Prevention is possible

The role of women’s rights organisations in ending violence against women and girls in Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia

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Abstract

This synthesis report draws together key findings and learning from three linked research studies commissioned by Womankind Worldwide (Womankind) to examine the contribution of community and rights-based approaches to the prevention of violence against women and girls (VAWG). The research studies examine three different programmes implemented by partner women’s rights organisations (WROs): The Women's Empowerment and Reduction of Harmful Practices programme implemented by Siiqee Women's Development Association in Ethiopia, The Nkyinkyim (COMBAT) project implemented by Window of Hope Foundation (with the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre) in Ghana, and the Popular Education and Community-led Mobilisation approach implemented by Women for Change in Zambia.

The report firstly outlines the research methodology and then situates the different programme approaches in the wider evidence on different community-level and rights-based approaches to VAWG prevention and the role of WROs. It then outlines the specific country and community contexts in which each of the three programmes operates. Based on participatory research with key stakeholders, programme participants and other community members in two target communities in each country, the report analyses the factors and processes that impede or enable change at a community level and assesses the contribution of the three programmes to the prevention of VAWG. It also reflects on the factors that contributed to successful outcomes as well as the challenges faced by WROs in implementing the programmes. The final section of the report presents conclusions and a number of recommendations for donor agencies, national governments and international NGOs and civil society organisations.
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Acronyms

CBO  Community based organisation
CSO  Civil society organisation
COMBAT  Community-Based Action Teams (Ghana)
FGM  Female genital mutilation
GBV  Gender-based violence
GSHRDC  The Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (Gender Centre), Ghana
HTP  Harmful traditional practice
INGO  International non-governmental organisation
IPV  Intimate partner violence
VAWG  Violence against women and girls
WERHP  Women’s Empowerment and Reduction of Harmful Practices programme
WFC  Women for Change (Zambia)
WHF  Window of Hope Foundation (Ghana)
WRO  Women’s rights organisation

Definitions

Violence against women and girls (VAWG):
“[A]ny 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”¹

Intimate partner violence (IPV):
Violence perpetrated by a current or former partner.

Women’s rights organisations (WROs):
Women-led organisations working to advance gender equality and women’s rights.

Social norms:
Shared expectations of specific individuals or groups regarding how people should behave. Norms act as powerful motivators either for or against individual attitudes and behaviours, largely because individuals who deviate from group expectations are subject to shaming, sanctions or disapproval by others who are important to them.²

¹ UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Woman (1993)
1.0 Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

This report draws together key findings and learning from three linked research studies commissioned by Womankind Worldwide to examine the contribution of community and rights-based approaches and women’s rights organisations (WROs) to the prevention of violence against women and girls (VAWG). The research studies examine three different rights-based programmes implemented by partner women’s rights organisations:

- **The Women’s Empowerment and Reduction of Harmful Practices programme (WERHP) implemented by Siiqqee Women’s Development Association in Ethiopia:** An economic and social empowerment programme with the overall aim to reduce VAWG including harmful traditional practices by increasing the knowledge of women, girls and community leaders about VAWG, and building the capacity of communities to support survivors and prevent violence. The project established and supported community conversation groups, which discuss VAWG, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and harmful traditional practices (HTPs), and self-help groups, which provide business development training as well as rights and VAWG training. It also supports VAWG survivors to access support services and works to build the capacity of local government officials and state agencies.

- **The Nkyinkyim (COMBAT) project implemented by Window of Hope Foundation (with the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre) in Ghana:** A multi-pronged community mobilisation, prevention and response intervention, which seeks to bring about change in individual knowledge and behaviours as well as broader social norms that underpin VAWG by working at different levels. These are: individuals, couples/families, communities and authorities. The main intervention is the selection, training and mentoring of Community-Based Action Teams (COMBATs), comprised of elected community members (five women and five men) who undertake crisis intervention to handle and refer VAWG cases, undertake community sensitisation on VAWG – through community meetings, theatre and house-to-house visits – and work to establish a graded community level system of sanctions against perpetrators of violence. The project also includes targeted work with traditional and religious leaders and state agencies.

- **The Popular Education and Community-led Mobilisation approach implemented by Women for Change in Zambia:** An organisational approach that promotes social and economic empowerment through community mobilisation based on a long-term popular education methodology and movement building at the local level to work for gender equality. The aim is to raise a critical mass of people who are able to demand their rights and increase gender sensitive and human rights focused citizen-led interventions. The interventions do not focus directly on VAWG prevention, but more broadly on harmful gender norms and discriminatory practices. WFC works with people in rural areas to establish Area Associations comprised of women and men from community groups, which are supported to become self-sustaining entities. The Area Associations work for change in gender roles and relations at an individual,
family, group and community level. WFC also engages with local power holders, including traditional and religious leaders and representatives of district-level state agencies.

The research was based on secondary analysis of programme documentation and primary research in two communities targeted by each programme in each country. The studies were retrospective and based on qualitative research including consultations with the partner WROs, in-depth interviews with key informants and participatory workshops with community members who were involved to varying degrees in the programmes – including direct participants, but also those not directly engaged in the programmes.

In all three contexts, levels of VAWG are high, with almost half of women aged 18-49 reporting experience of physical violence since age 15. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most common form of violence experienced by women in the three countries. The research highlighted a number of recurrent and common factors across the three contexts that made the perpetration of VAWG more likely or acted as barriers to change – many of which are consistent with the wider literature: discriminatory gender norms which proscribe women a lower status and where dominant forms of masculinity stress male entitlement to discipline and control women, women’s economic dependency on men, the linking of women’s status to marriage, community tolerance of IPV and harmful traditional practices and women’s lack of knowledge of their rights. In all three contexts, survivors of VAWG found it difficult to access services due to distance and lack of capacity and were reliant on traditional systems to deal with cases.

The studies also identified a number of factors at community level that enabled positive changes in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals and helped to shift social norms: individual awareness of the negative consequences of VAWG, community members modelling new non-violent and gender equitable behaviours, commitment to and leadership of change by community leaders – particularly traditional leaders, public condemnation of VAWG, and women’s mutual support and solidarity. In Ethiopia and Ghana, there was also evidence that family and community members sometimes act to protect women’s rights and condemn violence even in the absence of external interventions.

In all three contexts the research aimed to understand the effectiveness of the programme in three main areas: (i) changing the knowledge and attitudes of individuals with respect to gender roles and VAWG;
(ii) changing the behaviours of individuals with respect to gender roles and VAWG; and (iii) changing wider social norms with respect to gender roles and VAWG. Given the limited funding for the monitoring and evaluation of the three programmes, there was no baseline or endline data collection for any of the programmes. Thus, these findings are based on triangulating data from retrospective interviews and focus groups with multiple stakeholders. The studies were not able to draw any conclusions about whether the prevalence of VAWG had decreased in any of the communities – although in all three cases, several stakeholders judged that levels of VAWG had reduced during the time period.

(i) Changing the knowledge and attitudes of individuals with respect to gender roles and VAWG: In all three contexts, there is evidence that the programmes have made significant contributions to shifting the knowledge and attitudes of several individuals with respect to gender roles and relations and VAWG. Improvements in knowledge about the types, causes and consequences of VAWG, as well as more positive attitudes to women's rights and a lack of tolerance of VAWG, were evident among many direct programme participants: members of the self-help groups and community conversation groups in Ethiopia, the Community Based Action Teams (COMBATs) in Ghana – and women who had attended community sensitisation sessions or sought help from the COMBATs; and the Area Associations in Zambia. Comparison with other community members who had no or limited involvement in the programmes confirmed these differences in attitudes, demonstrating the programme impact, but also its limitations in terms of reaching those community members not directly targeted. It was also evident that a long-term, sustained approach is critical as, in a minority of cases, some direct participants expressed attitudes unsupportive to women and girls. All three programmes had engaged with traditional and religious leaders and representatives of state agencies, and in most cases there was evidence of positive shifts in knowledge and attitudes.

