A Theory of Change for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

Principles

The seven key principles underlying the Theory of Change are that:

1. **Context is critical:** successful interventions are those that are tailored and based on rigorous analysis of the particular factors affecting violence against women and girls in a specific context, including setting, form of violence and population affected by the violence.

2. **The state has primary responsibility for action on violence against women and girls:** national governments hold the ultimate responsibility for implementing laws, policies and services around violence against women and girls and can achieve change on violence against women and girls.

3. **Holistic and multi-sectoral approaches are more likely to have impact:** coordinated interventions operating at multiple levels, across sectors and over multiple time-frames are more likely to address the various aspects of, and therefore have greater impact on, tackling violence against women and girls.

4. **Social change makes the difference:** sustained reduction in violence against women and girls will only occur through processes of significant social change, including in social norms, at all levels.

5. **Backlash is inevitable but manageable:** resistance to tackling violence against women and girls, which may include increased risk of further violence against women and girls, is inevitable where root causes are being addressed but can, and should, be managed.

6. **Women’s rights organisations create and sustain change:** supporting women’s rights organisations, especially those working to tackle violence against women and girls, to make change and build strong and inclusive social movements is the most effective mechanism for ensuring sustainable change in the lives of women and girls.

7. **Empowering women is both the means and the end:** focusing on the rights of, and being accountable to, women and girls is the most effective way of tackling gender inequality as the root cause of violence against women and girls.

For more information please visit: www.actionaid.org.uk/womensrights
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**SUPER IMPACTS**

- Women and girls are safe to pursue their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Development gains (e.g., meeting the MDGs) are made as a key barrier to their success is eliminated.

**IMPACTS**

- Women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence and from the threat of such violence.

**OUTCOMES**

- Women and girls know their rights and are empowered, supported, and resourced to claim them as individuals and collectively.
- Values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours & practices (individuals, communities, institutions) shift to recognise VAWG as unacceptable & a crime.

**OUTPUTS**

- Women & girls have increased ownership of, access to and control over resources (political, legal, economic and social).
- Women, women’s human rights defenders and WROs working on gender-based VAWG have the capacity to organise collectively, facilitate social change, and respond to backlash.
- Preventing and responding to VAWG is an explicit aim of government with effective policies and budgets in place to deliver & being monitored at all levels.
- The legal system, including customary and religious laws, prevents, recognises and adequately responds to VAWG.
- Community-level prevention & response mechanisms are active and effective, and respect women’s rights.

**INTERVENTIONS**

- Empower women and girls e.g., build assets, increase rights to land, promote leadership at all levels, increase literacy, education and skills, inform and educate women and girls about their rights, support women and girls to organise and create change.
- Change social norms e.g., build capacity of media to report on VAWG, support women’s rights organisations (WROs) to deliver programmes and run campaigns, support women human rights defenders, work with men and boys, engage local leaders, teach gender equality in school curricula, encourage politicians to speak out about VAWG.
- Build political will and legal and institutional capacity to prevent and respond e.g., support design and implementation of VAWG policies and action plans & track spends across sectors, build women’s ministries, reform security and justice sectors, collect national level data on VAWG, support advocacy work by WROs, support national and international networks lobbying for change.
- Provide comprehensive services e.g., create and protect women’s and girls’ only spaces, strengthen social assets and safety nets, provide core funding for WROs delivering specialist services, create specialist gender units in police.

**BARRIERS**

- Lack of political will and resources in governments at all levels of government.
- Dominant social norms (values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices) support male dominance, condone VAWG and support impunity.
- Inadequate services (education, health, justice, security, social welfare) to prevent, protect and respond effectively.
- Over-burdened and under-resourced civil society undertakes majority of prevention and response efforts.
- Lack of social, legal and economic autonomy for women and girls which increases vulnerability to violence and decreases agency to respond.

**PROBLEM**

Gender-based violence against women and girls (VAWG), and the threat of such violence, exercised through individuals, communities and institutions in both formal and informal ways, violates women and girls’ human rights, constrains their choices and agency, and negatively impacts on their ability to participate in, contribute to and benefit from development.

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