies and in development work.

## EXAMPLES:

During the 1999 earthquake in Turkey, the NGO Women's Solidarity Group set up "women's tents" for women to get together safely, share their experience and problems, and devise solutions.

Female volunteer doctors, psychologists and lawyers provided support. In recent years, women's organisations in Afghanistan and Pakistan have trained women as rescue workers. This is of life-saving importance in regions where traditions forbid men to touch or even see women who are not part of their close family.



Water tanks provided by Oxfam as part of the Asian Tsunami response in Sri Lanka (2005) were decorated by local artists to raise awareness for the destructive effects of violence against women.

The captions on this example say: "My father is always shouting at my mother. Why?" And: "Violence destroys the whole family".

Development programs can also have implications for violence against women. For example, research in Bangladesh has shown that micro-finance projects do not automatically strengthen women. Micro-finance initiatives for women can actually increase violence against women, if such projects ignore the power imbalances between women and men. Likewise, getting a girl to attend school can devastate her life if there are no safeguards against sexual abuse by teachers and school boys.

Oxfam uses power and “intersectional” analysis to ensure its programs are safe for women and girls, and contribute to greater gender equality. We recognise women and girls as the experts for their own situations, and make sure they play leading roles in planning, implementing and monitoring projects.

## INSIDE OXFAM

Violence against women exists everywhere. Oxfam is committed to changing its own organisational culture, for example through internal champions and codes of conduct. These women and men will run discussions, training and other activities to ensure Oxfam does not reproduce gender inequality and violence. If you feel you experience violence against women at work, do not hesitate to seek support from your line managers or human resources staff. It is also in the interest of the organisation as a whole for Oxfam to be a safe work environment for everyone.

**EXERCISE:** This exercise is particularly interesting for those who have not yet carried out any awareness-raising on violence against women, or counselling with survivors. Find someone – a friend, a relative, an acquaintance – who has no experience in work to end violence against women. Talk to him/ her about the subject – what is violence against women, what damage it does, what needs to be done about it, and what one can do at work and in one’s daily life to end it. How does it feel to discuss the subject? How does the person react?

It is enlightening to repeat the exercise with a group of people, informally or in a more formal setting. Brace yourself for unfriendly reactions, and bear in mind: disparaging or aggressive comments have nothing to do with you personally! Violence against women is so deeply rooted in societies that many people are afraid of speaking – or even hearing – about it. Reflect on any hostile reactions: what do they reveal about the person’s attitudes, beliefs and maybe fears? And what could be done to change them?

# SUMMARY: OUR TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

Oxfam wants to contribute to deep and lasting change that will end violence against women.

This transformative approach:

- Starts with the understanding that every human being has rights, and can claim these rights
- Respects that every person experiences her situation in a unique way, and that every person must be in charge of her own development
- Aims to fundamentally change the balance of power between women and men for greater equality.

Oxfam invests in research, monitoring and evaluation so as to make sure our work is relevant and effective. Useful experience and lessons learnt are documented and shared within Oxfam and beyond, so as to contribute to the growing knowledge base on what works in ending violence against women.

# GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS AND ACRONYMS

For more and more detailed definitions, please refer to the OI Gender Justice Glossary (June 2008), which is the basis of most definitions below.

## **DEVAW**

UN Declaration to End Violence against Women (1993)

## **Domestic violence**

Violence that happens in households and intimate relationships. This includes harm to children from witnessing domestic violence. Some definitions also encompass any kind of violence that happens within the family, e.g. harsh “punishment” of children and abuse of older family members.

## **Empowerment**

The process of gaining control of the self, over ideology and the resources which determine power.

## **Female genital cutting FGM/C**

All procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other deliberate injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons, also known as female genital mutilation or female circumcision. Many FGM/C survivors consider the term “cutting” more respectful to their dignity.

## **Femicide**

The act of killing a woman; or, the deliberate, wanton violation and massacre of women and girls, as in a particular ethnic group by an invading army<sup>3</sup>.

## **Fistula**

An abnormal hole between organs that are not supposed to be connected. Complications in child birth (exacerbated by FGM/C) and rape can cause such openings between the vagina, the urinary tract and the rectum. Women with fistula are unable to withhold urine or excrement (incontinence).