(ii) Changing the behaviours of individuals with respect to gender roles and VAWG: In all three contexts, there are examples of changes in individual behaviour relating to gender roles and VAWG, which multiple stakeholders attribute to the programmes. In all three cases, direct programme participants reported a number of similar changes in their own behaviours to prevent or respond to VAWG or promote gender equitable behaviours: acting to negotiate solutions to violence in their own family relationships, intervening to mediate tensions between other couples (in the case of trained individuals such as the COMBAT, Area Associations and community conversation members); speaking out against VAWG including harmful traditional practices; increased reporting of cases of VAWG to informal mechanisms (e.g. COMBATs, traditional leaders) and to the formal justice system (e.g. police, magistrates). In addition, in all cases, several women reported positive changes in the division of labour in the household with men being more involved in domestic tasks and looking after the children. There were also individual women in all three contexts who reported that their husbands had stopped or reduced the perpetration of physical or emotional violence. In all three cases, the community-based mechanisms had accompanied some VAWG survivors to access support services, particularly medical treatment. Finally, in all three contexts there were examples of women becoming more visible in community and household decision-making, and leadership positions, although there is still a long way to go in this area.

In addition, in Ethiopia, programme participants reported improved entrepreneurial and business skills leading to greater income generation and increased roles in household decision-making as a result. In Ethiopia and Ghana, some direct programme participants reported improving their parenting by supporting their children to go to school, reducing the harsh use of discipline and ensuring both boys and girls participate in domestic chores. In Ghana, there were
several examples where husbands or ex-husbands had started to contribute more towards the upkeep of their children, as a direct result of the COMBAT intervention. In Zambia, the Area Associations have also been able to provide economic support to VAWG survivors including direct financial assistance and support to re-establish a livelihood.

However, in some cases, there were examples where programme participants had struggled to change their behaviour or take action on the basis of their greater knowledge or changed attitudes, an important reminder that attitude change does not necessarily lead to behaviour change. It was also impossible for the research to judge how widespread these changes in behaviour were beyond the examples given by the participants in workshops.

(iii) Changing wider social norms with respect to gender roles and VAWG: Although this type of retrospective research could not undertake robust measurement of wider social norm change, there were indications in some cases that the programmes had started to influence individuals beyond direct participants. For example, in Ethiopia and Ghana, stakeholders consistently reported that gender roles and decision-making processes were shifting to be more gender equitable – in households and the community – as a result of changed attitudes and new behaviours modelled. Equally, in these two contexts, stakeholders agreed that more women across the community were speaking out against VAWG. However, it is also important to note that in all cases, it was clear that cases of VAWG continued and some women remained silent about the abuse they experienced. There was some evidence of a community-wide shift in the importance attributed to girls’ education and a relative rise in girls attending school. In Ethiopia, stakeholders consistently said that more community members were intervening in VAWG including FGM cases and were supporting women to report violence.

Across the three contexts, the research identified a number of factors that contributed to programme successes:

- **Implementation by local women’s rights organisations:** The WROs brought vital knowledge and understanding of the target communities and how to engage with traditional leaders and local decision-making structures, an ability to bridge the gap between women and formal decision-making structures, supported self-led change, recognised the importance of women's empowerment and participation, and a link to the wider women's movement working for change at a national level.

- **Using rights-based approaches that empower women,** placing women in leadership positions within groups and emphasising a woman's own right to choose how to respond to VAWG resulted in a process that empowered women.

- **Promoting self-led change to support women,** for instance through COMBATS and Area Associations, to be empowered to make changes in their communities.

- **Long-term commitment to communities:** The WROs have a long-term commitment to the communities. In Zambia, WFC has over 20 years’ relationship with one community which took part in the study and the research has found this was very significant in terms of outcomes.
• Gaining the full support of the traditional and religious leadership from the onset to ensure they put their authority behind the project and helped to mobilise the community.

• The presence of the intermediary community-level groups, composed of community members (COMBATs, Area Associations, self-help groups, community conversation groups) which are easily accessible to the rest of the community, can sustain regular sensitisation work, and ensure immediate response and follow up to VAWG cases.

• Use of a community-based approach including men and women which ensures that the focus is firmly on transforming gender relations and discriminatory gender norms.

Nonetheless, there were also a number of common challenges for the WROs in terms of implementing the programmes in each context; many of which are inherently linked to the limited core and long-term funding available for WROs:

• Reaching all members of the community: e.g. marginalised women and girls and new community members. In Ethiopia, Siiqee has successfully engaged with marginalised women – however, this has put a strain on Siiqee’s limited resources.

• Social change needs long-term funding: All three programmes had limited access to long-term funding, however social change requires sustained investment over a long-term period.

• Lack of core funding: The smaller women’s rights organisations – especially in Ghana and Ethiopia – are vulnerable to lose in capacity as soon as project funding ends because of lack of core funding.

• Programme sustainability after the end of funding: In Ghana and Zambia, the community mechanisms established were still active more than one year after the programmes ended, which is testament to the work of the WROs ability to ensure change is rooted in, and owned by, communities. However, this was at reduced levels, there was attrition and not all members were still active.

• Ongoing training and mentoring for community groups: There is a need for periodic refresher training and low level ongoing mentoring and support for community mechanisms – and this needs funding.

• Building and sustaining links with state agencies: A key challenge was how to ensure closer coordination between informal (community mechanisms) and formal response (police and other state agencies) mechanisms to ensure that survivors receive comprehensive and appropriate support.

• Gaps in service delivery: This was particularly the case in Ethiopia and Ghana where many services – especially shelter, legal and economic support -were not available for VAWG survivors, and even health and police facilities were far away.

• Measuring impact on prevalence of VAWG: None of the programmes undertook measurement of the impact of the interventions on VAWG prevalence – funding was not available to measure prevalence of VAWG.

• Documentation of the project: Documentation of the projects was patchy at times (e.g. lack of information on mediation of cases) and more resources are needed to properly track programmes.

• Measuring potential backlash: None of the projects undertook robust assessment of the unintended consequences of their interventions e.g. potential increase in violence against women programme participants.

• Assessing programme effectiveness and impact: There were inadequate resources for the WROs to invest in robust endline and baseline studies to enable the measurement of results and impacts.

For Key Recommendations – Please see Section 8.
2.0 Introduction

“Violence against women and girls devastates lives, fractures communities and stalls development”

Violence against women (VAWG) is one of the most widespread violations of human rights with 35% of women worldwide experiencing violence in their lifetime. VAWG devastates lives, fractures communities and stalls development. Violence denies women and girls the right to a life free of abuse and subjects them to inhuman and degrading treatment. It also inhibits their ability to enjoy rights and freedoms equally to men, and to live their lives with dignity and respect.

The most common form of VAWG worldwide is intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrated by a current or former partner. But violence is also perpetrated by other family and community members, acquaintances, people in positions of authority and strangers. Recent statistics show that 1 in 14 women has been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner.

Despite the recent increased international focus on VAWG, millions of women and girls continue to experience violence throughout their lifetime. Urgent action is needed to end this pervasive violation of women’s human rights. Violence is preventable and there is a growing evidence base on the types of interventions that can help to prevent VAWG.

This report draws together key findings and learning from three related research studies to examine the contribution of community and rights-based approaches to preventing VAWG. The three research studies examine three different programmes implemented by partner women’s rights organisations (WROs):

- The Women’s Empowerment and Reduction of Harmful Practices programme (WERHP) implemented by Siiqqee Women’s Development Association (Siiqqee) in Ethiopia;
- The Nkyinkyim (COMBAT) project implemented by Window of Hope Foundation (with the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre) in Ghana;
- The Popular Education and Community-led Mobilisation approach implemented by Women for Change in Zambia.

Each programme adopts a slightly different approach to addressing VAWG at community-level, but in each programme the role of the women’s rights organisation (WRO) is central, in line with the partnership approach adopted by Womankind (see box 1).

Box 1: Womankind’s partnership approach with women’s rights organisations

Partnership with women’s rights organisations (WROs) is the cornerstone of Womankind’s approach to achieving its vision and organisational aims of ending VAWG, increasing women’s civil and political participation and ensuring equal access to and control over economic resources. Womankind believes that WROs are best placed to create and sustain change for women because they are rooted in the realities of their country, understand the challenges facing women and have a fuller understanding of the context than external actors. Womankind’s approach to partnership is based on an accompaniment model with a flexible, long-term commitment to partners and a systematic approach to capacity development.


3.1 Objectives and methodology
The objectives of the three research studies in Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia were:

- To examine the effectiveness of community and rights-based approaches in challenging the individual behaviours and social norms that underpin VAWG.
- To document practical lessons learnt and recommendations for wider dissemination and to support Womankind partners in future programming.
- To provide evidence on the role of WROs in delivering VAWG prevention programming.