## **Gender**

The characteristics and roles that societies attribute to women and men respectively. Gender is not “natural” – it is constructed by societies.

## **Gender equality**

The situation in which women and men enjoy the same status; have equal conditions, responsibilities and opportunities for realising their full human rights and potential; and can benefit equally from the results.

## **Gender equity**

Fairness of treatment for women and men according to their respective needs

## **Gender-based violence GBV**

The use of power to enforce gender norms.

## **Gender discrimination**

Discrimination based on gender differences. Examples: Women tend to get paid less than men; some armies exclude homosexual men from service.

## **Gender justice**

Full equality and equity between women and men in all spheres of life.

## **Gender mainstreaming**

A strategy which aims to bring about gender equality in programs and organisations whose main purpose is not necessarily gender justice.

## **Gender norms**

What societies expect from women and men based on their respective gendered identities.

## **Gender relations**

Ways in which a culture or society prescribes rights, roles, responsibilities and identities of women in men in relation to one another.

## **Gender roles**

The roles a society expects from women and men respectively. These roles vary depending on many factors (“intersectionality”), even within a society.

## **Harmful traditional practice**

Practice that is rooted in a way of thinking or acting that is inherited from the past, and that is likely to damage the health and well-being of persons. For example, FGM/C and forced marriage of teenage girls are harmful traditions.

**Intersectionality**

A methodology of studying the relationships among multiple dimensions of social relationships and people's identity. Intersectionality holds that different types of oppression – such as racism, sexism and homophobia – do not act independently of one another, but interrelate, to create the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination.

**MEL**

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

**Partner violence**

Violence perpetrated by an intimate partner. World-wide, most partner violence is perpetrated by men against their wives or female partners.

**Patriarchy**

Societal structures and practices that institutionalise male power over women and children.

**Power**

The ability or capacity to perform an act effectively; a specific capacity (as in "her powers of persuasion"); strength; authority; might; forcefulness.

**Power analysis**

In advocacy, "power analysis" examines the different types and levels of power that play a role in a situation. (Also used as a technical term in statistics, with a different meaning.)

**Rights based approach**

A way of working that (1) is based on the idea that all human beings are of equal value and have rights that must be upheld at all times, and that (2) aims to ensure people can claim their rights with the duty-bearers – i.e. those who are responsible for protecting their rights (for example, governments).

**Safe programming**

Programming that identifies key risks, and that avoids increasing these risks and other negative effects for the women and girls, men and boys involved.

**Sex**

The biological differences between men, women and intersex persons, i.e. the biological, physical and genetic composition with which we are born.

**Sexual orientation**

Someone's viable attraction to (a) specific gender(s). For example, someone who is attracted to members of the opposite gender is heterosexual. Women who are attracted to women are lesbians; bisexual persons can be attracted to someone of the same gender or someone of a different gender; asexual persons are not sexually attracted to other people at all.

**Sexual abuse**

Any kind of non-consensual sexual contact, such as rape. Refusal to use contraception, deliberately causing unwanted pain during sex, and deliberately passing on sexual diseases are also forms of sexual abuse.

Any sexual act, including touching and insinuations, that involves children is sexual abuse.

**Stereotype**

Prejudice – widespread, simplified conceptions of people. Ideas such as "all homosexuals are feminine" or "all men are violent" are stereotypes.

**Support services**

Organised assistance. Support services to VAW survivors include, among others, health care, legal aid, shelter and psycho-social counselling.

**Survivor**

A person who has experienced violence. This term emphasises the person's capacity to overcome a violent experience. Since it is respectful and empowering it should be preferred over the term "victim".

**Transformation**

Fundamental, lasting change. Transformation in Oxfam's gender justice work refers to fundamental change in the structures and cultures of societies.

**VAW - Violence against women**

Gender-based violence that targets women.

**Victim**

A person who has experienced violence. In English, the term "survivor" is more respectful of the person's dignity. The term "victim" should be used only with persons who have died from a violent attack, or in legal proceedings.

**Violence**

The intentional use of force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.