The studies were retrospective – looking back at the operation of the three programmes in each context. They were not formal evaluations of the programmes and hence do not attempt to draw definitive conclusions about the level and extent of programme impact against specific objectives and indicators. Rather, each study analyses the factors and processes that impede or enable change at a community level, assesses the contribution of the three programmes to the prevention of VAWG and reflects on the factors that contributed to successful outcomes as well as the implementation challenges faced by WROs.

Each research study was guided by three key research questions:

1. To what extent has the programme contributed to a shift in individual attitudes and social norms surrounding VAWG and gender roles in intervention areas?
2. What has the programme’s effect been upon cognitive and behavioural outcomes for (a) the mechanisms or groups set up by the programme; (b) key actors such as community leaders and local representatives of state agencies; (c) women and men directly engaged by the programme?
3. To what extent have Womankind partners as WROs contributed to the appropriateness and sustainability of the Programme?

The overall research strategy aimed to achieve a balance between the depth and breadth of data collected and to allow for the triangulation of data by collecting information from different sources and comparing it for consistency. This included analysis of available secondary data in May 2014, largely from previous programme progress reports and programme evaluations. This was followed by 15-20 days of fieldwork in each country in June and July. The analysis and report-writing was undertaken in August and September and included a feedback and validation process with Womankind’s partner organisations.

Given the research objectives, timeframe and documentation available, the primary research employed a qualitative research strategy, entailing in-depth data collection in two target communities in each country and consultations with staff of the partner WROs. In each country, the research was conducted by one international and one national consultant-researcher with participation from the staff of partner WROs.

The data collection methods used for the primary research in the three countries were as follows:

(i) An initial consultation and capacity-building workshop with each Womankind partner WRO:

- To discuss the research process, questions and methods.
- To engage Womankind partner staff in a facilitated process of reflection on their programme Theory of Change and to reflect on the programme implementation and results, identifying key changes, successes, challenges and lessons learnt.
- To demonstrate and use some of the research techniques both to train Womankind partner staff in their use and to generate initial data.
- To discuss issues of research quality and roles and responsibilities in the research process.

(ii) Participatory community workshops

In each of the two communities in each country, participatory workshops were undertaken with groups of programme stakeholders with 10-16 participants per group:

- In Ethiopia, two interlinked participatory workshops were undertaken in both communities (Kese Kebele, Darge Kebele) with: (i) Direct programme participants – women who have been members of the targeted self-help groups for over three years and had directly participated in the programme activities and/or had received support through the programme activities; (ii) Indirect programme participants – women and men who live in the targeted kebeles or nearby areas but have not been directly involved in the self-help groups or community conversation groups supported by the programme, but may have benefited indirectly, for example by being exposed to the community conversation group’s activities.

- In Ghana, two interlinked participatory workshops were undertaken in both communities (Daekrom, Mpatasie) with: (i) Women direct participants – a diversity of women who had directly participated in the programme activities
and/or had received support from the Community-Based Action Teams (COMBATs) established and supported by the programme; (ii) Women and men from the wider community – who did not directly take part in programme activities, including those who had been hard to reach with programme activities and those who were relatively new to the community.

- In Zambia, four workshops were undertaken in total across two areas (Nkonkola, Hanzala) with slightly different profiles of participants: (i) Members of Nkonkola Area Association, which has a longstanding (more than twenty years) relationship with Women for Change; (ii) Members of Hanzala Area Association with more than ten years relationship with WFC; (iii) Members of Tuyake Area Association/Cooperative in Nkonkola community, where the relationship with WFC was short-lived (less than three years); (iv) A group that had no relationship with WFC – a group of traditional leaders from a village within Nkonkola area.

The objectives of the workshops were: to promote in-depth reflection around the types, levels, causes, and consequences of VAWG in the community and how cases are dealt with; to explore participants’ knowledge of and/or contact with the programme and implementing WRO, and to analyse any recent changes that have occurred and the contribution of the programme to these changes. The participatory workshop sessions involved group brainstorming and group exercises, as well as peer-to-peer processes to collect and analyse individual ‘critical change stories’ related by each participant using visual story mapping techniques.

(iii) In-depth interviews with key informants (group-based or individual)

Key stakeholder interviews were also conducted in the communities and at district and regional levels. These included individual and group meetings with members of community mechanisms established or supported by the programmes (e.g. COMBAT members in Ghana), traditional and religious leaders, elected leaders, husbands of self-help group members in Ethiopia, and representatives of state agencies responsible for delivering services to women and girls and VAWG survivors (e.g. police, health, education, social welfare).

3.2 Preventing VAWG: Existing evidence

3.2.1 Factors that contribute to VAWG

VAWG is one of the most widespread abuses of human rights, with 35% of women experiencing at least one form of violence in her lifetime. VAWG can be prevented, but this requires an understanding of the scale and scope of violence and the underlying drivers, risk and protective factors that influence the occurrence of VAWG in any specific context. The design of effective interventions thus implies careful analysis of the specific combination of factors at different levels that contribute to or mitigate violence in a particular setting. Nonetheless, across settings, research suggests that there are a number of factors that consistently elevate the risk of violence.

For example, intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most common form of VAWG globally – 30% of women over the age of 15 have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime. The following factors have been found to heighten the risk of IPV across multiple settings:
- **Social norms that support partner violence:** Data from a wide range of countries demonstrates that wife beating is normative in many settings, with men and women expressing support for partner violence under some circumstances. Implicit support for violence is frequently couched in terms of men’s need to discipline women, generally related to gendered expectations regarding women’s behaviour or deference to male authority.

- **Harmful notions of masculinity and rigid gender roles:** Evidence suggests that certain constructs of masculinity and strictly enforced gender roles increase partner violence. Research with male perpetrators suggests the risk of partner violence is highest when ideas of what it means to be a man in society are linked to ‘toughness’, male control of women, husbands as breadwinners and heterosexual performance.

- **Violence in childhood:** Studies have found that children who witness violence between their parents or who are physically abused themselves are more likely to be violent in relationships.

- **Alcohol abuse:** Studies show a strong and consistent relationship between men’s excessive consumption of alcohol and women’s risk of experiencing IPV.

Globally, it is estimated that the proportion of women who have experienced non-partner sexual violence since the age of 15 is 7.2%. A large UN study across South Asia, South-East Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, including two post-conflict sites, found the most common motivation that men reported for rape perpetration was related to sexual entitlement—men’s belief that they have the right to sex, regardless of consent. This was reported by 70–80% of men who had perpetrated rape.
Over the last decade, there has been a significant increase in community and rights-based programming to prevent or reduce the prevalence of VAWG. Many of these programmes – implemented mostly by civil society organisations (CSO) and international non-governmental organisations (INGO) – aim to reduce VAWG by working to change social norms that support or tolerate violence and/or shifting harmful constructs of masculinity.

There are now a growing number of studies that yield evidence and lessons about different programming approaches, whether, how and under what conditions they are effective in addressing VAWG. However, one of the challenges is that surprisingly few programme evaluations actually measure the impact of the interventions on the incidence or prevalence of VAWG. Equally, very few evaluations assess the impact of interventions at a community level, beyond the direct participants. Nonetheless, there is a growing evidence base on which interventions can be effective in addressing key risks factors for VAWG including harmful social norms:

(i) Awareness raising programmes using community workshops or dialogues: These programmes mainly use community meetings, dialogues or conversations to provide information to individuals, groups and communities about different forms of VAWG, what constitutes violence and which acts are a breach of human rights and national legislation. Studies of these programmes suggest that awareness raising work is key to breaking the silence on VAWG and can help to foster advocacy initiatives, but it is not robust enough to transform social norms or foster behaviour change. Instead, a combination of interventions is needed to effect bigger changes by increasing levels of knowledge and inspiring community members to take actions against violence.