# SUGGESTIONS FOR MONITORING

## Implementation Of The Oxfam Guide On Ending Violence Against Women

### QUESTIONS AND INDICATORS

The purpose of the Oxfam guide is to contribute to clear and consistent messaging on violence against women (VAW) and gender-based violence (GBV), across the confederation as well as in communication with partners. Most users of the guide are likely to be Oxfam staff. Hence, the focus of the key questions and indicators below is on Oxfam. This list is not exhaustive – questions can be added and removed to fit specific contexts.

<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>CHECKLIST (INDICATORS)</b>
<p><b>Does Oxfam develop more effective programs to end violence against women?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it easy for program and campaigns staff to develop programs to end violence against women?</li> <li>• What makes it difficult within our office to promote work to end VAW? How do we overcome such difficulties?</li> <li>• What other difficulties do we face when promoting work to end VAW? What efforts do we make to overcome these difficulties?</li> <li>• Do we systematically consult women and girls of different backgrounds, including survivors of violence, when designing work on violence against women?</li> <li>• Do we work with men and women, boys and girls in our initiatives to end violence against women?</li> <li>• Do we use gender analysis and an explicit theory of change when designing interventions to end violence against women?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Is there broad support among female and male Oxfam staff of diverse backgrounds for Oxfam’s commitment to ending VAW?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does our Oxfam office organise internal and external events to discuss and address violence against women?</li> <li>• Do most of our male and female staff members of various backgrounds participate in these events? If not – what can we do to raise more interest?</li> <li>• Is (prevention of) violence against women raised as an issue when developing and monitoring programs and campaigns?</li> </ul>



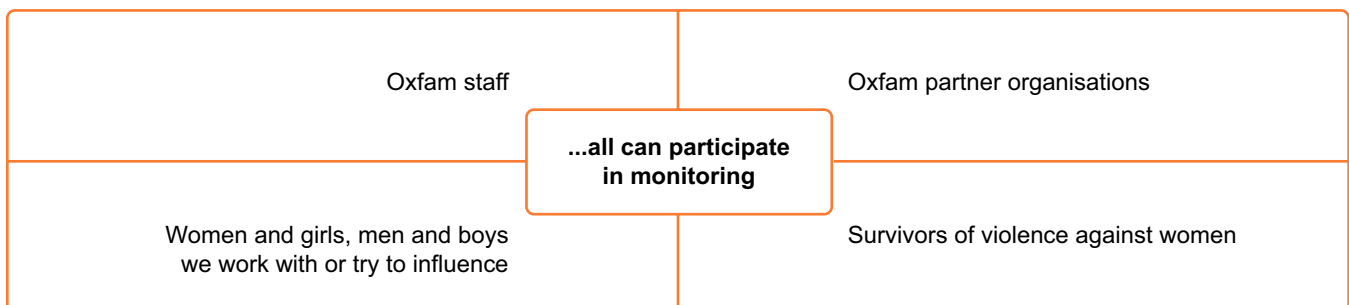
QUESTIONS	CHECKLIST (INDICATORS)
<p>Do Oxfam staff members have a basic understanding of Oxfam’s transformative approach?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are Oxfam staff members able to explain Oxfam’s transformative approach to end violence against women without using jargon?</li> <li>• Does program and campaign documentation present women as change agents, rather than passive recipients of aid?</li> <li>• Does our documentation on VAW take into account people’s complex identities and the multiple dimensions of social relationships?</li> </ul>
<p>Do Oxfam staff members grasp basic concepts of gender and violence against women?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are concepts such as empowerment, female genital cutting/ mutilation, gender, gender-based violence, harmful traditional practice and violence against women used correctly in speaking and writing?</li> <li>• Are Oxfam staff members able to explain these concepts in a simple manner, without using jargon?</li> </ul>

## PROCESSES FOR MONITORING AND EXPERIENCE-SHARING

Monitoring is only useful if everyone who matters in an intervention can contribute to it and the information reaches everyone who needs it. Ideally, participants and partners in Oxfam’s work to end violence against women should contribute to monitoring and experience-sharing.

Routines: The checklist shown in the “questions and indicators” above can be built into routine processes, such as staff meetings, staff assessments, monitoring visits and evaluations.

Extra processes: To ensure violence against women receives all the attention it needs, it may be a good idea to organise regular moments for reflection. This could be simply a series of informal discussions over lunch, where colleagues and visitors share their experience. A more formalised option would be an annual “learning day”, where key experience and lessons learned could be shared in a more structured manner.



# ANNEXES

## RESOURCES

### Key Oxfam Internal documents

Available to Oxfam Staff on SUMUS

- Oxfam Statement on Support to a Transformative Approach to Ending GBV and VAW (June 2011)
- OI HANDBOOK: Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Emergencies (2012)
- Oxfam Gender in Emergencies Minimum Standards (2012)
- Gender Justice Policy Compendium: A collection of OI's policy positions on gender equality and women's rights (2011)
- Oxfam Quick Guide to Power Analysis in advocacy: [http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/quick\\_guide\\_to\\_power\\_analysis\\_external\\_final.pdf](http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/quick_guide_to_power_analysis_external_final.pdf)
- "Making Gender Based Violence Programming Explicit: An Oxfam Review" By Alexandra Pittman (May 2011)
- Gender Justice Change Goal GBV resource page on Sumus offers links to internal reports and resources: <https://sumus.oxfam.org/gender-justice-program-development-support-group-gj-pds/wiki/resources-gender-based-violence>

### Other key resources

- UN WOMEN Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against women [www.endvawnow.org](http://www.endvawnow.org): a rich, growing collection of step-by-step instructions, references and tools for programs and campaigns. Currently available learning modules (April 2012): Campaigns, Health, Justice, Legislation, Men & Boys, Safe Cities, Security
- IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee) Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings (2005), available on <http://www.unhcr.org/453492294.html> and [www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/). The latter site includes resources on protection from sexual abuse and exploitation in several languages
- UN WOMEN has a web-page with news and links to all major UN resources on violence against women, in 5 languages: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/> In addition, there is a special page for the Special Rapporteur on VAW: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/SRWomenIndex.aspx>
- Lori Heise/ DFID. What Works to Prevent Partner Violence – An Evidence Overview (2011). The high quality report includes an updated version of the Conceptual Framework for Partner Violence used by the UN – a mandatory reference for anyone who works on violence against women. [http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/PDF/Outputs/Gender/60887-Preventing\\_partner\\_violence\\_Jan\\_2012.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/PDF/Outputs/Gender/60887-Preventing_partner_violence_Jan_2012.pdf)
- The Violence Prevention Alliance, led by the World Health Organisation, offers rich information, including on the public health and ecological approaches to end violence <http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/en/>
- AWID Primer Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice – an explanation of "Intersectionality" and how it can be used in gender equality advocacy, available on <http://www.awid.org/eng/content/view/full/41854/%28language%29/eng-GB>
- AWID has also developed useful principles for monitoring and evaluation, for women's organisations (<http://www.awid.org/Library/Strengthening-Monitoring-and-Evaluation-for-Women-s-Rights-Thirteen-Insights-for-Women-s-Organizations>) and for donors respectively (<http://www.awid.org/Library/Strengthening-Monitoring-and-Evaluation-for-Women-s-Rights-Twelve-Insights-for-Donors>),
- The BRIDGE is a program of the Institute for Development studies with a searchable web-based library on gender issues, including over 500 reports on GBV/VAW. <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/>

## THE OXFAM INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT ON GBV/VAW

### STATEMENT ON SUPPORT TO A TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO ENDING GBV AND VAW

#### Our understanding of the problem

Oxfam envisions a safe and just world, where women and girls gain power over every aspect of their lives and live free from violence. Gender based violence (GBV), and specifically violence against women (VAW), is a violation of women's rights, a barrier to women's active citizenship, and hence, a fundamental constraint to poverty alleviation. It limits women's choices and ability to access education, earn a living and participate in political and public life. The elimination of GBV, and VAW in particular, are essential for realizing gender justice.

Oxfam understands that VAW is a global pandemic that knows no boundaries. Its elimination requires deep structural changes and powerful global, regional and local women's movements, networks and organizations to build on the gains that have been made towards ending VAW. New alliances and support for this work by wider social movements are also needed to support this agenda.