Box 2: SASA! Programme in Uganda

SASA! is a community mobilisation intervention which seeks to change community attitudes, norms and behaviours that result in gender inequality, violence and an increased HIV vulnerability for women. It is based on the premise that change is only achieved through systematic work with a broad range of community stakeholders including activists, local government and traditional leaders and professionals such as police officers and health care providers. SASA! entails the selection, training and ongoing mentoring of women, men and groups, to help improve their knowledge and inspire their activism via their social networks and spheres of influence to address gender inequality and violence. The central focus is to promote critical analysis and discussion of power relations. The preliminary findings of the SASA! Randomised Control Trial study (2014) indicated that: There was reduced social acceptance of physical violence in intimate relationships in Sasa! Communities compared to control communities; in SASA! communities, more women and men believed that it is acceptable for women to refuse to have sex than those in control communities, levels of physical violence against women were lower in Sasa! Communities compared to control communities, women exposed to SASA! were three times more likely to receive helpful support than women who were not exposed to SASA! and there were lower levels of sexual concurrency among men in SASA! communities than in control communities.
(ii) Social norms communications, media and ‘edutainment’ programming: These programmes aim to break the silence and challenge social norms that tolerate violence through making creative use of media and/or entertainment culture. The evidence is mixed with some demonstrated impacts on individual knowledge about VAWG, support-seeking and support-giving behaviours, but little impact on wider social norms. Overall, evaluations suggest that the most effective programmes are those that combine media campaigns via radio or TV with face-to-face dialogue work and other interventions at community level. 21

(iii) Community mobilisation approaches: These work to empower women and engage with men to act as agents of change in their own communities through challenging gender stereotypes and norms. They usually use “gender transformative approaches” combining workshops, campaigns and action planning to encourage critical awareness among men and women of gender roles and norms, work to construct new equitable concepts of masculinity and femininity, promote the position and rights of women, challenge the distribution of resources and allocation of duties between men and women; and/or address unequal power relations between women and men and with others in the community such as service providers or traditional leaders. 22 Evaluations suggest that these multi-component approaches can be very effective in shifting the attitudes and behaviours of the individuals who are the direct participants of the programmes, and that some programmes have also had a positive impact on wider social norms among other community members.

(iv) Women’s economic empowerment programming: These programmes seek to reduce women’s economic dependency on men to enable them to have more decision-making power and autonomy, leave abusive relationships and reduce any dependency on transactional sex. They use a variety of economic empowerment approaches including microfinance, village savings and loans associations, cash transfers, increasing access to formal savings facilities in the banking sector and vocational or job training programmes. There is mixed evidence on how the relative changes in the economic circumstances of women and men – and thus women’s economic empowerment programmes – affect the risk of partner violence. 23 Some evaluations have found that specific programmes have increased women’s negotiating power in the family, expanded their social network and encouraged greater civic participation, while others have found that programmes have had little impact on women’s lives or, in some cases, have led to increased relationship tensions and sometimes violence. 24 The most effective programmes have combined economic and social empowerment with specific awareness raising and dialogue on gender inequalities and VAWG. 25

(v) Small group “gender transformative” approaches encourage critical awareness among women and men of gender roles and norms, work to construct new equitable concepts of masculinity and femininity, promote the position and rights of women, challenge the distribution of resources and allocation of duties between women and men; and/or address unequal gender power relations and among others in the community such as service providers or traditional leaders. They work with both men and women and have had some impacts on shifting gender
3.3 The role of women’s rights organisations

Many of the approaches discussed in the previous section have been implemented by or with women’s rights organisations (WROs). There is a growing body of research demonstrating that WROs and women’s movements are important catalysts in interventions to promote greater gender equality, realise women’s rights and prevent VAWG in the following ways:

- **WROs support transformative change by challenging social norms through awareness raising, empowering women and fostering collective action:** Research suggests that progress towards gender equality can only be achieved through demand driven approaches i.e. through women’s mobilisation, awareness raising and collaborative action, as opposed to traditional supply driven interventions aimed at empowering individual women. WROs are particularly well placed to increase women’s consciousness and agency and have pioneered a range of effective models for mobilising and empowering women to come together to know and claim their rights. WROs’ work is based on a rights-based approach, which sees women as key development actors rather than passive participants, and as agents of change.

For example, evidence collected by the Association of Women in Development (AWID) shows that WROs can have a positive impact on increasing women’s rights under the law, increasing women’s access to resources, and shifting informal belief systems and gender-biased practices. A recent World Bank report also shows that collective action is crucial to amplifying women’s voice and agency and, in turn can reduce gender disparities by increasing accountability, giving citizens a voice and helping them claim resources through bottom-up pressure.

The report also provides evidence that when women participate in self-help groups and other participatory development programmes, they also demonstrate increased agency in their lives.

Research by the Pathways to Women’s Empowerment Centre confirms that interventions aimed at supporting women’s capacity to act together, and creating supportive relationships among women, are much more likely to have a transformative effect than interventions aimed at individual women. It also finds that WROs play a crucial role in supporting relationships and demand driven interventions. A five country study also shows that women’s organising and collective action is a successful approach in achieving change in peacebuilding.
WROs play a key role in advocating for women’s rights and policy change: WROs also play a critical role in advocacy and holding state actors to account to implement their commitments and obligations on women’s rights. WROs act as policy watchdogs as well as defenders of past achievements for women’s rights and gender equality that are now under threat. A recent large-scale quantitative study confirmed the crucial role of WROs in advancing the issue of VAWG on national and international agendas. The findings show that feminist mobilisation in civil society has had a greater role in policy development than political parties, women in government or economic factors. This is also backed up by a separate survey of almost 1,000 WROs.

WROs provide support systems and women-only safe spaces: WROs also play a vital role in providing the support systems and safe spaces that women need.

Box 3: Lessons on how WROs have promoted gender equality and reduced VAWG

- Building strategic alliances with other pro-women forces, strengthening informal community support networks through well established community-based networks.
- Combining mass mobilisation and advocacy strategies with strong support systems to help women feel safe.
- Ensuring their organisations are well grounded within the target community.
- Understanding the context, and focus on the day-to-day reality of the women.
- Adopting demand-driven approaches e.g. raising consciousness and supporting women to organise.
- Using gender analysis systematically to understand power relations and challenge discriminatory gender norms.
- Engaging in advocacy and campaigning and public debates and influencing public opinion.
- Securing access to funding over a sufficient period to allow implementation of long-term support to community women to ensure that gender transformation is deep, broad and sustainable.
women need to gain capacities, confidence and awareness.53 Safe spaces can also be the stepping stone for subsequent efforts by women to organise and claim their rights.54

- **WROs have a unique reach within communities:** Evidence suggests that women’s rights programmes can only be successful if implemented with a partner organisation that is well grounded in the targeted community.55 WROs often act as a vital intermediary between formal institutions and communities, supporting women to improve their awareness and understanding of legal instruments.56 For example, a Social Return On Investment analysis of organisations in the UK providing specialist women’s services, including domestic violence services, confirms that these organisations have a unique reach within communities and fill essential gaps in statutory provision.57 Evidence from ActionAid’s programme on Violence against Girls in Schools also shows that this allows for increased community support and enhances the interventions’ effect, as well as increases their sustainability.58

- **WROs often have good contextual knowledge:** WROs based at community level usually have excellent contextual knowledge of the local social and political structures, the specific gender inequality issues, local women’s priorities and the approaches that could work in their specific context to mobilise women.59 This proximity and knowledge is crucial to the design and implementation of effective interventions as different approaches are often suited to different contexts.60

However, research also suggests that WROs face a number of key challenges in their work:

- **A lack of adequate funding and resources, especially long-term relatively flexible funding required for gender transformation and VAWG prevention programming.**61 While VAWG continues at endemic levels and need for funding is high, WROs face short-term project funding and financial insecurity is common for WROs.62 Furthermore, many donors have recently been reluctant to fund capacity-building and broad-based women’s empowerment programming; instead tending to direct most funding to direct service provision.63 Many WROs are increasingly relying on income generation activities to finance their programming, especially for capacity building.
WROs are mostly small in size – two thirds of almost 1,000 WROs surveyed by AWID in 2008 had a budget of less than USD 50,000 and while half of the organisations reported some kind of growth, this is on a very small scale, mostly between USD 10,000 to 20,000 per year. The same survey shows that WROs have access to half the funding they would need to achieve their objectives. This further hinders WROs’ abilities to access additional funding, as many donors view them as small and vulnerable. In addition, donors need to consider how to ensure funding mechanisms are accessible to WROs. The OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality has produced this guidance on supporting simplified processes: applications are not expected to be written in perfect English; applications can be in any language; application forms are kept simple and straightforward; evaluations are participative and meaningful, while being able to capture longer-term change; extensive evaluations are not imposed – indicators and measuring systems are open for negotiation with recipient organisations; reporting processes are flexible and not time intensive; and multi-donor funds and harmonised approaches are used.

Backlash against women’s organising: Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and WROs can face direct threats of violence as a result of their activism in support of women survivors and their efforts to prevent violence against women and girls. WHRDs are exposed to violence because they are women, sometimes experiencing violence at the hands of family or their community, as well as from state actors. The variety of risks and violations that WHRDs and WROs face requires the adoption of differential support programmes and gender-specific protection measures, taking into account the contexts in which WHRDs live and work, as well as other conditions and identities present in the diversity of WHRDs.

**Limited organisational development and capacity constraints:** The lack of consistent and unrestricted funding for WROs is a barrier to the organisational strengthening and capacity building needed to design, implement and evaluate effective programmes, scale up and sustain results.

**Results agenda:** Many WROs accept the need to effectively document the results of their work. They also recognise that being able to effectively apply monitoring and evaluation frameworks and methods will require developing new skills and capacities, and dedicating staff time to this work. However, research by AWID found that the costs of monitoring and evaluation are rarely factored into project costs. Several organisations interviewed said that the information required of them was so extensive that almost an entire staff person was required for the task, but this cost was not built into their grants.

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60. AWID (2013) Watering the leaves, starving the roots; Pathway 2012; UN Women in DFID; Alpizar-Duran (2012); Esplen (2013)
63. opcit AWID (2013) Watering the leaves, starving the roots
64. opcit AWID (2008) The State of Women’s Organisations
66. opcit. Esplen (2013)
68. Opcit AWID (2014) Our Right to Safety
69. AWID, Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots
71. opcit AWID (2011) Twelve insights for donors
The three countries in which this research was conducted represent a range of contexts in terms of the overall situation of development and fragility, the political and legal context, as well as the levels and types of violence against women and girls. This section provides a brief overview of VAWG in each country and of the specific communities where this research was conducted.

4.1 Ethiopia

VAWG is widespread in Ethiopia. The types of violence that are particularly prevalent include: intimate partner violence (IPV) including marital rape, non-partner sexual violence; and harmful traditional practices (HTPs) such as female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, and widowhood rites. The latest data available is from the 2005 WHO multi-country study, the 2005 and 2008 Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), and the 2011 Welfare Monitoring Survey (see table 1 on the next page).

IPV is highly prevalent in Ethiopia and widely socially condoned and the courts do not tend to consider IPV as a serious justification for granting a divorce. Abduction of women, although a criminal offence, is still considered a legitimate way of procuring a bride (especially in southern Ethiopia). In the region studied, Oromia, a 2013 research found the prevalence of IPV among women in Kersa district was 19.6%.

FGM is still a widespread practice in Ethiopia. FGM in Ethiopia is associated with other HTPs, and is linked with low female literacy rates, inequality of women’s status, early marriage and poor economic/political opportunity.

Box 4: International and regional frameworks

Under international law, national governments are legally bound to, and hold the ultimate responsibility for, preventing violence against women and girls, protecting women and girls from violence and providing comprehensive services to survivors.

UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): The Governments of Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia have signed and ratified CEDAW. Whilst CEDAW does not explicitly mention violence against women and girls, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has made it clear the Convention covers violence. In its General Recommendation 19 it establishes the due diligence standard which requires states to prevent violence against women and girls. The Recommendation stipulates the need for states to tackle the gender inequality that both causes and perpetuates violence against women and girls. General Recommendation 19 also stipulates that “appropriate protective and support services should be provided for victims”.

Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights: The African Charter lays out the rights to freedom from discrimination and freedom from cruel and degrading treatment for all people in Africa. The Maputo Protocol to the Charter requires states to take appropriate and effective measures to enact and enforce laws to prohibit all forms of violence against women, take appropriate measures to prevent and eliminate violence, and establish accessible services for survivors of violence. The Governments of Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia have all signed the Maputo Protocol, but only Ghana and Zambia have ratified the Protocol.
Womankind: Prevention is Possible

Table 1: Violence Against Women and Girls in Ethiopia

| % women aged 15–49 reporting experience of physical intimate partner violence during their lifetime | 48.7 |
| % women aged 15–49 reporting experience of physical intimate partner violence in the 12 months preceding the survey | 29 |
| % women aged 15–49 reporting experience of intimate partner sexual violence during their lifetime | 58.6 |
| % women aged 15–49 reporting experience of intimate partner sexual violence in the 12 months preceding the survey | 44.4 |
| % women aged 15-49 reporting intimate partner and/or non-partner violence physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime | 55.9 |
| Estimated prevalence of FGM in women aged 15-49 (%) | 74.3 |
| % girls under the age of 15 experiencing FGM in 2011 | 23 |
| % women reporting forced first sex | 16.6 |
| % women reporting abuse during pregnancy | 7.5 |

Sources: WHO multi-country study: 200576; Demographic and Health Survey (2005); 2011 Welfare Monitoring Survey

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However, important declines in prevalence rates can be observed in some areas of the country.77

The perpetrators of different forms of VAWG in Ethiopia include husbands and partners, other family members, acquaintances, teachers and strangers. Existing research and data is quite limited, but suggests the following risk factors for VAWG in Ethiopia:

- **Having a controlling partner**: A community-based cross-sectional study conducted in Southwest Ethiopia found that men who were controlling were more likely to be violent against their partner. The authors suggest that interventions targeting controlling men might help in reducing IPV.78

- **Alcohol and khat consumption**: In a survey of high school girls in Jimma, many survivors of sexual violence reported that the perpetrators had consumed alcohol (52.8%) and khat (33.5%).79

- **Homelessness**: A survey on rape among homeless women in Bahir Dar, a town in Northwest Ethiopia found that homeless women were at greater risk of rape. Vulnerability factors cited included the women's physical weakness, long-term homelessness and sleeping in the proximity of homeless men.80

A minority of women who experience violence report it to the legal authorities. For example, one study found that only 33 (19.9%) women in Kersa district in Oromia region who ever experienced violence had reported it to the legal authorities.81

Women's reasons for failing to report to the legal system were not wanting to expose the issue and not knowing where to go.82 According to a qualitative study on family violence, lack of legal remedies and the fear of retaliation by the abuser are among the reasons for the reluctance to report marital rape cases.83

Ethiopia is a signatory to key international laws and conventions that contain obligations to protect women’s rights and in recent years, the national legal, policy and institutional environment to address VAWG has been strengthened (See box 5). However, there remains a significant gap between these commitments and their implementation with constraints on capacity and resources.

The 2009 Ethiopian Charities and Societies Proclamation places significant restrictions on the work of civil society organisations (CSOs) working on human rights and governance issues, and particularly on advocacy activities. CSOs staffed by foreign nationals, and local organisations which receive more than 10% of their funding from international sources, are prohibited from engaging in work on human rights, including women's, children's, disability and citizenship rights; conflict resolution and reconciliation, and promoting the effectiveness of justice and law enforcement services.84 Since the enactment of the law, Ethiopian CSOs in this category have had to either modify their objectives or abandon their advocacy work altogether.85

The Siqqee WERHP programme has been implemented in the East Wollega Zone, where Siqqee had previously implemented an environment and women’s economic empowerment programme. In 2008, Siqqee was the first women’s organisation to work in this region following the mass resettlement of people from Eastern regions of Ethiopia due to drought, land degradation and over-population. The WERHP programme was implemented in Guto Gide, a woreda (District) in the East Wollega zone in the Oromia region. It is targeted specifically in six rural kebeles (municipality: the smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia) around Nekemte town and two farmers’ associations. Two new kebeles were added in the fourth year of the project. The research study was conducted with participants from the two urban kebeles – Kese kebele and Darge kebele.
Kese kebele: Kese kebele has a population of 20,200. There is one government primary school, two non-government primary schools and six private health clinics. The main occupation groups for the population overall are government workers, daily labourers and merchants/vendors (no disaggregated data for men and women is available). There is no shelter or refuge for women in the area. The local language is Oromo, but many people also

Box 5: Ethiopia: The legal, policy and institutional environment

Legal
- Ethiopia is a signatory of the African charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), but has not ratified the Maputo Protocol.
- Ethiopia is signatory of and has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- The 1994 Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender.
- The 2005 Criminal Code explicitly prohibits IPV, FGM, rape outside of marriage, abduction of women for marriage and marriage with a minor, and outlines the penalties associated with each crime.