#### Defining VAW and GBV

Oxfam is concerned with the root causes of poverty and suffering. We understand GBV to be a structural form of violence perpetuated on the basis of gendered identities and unequal gendered power relations. GBV is an expression of these unequal relations. It is rooted in patriarchy and institutionalized gender inequalities and is a primary mechanism to control women's bodies, sexuality, and autonomy.

The most common and pervasive form of GBV is VAW<sup>3</sup>. How it is experienced depends on how gender intersects with other identities (i.e. race, colour, caste, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic class, ability, etc) to create multiple forms

of discrimination and denial of rights. Oxfam uses the definition of VAW in the United Nations' Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women: Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life<sup>4</sup>.

While this definition guides Oxfam's work, we acknowledge that partners will use their own (context) specific definitions of GBV and VAW<sup>5</sup>. Understanding context is also important for understanding opportunities for change. For instance, while culture is often used to justify harmful practices, it can also become a powerful force for positive change. And in conflict and humanitarian situations, the breakdown in social norms and increased impunity can intensify GBV, but can also create greater awareness of the problem of GBV and opportunities to reduce its social acceptance and incidence.

#### Oxfam's transformative approach to ending GBV and VAW

In all of our work towards Gender Justice, we promote a transformative approach to change. The core components of this approach are that it is:

- is rights based;
- aims to transform gender power relations<sup>6</sup> and norms based on a gendered power analysis<sup>7</sup>;
- incorporates an understanding of how multiple identities intersect to create and sustain discrimination and violence;
- facilitates and supports individual and collective capacity for sustainable change;
- supports women's articulation of their own political voice and agendas as well as partners' identification of needs and implementation of their own agendas.

Applied to our work on GBV and VAW, this requires a multi-faceted strategic approach, that catalyses and fosters change at individual and collective levels, in informal and formal domains; shifts women's and men's attitudes and beliefs; and increases women's abilities to access resources, cultural norms and formal institutions, laws and policies.

We recognize the critical importance of individual power as a means to fostering collective action and longer-term community and societal transformation. Yet we prioritize collective power and women's movement building, with our primary constituents being women's movements, networks and organizations. We recognize that the responsibilities for and benefits of promoting gender equality and an end of GBV and VAW rests with all members of society. To this end, we work with wider social movements, and non-traditional allies, such as men and boys, and religious leaders to magnify, support and sustain the efforts so often driven by women's rights organizations. This transformative approach should become mainstreamed, as a non-negotiable, good practice throughout Oxfam.

Through our GBV/VAW programs we seek the following outcomes:

- Women's CBOs, organizations and networks working on GBV and VAW are recognized as legitimate actors in society and by the institutions that they want to influence, including Oxfam;
- Public services and institutions are transformed to empower women experiencing VAW and provide support to them to become active agents of change;
- Legislation on GBV and VAW exists, is applied and is used by people to defend their rights;
- Strengthened women's organisations, in particular new, emerging groups of young women's organisations, who are able to hold duty bearers to account;

- Increased support from other social movements and non-traditional actors - such as men and boys, religious leaders - for women's efforts to hold duty bearers to account; and
- Shifts in attitudes, ideas and beliefs about gender relations among men and women
- Humanitarian systems and response incorporate the values and practice of a transformative approach to ending GBV and VAW.

We support the following strategies for change:

1. Strengthening organizations: Support to existing women's organizations, networks and movements – as well as an emphasis on new, emerging and young women's organizations – that strengthens their capacity, leadership, and movement for change, by providing core and institutional support and multi-year programs that increase their sustainability.
2. Developing strategic alliances with women's rights movements, organizations and networks to lead in advocacy with key international institutions.
3. Training and awareness raising: To promote changes in attitudes and beliefs in women and men that perpetuate the social acceptance of GBV, and to strengthen a network of activists engaging in strategies to transform power and the root causes of GBV and VAW, from grassroots to global levels.
4. Supporting advocacy for law reform and implementation to end GBV, through efforts to challenge impunity and hold governments and other duty bearers to account for providing adequate services and response for work experiencing VAW.
5. Supporting innovative service infrastructures and delivery that are driven by and respond to the needs and interest of women experiencing VAW.