Policy
- The 1993 National Policy on Women provides an institutional framework for the development and implementation of gender-sensitive public policies. The policy emphasises women’s rights to own property and to benefit from their labour but does not explicitly address violence issues.

Institutions mandated to play a role in the prevention of and response to VAWG:
- The Women’s Affairs Department in the Ministry of Justice has responsibility to ensure participation and empowerment of women in political, economical, social and cultural matters.
- The Ministry of Justice has a special unit for investigating and prosecuting violent crimes, including sexual violence, and is planning to expand specialised police/court(s)/prosecutor(s) teams to other regional states.
- A national committee to eradicate HTPs such as FGM, abduction and rape has been established.
- In 2008, a high-level inter-sectoral management body composed of different government ministries and civil society was established to develop an integrated approach to prevent and respond to VAWG, including HTPs. Equivalent coordination bodies are being piloted at regional level in Oromia and Amhara regions.
- The police are mandated to investigate VAWG cases such as rape, to safeguard prostitutes from VAWG through activities such as training and counselling and to encourage greater representation of women in the police.

Gaps in policy and legislation
- No law on marital rape.
- Gaps between the legislation aimed at gender-based violence and the enforcement of the legislation.

87. The Ministries of Justice, Women’s Affairs, Education, Health, Labour and Social Affairs, Youth and Sports; the Federal Supreme Court, Police Commission, Health Bureau, Human Rights Commission, the Inter-faith group, Ethiopian Women Lawyers’ Association.
89. Women Watch (date n.a) Ethiopia National Action Plan
90. Data for 2013 obtained by Siiqqee from local government. Note this represents a significant increase on the population data for Kese kebele in the 2007 census, where the population was given as 10,387.
The majority of the population are Protestant or Orthodox Christian, while a minority are Muslim.

- **Darge Kebele:** Darge kebele has a population of 18,758. It has three primary government schools, two secondary schools and one technical institute. There is a further non-government secondary school. There are three private clinics and one government hospital. The main occupation groups for the population overall are daily labourers, government workers and merchants/vendors (no disaggregated data for men and women is available). There is no shelter or refuge for women in the area. The local language is Oromo, but many people also speak Amharic. The majority of the population are Protestant or Orthodox Christian, and a minority are Muslim.

### 4.2 Ghana

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is widespread in Ghana. The most prevalent types of violence are IPV including marital rape, non-partner sexual violence and harmful traditional practices such as FGM, ritual slavery and widowhood rites. The latest data available is from the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), which includes data on the Ashanti region where the Womankind-funded programme operated and the prevalence of violence is mostly higher than the national average:

The main perpetrators of physical and sexual violence are current or previous husbands and partners, other family members, acquaintances, teachers and strangers. The limited number of studies conducted in Ghana suggests the following risk factors for VAWG:
In The Upper West Region Of Ghana
Human Rights In The Wa Municipality
Violence Against Women and Their
men controlled the resources and the
West region also concluded that the
Open Secret, 7 Geo. J. Gender & L.
Domestic Violence in Ghana: The
103. Cantalupo, N. C. Et al. (2006)
Gendercentreghana.org/?p=65
Acts on Violence Against Women in
Ghanaian case
Violence against women: The
Ardayfio-Schandorf, E. (2005)
Health Survey 2008.
101. opcit Cantalupo, N. C. Et al.
Health Survey 2008.
100. opcit. Ghana Statistical Service
(iii) she is tired or not in the mood).
husband/partner had ever exhibited at least one specific type
% of ever-married women age 15-49 saying that their
Source: Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 200892
Human Rights in the Wa Municipality
and Health Survey 2008.
95. opcit. Ghana Statistical Service
94. Geographical location: Urban women are
men agree that a wife is justified in
Violence against women: The
Ghanaian case: this study found that
various types of violence than their counterparts
in other regions.95
98. (i) husband has an STI; (ii)
expressed to their partners a general lack of
97. Social acceptance of VAWG: The DHS
found that 37% of women and 22% of
men agree that a husband is justified in
beating his wife for more than one
specified reason.100 Studies also suggest that
Ghanaian women face powerful
obstacles to reporting violence, which
tem from cultural beliefs that IPV is a
private, family matter that should be
addressed outside of the criminal justice
system.101
Violence Against Women and their
Human Rights in The Wa Municipality
In The Upper West Region
Marital Rape: A Women’s Equality
Issue in Ghana: This study found that
although customary law does not
indicate explicit support for marital rape, some traditional practices and
the patriarchal nature of Ghanaian
society allow the treatment of
women and girls as inferior in status
to men and some level of acceptance
of marital rape. It also found that
women are socialized to be passive
and acquiescent sexual partners in
marriage; Bashiru, A. (2012) Sexual
Violence Against Women and Their
Human Rights In The Wa Municipality
In The Upper West Region
% of ever-married women age 15-49 saying that their
husband/partner had ever exhibited at least one specific type
of controlling behaviour
* Age: A qualitative study found that
women are most at risk of sexual violence
between 10-18 years.93
* Marital status: DHS data shows a strong
association between being currently or
formerly married with experience of
violence.94
* Geographical location: Urban women are
slightly more likely to experience each
type of violence than rural women.
Women in the Northern, Ashanti, Upper
West, Central and Greater Accra regions
are more likely to have experienced all
types of violence than their counterparts
in other regions.95
* Substance abuse: A qualitative study in
the Upper West region found that alcohol
and drug use by husbands is correlated
with VAWG.96 The husband’s alcohol
consumption is also strongly related to
the wife’s reporting of violence.
* Patriarchal social norms: Several studies
suggest that the assumed inferior status
of women and girls and the payment of a
bride price in many parts of Ghana lead
to women being viewed as the property
of their husband and a sense of male
entitlement over women’s bodies.97
Nonetheless, almost two-thirds of women
and men agree that a wife is justified in
refusing to have sex with her husband
under one of a number of specific certain
circumstances, including if she is tired or
not in the mood.98
* Women’s status and gender roles: Some
qualitative studies suggest that women’s
vulnerability to violence increases when
they do not fulfil expected gender roles,
such as domestic and childcare duties.99

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% women aged 15–49 reporting experience of physical violence since age 15</th>
<th>Ghana</th>
<th>Ashanti Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% women aged 15–49 reporting experience of violence in the 12 months preceding the survey</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% women aged 15–49 reporting experience of sexual violence since age 15</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of ever-married women age 15-49 saying that their husband/partner had ever exhibited at least one specific type of controlling behaviour</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 200892

97. Asiampong, E. A. (2010) Marital Rape: A Women’s Equality Issue in Ghana: This study found that although customary law does not indicate explicit support for marital rape, some traditional practices and the patriarchal nature of Ghanaian society allow the treatment of women and girls as inferior in status to men and some level of acceptance of marital rape. It also found that women are socialized to be passive and acquiescent sexual partners in marriage; Bashiru, A. (2012) Sexual Violence Against Women and Their Human Rights In The Wa Municipality In The Upper West Region
98. (i) husband has an STI; (ii) husband has sex with other women; (iii) she is tired or not in the mood). Op cit. Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2009. Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2008.
99. Ardayfio-Schandorf, E. (2005) Violence against women: The Ghanaian case: this study found that men and women have well-defined assigned roles in Ghana and any breach of these roles on the part of women can lead to violence; Actionaid (2012) Condemned without trial: women and witchcraft in Ghana: this study found that women who do not fully expected gender stereotypes, for example if they are widows, unmarried or cannot have children, are vulnerable to being branded as witches and are therefore vulnerable to violence and discrimination.
102. Gender Studies & Human Rights Documentation Centre (date n.a.) A national study carried out by the Gender Studies & Human Rights Documentation Centre (GSHRDC), found that 12% of respondents indicated issues related to money and maintenance as triggers for violence. This includes women asking their husbands for money and insufficient food for the household.
103. Economic dependency: A review of domestic violence in Ghana also lists economic dependency of women on men as a key factor in the perpetuation of abuse.

Ghana is a signatory to key international laws and conventions that aim to protect women’s rights and in recent years, the national legal, policy and institutional environment to address VAWG has improved (see box 6). However, there remains a significant gap between these commitments and their implementation.
**Box 6: Ghana: The legal, policy and institutional environment**

**Legal**
- Ghana is a signatory of and has ratified the African charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) and the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa.
- Ghana is a signatory of and has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- The 1992 Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender.104
- The 2007 Domestic Violence Act 732 contains provisions criminalising various acts of violence – physical, sexual (within or outside of marriage), and between a wide variety of individuals in a relationship including family and non-family members such as house-helpers and people who do not physically live together economic and psychological abuse, intimidation and harassment. It makes provision for protection orders, psychological and rehabilitative services for survivors or perpetrators, and processes for promotion of reconciliation.105
- The 1998 Criminal Code Amendment Act (& 2007 amendments) criminalise some HTPs – including widowhood rites and FGM.

**Policy**
- A 10-Year Domestic Violence National Plan of Action (2009-2019) was developed to make the Domestic Violence Act 732 operational. However, work to develop the detailed regulations around case management and to ensure adequate funding to implement this Plan of Action has been slow.
- A Legislative Instrument has been under development for several years, which sets out the forms and procedures to follow in the handling of VAWG cases. It is now ready and, at the time of writing, it was hoped that it would be submitted for approval to Parliament in 2014.106

**Institutions** mandated to play a role in the prevention of and response to VAWG:
- A Domestic Violence Management Board has been established to play an advisory role and to liaise with government agencies to promote strategies to prevent domestic violence.
- The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) is mandated to fight IPV in all forms and to set up a victim support fund through voluntary contributions. MGCSP has a Domestic Violence Secretariat.
- The Domestic Violence Victims Services Unit (DOVVSU) has been established within the Police. The DOVVSU has 40 such units spread around the country with 430 staff.107
- The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) is a constitutionally-established arm of the government charged with upholding the human rights guaranteed by the Constitution and redressing grievances through a complaint procedure. Unlike other human rights violations, in most cases of IPV, CHRAJ uses non-binding mediation to resolve the complaint.

**Gaps in policy and legislation**
- Marital rape not covered by legislation.
- No laws on sexual harassment.
- Gaps between the legislation aimed at GBV and the enforcement of the legislation.

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105. Manuh, G. (date n.a.) The Passage of Domestic Violence Legislation in Ghana
106. Interview with Dorcas Coker-Appiah, Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre, June 2014
In Ghana, the research for this study took place in two communities close to Kumasi in the Ashanti region. These communities were targeted during the most recent phase of the Nkyinkyim (COMBAT) programme implemented by Window of Hope Foundation from 2010-2013.

- **Mpatasie**: A rural community located about 30 minutes drive from Kumasi (estimated 20 km). It has an estimated permanent population of around 1000 people. The local language is Akan. Most of the population describe themselves as ethnic Ashanti and are Christian. There is also a small number of minority ethnic groups from the North of Ghana, who practice Islam. Most people are farmers (growing crops for subsistence and petty trading, some growing cocoa as a cash crop). Others are traders or drivers and some commute to Kumasi for trade or office work. The community has electricity, water pumps, a few churches and a primary school, but no health centre or other services. The nearest health centre is at Trede, 10 mins drive, 5 km distance, from Mpatasie and the nearest hospital is in Kumasi. At Trede, there is also a police post and an office of the District Assembly member for Akwima Kwanwoma District. The main police station, the Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) and the nearest magistrate courts are based in Kumasi. There is no shelter or refuge for women in the area.

- **Daekrom**: A small rural community located about 45 minutes drive from Kumasi and a further 10-15 minutes (6 km) from Mpatasie, accessed by a poor condition unpaved dirt road. It has a population of approximately 700 people, some of whom live in houses in the village centre, and some of whom live in houses located on their land outside the main village. The local language is Akan, and most of the population describe themselves as ethnic Ashanti and Christian. There are also a small number of minority ethnic groups from the North of Ghana, who practice Islam. Most people in the village are farmers (growing crops for subsistence and petty trading, some growing cocoa as a cash crop), with a minority of people engaged in other trading or jobs outside the community, such as drivers. The community has electricity, water pumps, a few churches and a primary school, but no health centre or other services. To access other services, Daekrom residents need to travel to Trede or Kumasi.

### 4.3 Zambia

**Violence against women and girls is widespread in Zambia.** The existing data on the prevalence of VAWG is limited and is often not disaggregated by district. Nonetheless, the existing studies show that the problem is widespread and acute. The perpetrators of physical and sexual violence include current or previous husbands and partners, other family members, acquaintances, teachers and strangers. Violence is perpetrated within the community, family and schools, and is often underreported due to fear of shame and stigma, fear of retaliation, lack of efficient responses and redress, and lack of financial independence of women. Existing studies on VAWG in Zambia point to the following **risk factors** for VAWG:

- **Living in urban areas**: Women in urban areas are more likely to report having experienced violence, both physical violence (50% versus 44% in rural areas) and sexual violence (23% versus 18%).

- **Marital status**: Women who are divorced/separated/widowed reported a significantly higher incidence of violence than single women.

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108. Figure provided by the District Assembly Member for Akwima Kwanwoma District in which Mpatasie is located.  
109. Figure provided by the District Assembly Member for Akwima Kwanwoma District in which Mpatasie is located.  
111. Ibid.
A qualitative study of violence in schools found that girls between the ages of 14-18 are the most likely to experience sexual assault. The most common perpetrator for this violence is a family member, although a significant number of cases report a teacher or other student (about one third).115

Substance abuse: According to one study, alcohol abuse is strongly correlated with partner abuse. Women whose husbands are often drunk are more likely to experience physical or sexual violence than women whose husbands do not drink (70% and 39%).116

Seasonality: In several regions in Zambia, including the Southern region, VAWG is more prevalent during the marketing season for the farming community and during pay-days for those in employment. This is because there is more disposable income available and this can lead to disputes within families about how that money will be spent. For example, if a man receives pay and uses this to purchase alcohol, this can be the trigger for violence when he returns home.117

Discriminatory social norms towards women and girls: Studies find that VAWG is closely linked to women’s socio-economic status, which is in turn closely linked to education level, as well as to patriarchal beliefs that reinforce men’s and boys’ dominance over women and girls.118 VAWG is also perpetuated by cultural beliefs, as well as practices such as initiation ceremonies and payment of bride price, which further reinforce male perceptions of their superiority over women. These beliefs lead women to stay submissive, obedient and silent even when they are physically, sexually and mentally abused.119

Table 3: Violence against women and girls in Zambia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Zambia</th>
<th>Mazabuka district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of women in Zambia have suffered from physical violence at some point since age 15 (2007)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women who reported having experienced violence in the 12 months preceding the survey (2007)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women reported having suffered from spousal or partner abuse at some point in time, whether physical, emotional, or sexual (2007)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women who did not report the incident or seek help after experiencing violence (2007)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of girls aged 13-15 in Zambia that have been forced to have sex (2009)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases reported to ASAZA between 2008 and 2011</td>
<td>18,282</td>
<td>2633</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2007112; Brown et al 2009113; ASAZA report 2011114

115. Pathfinders Consultants (2005) Gender Based Violence A Situation in Chadiza, Chibombo, Mansa and Mazabuka, PLAN
• **Social tolerance of VAWG:** The overwhelming majority of the women in Zambia (85%) justify IPV as acceptable for reasons relating to the ‘appropriate’ role of women.120

• **Socio-economic factors:** Poverty is also a major contributing factor to VAWG. One qualitative study has found that GBV is linked to poverty and control of resources.121

For many women, seeking help results in having to confront not only the abuser, but also key members of the family and the justice system, which can in turn result in social isolation, loss of personal security, homelessness and loss of financial support to care for children. Often, therefore women have little choice but to continue living in situations of abuse.122

In terms of the legal, policy and institutional context, Zambia has an extensive set of overlapping policies and legislative frameworks relating to GBV. (See box 3).

In Zambia, the research for this study took place in the Hanzala and Nkonkola areas in Mazabuka District, Southern Province.