6. Engaging with men and boys to promote changes in gender-based power relations and to build a broader constituency against VAW.
7. Supporting action research and learning to strengthen the global evidence base of good practice, particularly in the context of conflict and humanitarian response.
8. Building a global network of organizations to advocate for humanitarian response to address the root causes of GBV.
9. Developing shared tracking systems to guide innovative funding strategies for work on GBV beginning with a comprehensive review of resources Oxfam dedicates to work in this area.
10. Catalyzing change within Oxfam by identifying and nurturing internal champions, and building staff awareness, capacity and commitment at all levels, to ensure that Oxfam does not reproduce gender and other forms of discrimination and violence, and becomes a more effective and efficient agent of change.

#### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)**

We are developing MEL systems that make explicit our contribution to how transformative change happens in relation to GBV and VAW. Our MEL approach needs to reflect the fact that the kinds of changes we are seeking to support will take time and includes backlash and reversals. As such we prioritize innovative learning evaluations and assessments to capture the complex changes that we are seeking, however incremental, and we support our partners to do the same, through participatory approaches to tracking changes in people's lives.

## **THE OXFAM POLICY COMPENDIUM ON GBV/VAW**

### **2. Oxfam's thematic policy positions on gender equality and women's rights**

#### **2.1 Violence Against Women and Girls<sup>8</sup>**

Oxfam envisions a safe and just world, where women and girls gain power over every aspect of their lives and live free from violence. This is a fundamental prerequisite to the autonomy and empowerment of women and girls. Violence against women (VAW), is a violation of women's rights, a barrier to women's active citizenship, and hence, a fundamental constraint to poverty alleviation. It limits women's choices and ability to access education, earn a living and participate in political and public life. The elimination of VAW is essential for realizing gender justice. The large scale acceptance of violence against women and impunity worldwide shows the global community is failing women and girls on this issue.

#### **Rationale:**

Violence against women is one of the most pervasive violations of human rights worldwide. Men and boys too experience violence and sexual abuse, especially in conflict. In all countries, violence against women has devastating long-term effects, not only on women but on their families and society. The home is often the most dangerous place for women and many live in daily fear of violence. One in three women will experience physical or sexual violence from men, usually someone known to them, in their lifetime<sup>9</sup>. Every year, 60 million girls are sexually assaulted either at or going to and from school<sup>10</sup>. Domestic violence is now outlawed in 125 countries but, globally, 603 million women live in countries where domestic violence is not considered a crime<sup>11</sup>. The systematic use of sexual violence is now a defining and deliberate tactic of war. Women who have experienced violence are up to three times more likely to be living with HIV<sup>12</sup>. It is estimated that more than 130 million girls and women alive today have undergone Female Genital Mutilation

(FGM), with two million girls a year at risk of mutilation<sup>13</sup>. Women and girls are subject to forced marriages and sexual harassment by relatives. Violence against women robs women of control over their own bodies, sexuality and lives. It is not only a major cause of death, ill-health and disability, violence against women acts as a break on progress towards the MDGs and wider development objectives by limiting women's choices and ability to access education, earn money or participate in political and public life.

Important progress has been made internationally as a result of years of lobbying by women's organizations and women's movements in promoting international standards and norms that clarify obligations of states to prevent, eradicate and punish all forms of violence against women and girls in the private and public sphere, by state and non-state actors, including CEDAW, The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (especially 1325 and 1820), and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Oxfam supports transformative approaches to ending VAW in order to address its root causes. This approach is based on an understanding that violence against women is structural in nature and is perpetuated on the basis of gender roles and identities and unequal power relations. Effecting lasting change in this context requires action on a massive scale. It requires a multi-faceted strategic approach that catalyses and fosters change at individual and collective levels, in informal and formal domains; shifts women's and men's attitudes and beliefs; leverages wider social movements to work towards an end of VAW; and increases women's ability to access resources, cultural norms and formal institutions, laws and policies.

However, many initiatives to address the problem lack coherence, funding, and concrete actions, structures, systems to implement and monitor their implementation at all political levels, especially the national level.

The large scale persistence of all forms of violence against women and the continuing impunity of its perpetrators demonstrates an urgent need to develop comprehensive and coordinated strategies to address this problem.

**Signed off policy:**

End all Violence against Women. A fundamental prerequisite to the empowerment of women and the realization of their full potential women is to be free from all forms as well as the threat of violence. The large scale acceptance of violence against women and impunity worldwide shows the global community is failing women and girls on this issue. We call for a comprehensive international action plan to address this issue politically, again with time-bound targets and explicit accountability mechanisms.

Source: OI Policy Position, 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), 15th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action on Women, Development and Peace, New York, 1- 12 March 2010.

Oxfam joins other development actors, governments and the UN urging that:

- VAW is recognized as a global human rights issue as well as a core development issue, and as such must be addressed through both domestic policy and foreign or international development policy interventions.

We urge governments and the international community to agree to a comprehensive international action plan to address Violence Against Women, which would:

- Include time-bound targets, global monitoring frameworks and explicit accountability mechanisms;
- Promote the development of tools that define the problem appropriately, standardize monitoring indicators and intensify resource mobilization for improved national and global data collection, disaggregated by age and other factors, on its prevalence worldwide;

- Identify strategies to address the ways in which violence affects groups of women in different ways because of their race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age, belief or religion;
- Stipulate that prevention and response to violence against women and girls are incorporated into key national development and funding frameworks, including Poverty Reduction Strategies, National Development Plans, MDG-related plans and Sector Wide Approaches (Swaps).
- Recognize and strengthen women's organizations and networks, including community based organizations and new or emerging young women's groups working on GBV and VAW so they are able to hold duty bearers to account. Recognize these organizations and groups as legitimate actors in society, create space for their participation in policy forums, and ensure that they are acknowledged by the institutions they want to influence;
- Promote well-funded public services and institutions which can provide integrated and comprehensive assistance that is designed and delivered in a way that meets the needs of women experiencing VAW and empowers them to become active agents of change;
- Ensure that CEDAW legislation on VAW exists, is adopted, enforced and implemented at all levels such so that women can defend their rights;
- Increase support from other social movements and non-traditional actors - such as men and boys, religious leaders - for women's efforts to hold duty bearers to account;
- Work to shift attitudes, ideas, and beliefs about gender relations on men and women;
- Promote humanitarian systems and response that incorporate the values and practice of a transformative approach to ending GBV and VAW.

# NOTES

- 1 <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/VAW.pdf>
- 2 Amartya Sen, "Missing Women." BMJ. Volume 304. 7 March 1992.
- 3 The terms 'gender-based violence' and 'violence against women' are not interchangeable but there may be a preference for one term over the other depending on context and strategy.
- 4 We also reference UN Security Resolutions 1325, 1888, and 1889 which relate to violence against women in conflict situations.
- 5 GBV takes many different forms including domestic violence, sexual violence, state violence and militarism, sex selection, forced marriages, harmful traditional practices, violence based on sexual orientation or other identities, such as ethnicity or religion, trafficking, forced prostitution, sexual harassment...GBV occurs in different spaces, including the home, community, organizations, and state institutions; the manifestations of which are culturally specific.
- 6 The concepts 'power to', 'power with', and 'power within' are also used to express power in ways that creates the possibility of forming more equitable relationships and capture the importance to social change of individual agency and collective action, from A New Weave of Power, People and Politics, Lisa VeneKlasen with Valerie Miller, Just Associates, 2007.
- 7 One component of the gendered power analysis includes intersectional analysis and the way in which multiple identities interact with oppressions, contributing to systemic discriminations.
- 8 See Oxfam Statement on Support to Transformative Approach to Ending GBV and VAW for brief overview of the principles, outcomes and strategies of this work. (<https://sumus.oxfam.org/workshop-towards-more-unified-oi-approach-ending-gender-based-violence-montreal-june-6-7-and-8-20-23>).
- 9 UNITE to end Violence Against Women, Fact Sheet, <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/VAW.pdf>.
- 10 ActionAid, Destined to Fail? How violence against women is undoing development, March 2010.
- 11 UN Women, Progress of the World's Women, Justice, June 2011.
- 12 [http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/violence\\_against\\_women/facts\\_figures\\_notes.html#1](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women/facts_figures_notes.html#1)



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COVER PHOTO

Sri Lankan women's rights activist Ganawathi takes part in a performance depicting women breaking the silence and speaking out against violence against women

*Annie Bungeroth/Oxfam*



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