**Nkonkola and Hanzala areas:** Rural communities located between 80 and 95 km (a two hour drive) from Mazabuka town. The route to Nkonkola and Hanzala from Mazabuka is paved only for the first 20 km. The remaining distance is reached via a dirt track, which during the rainy season can become difficult to pass. The area comprises several small villages and clusters of houses. It has an estimated population of 6,000 (2010). It falls within the traditional chiefdom of Chief Hanjelika. The local language is Tonga. Most of the population describe themselves as ethnic Tonga and Christian. Most people are subsistence farmers and some grow crops/raise animals for cash trading and producing commodities such as cotton and milk. The area has no electricity, although there are electricity lines that pass through en-route to the mining region in the Copperbelt. In the villages, in some cases there are communal water pumps, and each dwelling has a composting latrine. In Nkonokola, there are two public schools – a school for grades 1 – 9 and a high school for grades 10 -12 – and a Catholic school with students mostly from urban areas. Hanzalaa has one public school for grades 1 – 9. Though there was a police post recently established within the Catholic school premises, cases of VAWG tend to be registered in town after a medical doctor has examined and certified the survivor of violence. Registration is done in town as that is where the only Victim Support Unit (VSU) for the whole district is accessed. A person cannot register a complaint without a certified report from a medical institution. In Mazabuka town there is also an ASAZA (one-stop centre for sexual and gender-based violence) situated at the hospital, a police precinct with the only Victim Support Unit (VSU), and Magistrate’s Court. In the Nkonkola and Hanzala areas there are no shelters for survivors of violence or any other direct service providers for survivors.

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120. Reasons are: burning food, going without informing the partner, neglecting the children, arguing with the partner, and refusing sexual intercourse with the partner. Women with a history of IPV were at higher risk of justifying IPV than peers without IPV experience. See Lawoko, S. (2005) Factors Associated with Attitudes Toward Intimate Partner Violence: A Study of Women in Zambia Violence and Victims Volume 21 Issue 5 Pages:645 to 656

121. opcit. Pathfinders Consultants (2005)

Box 7: Zambia: The legal, policy and institutional environment

Legal

- Zambia is a signatory of and has ratified the African charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) and the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa.
- Zambia is a signatory of and has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- The Constitution guarantees the formal equality of women and men, and prohibits discrimination based on gender and marital status. But it has a reservation article 23, which states that the equality clause does not include “adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property on death and other matters of family law.”
- Anti-Gender-Based Violence Act No. 1 of 2011 provides for the protection of survivors of gender-based violence. It defines GBV as harassment, physical abuse, economic abuse and sexual abuse. Any survivor of GBV is entitled to free medical treatment and medical report. The act also provides services to survivors of GBV.
- The Penal Code provides for indecent assault, including bodily harm and sexual harassment. Women who have suffered physical injury as a result of domestic violence may sue their husbands for damages in the civil court. The Penal Code criminalises sexual violence including rape (but not marital rape) and defilement.

Policy

- The Fifth National Development Plan (2006-2010) recognises that: "(g)ender based violence is a critical area of concern particularly in cases relating to girls’ and women’s rights and its contribution to the spread of HIV". The Plan’s objectives include strengthening the Penal Code in relation to GBV, and facilitating the enactment of a GBV bill, which was passed in 2011.
- The National Action Plan on Gender Based Violence in Zambia 2008-2013 aims to eliminate GBV through multi-sectoral, and multi-dimensional approaches, and provide appropriate care and services to survivors of GBV. The NAP outlines various challenges including the lack of a coordinated response across government departments and ministries, the role of customary law at the local level, and gaps in the enforcement of legislation.

Institutions mandated to play a role in the prevention of and response to VAWG:

- A Safer Zambia (ASAZA) project set up referral networks to deliver access to comprehensive services for GBV survivors to meet their medical, psychological and legal needs. ASAZAs continue to function on reduced resources provided by the Department of Health.
- Victim Support Units (VSU) have been installed within police stations to support VAWG survivors and prosecute cases. The most recent statistics show a significant gap between the number of cases reported to ASAZA and those reported to the police. Numbers of official cases withdrawn are falling, but remain high.

Gaps in policy and legislation

- Marital rape not covered by legislation.
- Exception within the legislation for customary law.
- Gaps between the legislation aimed at GBV and the enforcement of the legislation.

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126. Ibid.
127. A CARE-led project funded by USAID and the European Union (EU) grant for the Expansion of the Coordinated Response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Zambia project, which ran from September 2007 to December 2011.
5.0 Programme Approaches in the Three Countries

The programmes in the three countries have different approaches and intervention models at community-level, which are summarised below. The following are the common elements in all three programmes:

- **The role of the women’s rights organisation (WRO):** In each context, the partner WRO plays a key role in awareness raising, capacity building and mentoring at community level to support community members and groups to make changes in their own individual attitudes and behaviours and then to support wider change in their own communities.

- **Focus on individual attitude and behaviour change and social norm change:** The three programmes have a common objective of tackling known risk factors for VAWG by working to change both individual attitudes and behaviours as well as wider social norms that support VAWG and gender inequalities.

- **Women’s rights are central:** All three programmes recognise the importance of focusing on the rights of women and girls as an effective way to tackle gender inequality, which is identified as a root cause of VAWG. In the case of Siqqee in Ethiopia, this includes ensuring women-only spaces are available. In the case of WFC in Zambia, the work is based on adult education principles – Participatory Education Methodologies – which is an empowering approach for social change.

- **Group-based interventions:** The main interventions of all three programmes are group-level interventions e.g. self-help groups and community conversation groups in Ethiopia; Community Based Action Teams (COMBATs) in Ghana, and Area Associations in Zambia.

- **Individual transformation is key:** All three programmes are based on the premise that individuals (in self-help groups,
COMBATs, Area Associations) first need to undergo a process of personal transformation of their own attitudes and behaviours before they can realise their rights and then support others to change.

- **Use of community-level dialogues or conversations:** All three programmes facilitate dialogues at community level, which draw on human rights principles to support community members to reflect on their values, beliefs, attitudes and practices and those prevalent in their communities.

- **Strategic engagement with community leaders and men:** All three programmes have adopted a strategy of engaging with community leaders – elected, religious or traditional – as well as male community members as a building block to bring about change.

- **Work on all forms of VAWG present in the community:** None of the programmes focus solely on one manifestation of VAWG, but they work to address all forms of violence experienced by women and girls in the communities.

The **key differences between the programme approaches are:**

- **Programme objectives:** The Ghana and Ethiopia programmes have reduction in VAWG as explicit objectives, where the Zambia organisation works more broadly for gender equality – although reducing violence is one of the priorities the women express. However, none of the programmes have effectively measured whether the projects impacted on the prevalence or incidence of VAWG in the target communities. This is largely because measurement of this outcome requires a representative quantitative measure (e.g. via a household survey or self-administered questionnaire), which requires greater funding for monitoring and evaluation than was available for these projects, and measurement over a longer-time period. Instead, all three programmes have sought to measure impact of attitude, behaviour and social norm change.

- **Platforms for intervention:** In Ethiopia, interventions are via women’s self-help groups set up to support women’s economic and social empowerment plus community conversation sessions involving various community leaders and influential stakeholders (mainly men). In Ghana, the programme works mainly through COMBATs – elected groups of community members that work to prevent and respond to VAWG. In Zambia, the key intervention platform is via community-led mobilisation and popular education. This includes Area Associations, led by women, but which include men. They are established by women and men from the local communities who have been trained and supported by WFC to work on individual, family and community change towards greater respect for women’s rights.

5.1 Ethiopia: Women’s Empowerment and Reduction of Harmful Practices programme (WERHP)

‘By taking a community and rights based approach, which develops the social, economic and human capital of individuals and groups of women and men, there will be positive effects upon a

### Key terms

**Community Conversation Groups:** Participatory reflection by community members, men and women, drawing on human rights principles to discuss VAWG including female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices. This can include community leaders and religious leaders.

**Self-Help Groups:** Kebele-based financial committees which enable women to pool savings and provide micro-credit. Siiqqee’s SHGs also receive training in FGM, HTPs and VAWG issues.

**Cluster Level Associations:** Second-level committees formed of representatives from 8-10 SHGs, and responsible for coordinating the work of SHGs (including on VAWG), mobilising additional credit, and engaging with governance structures.
range of personal and behavioural outcomes for programme participants, which will contribute to shifts in specific gender norms and expectations that underpin VAWG, traditional gender roles and HTPs. Siiqqee’s hypothesis for change

Siiqqee’s WERHP project is an economic and social empowerment programme with the overall aim to reduce VAWG and HTPs through increasing women and girls’ knowledge and communities’ capacity to support survivors and prevent violence. The project targets women, community and religious leaders, traditional healers, and men and women elders. The key components of Siiqqee’s approach are:

(i) Increasing community awareness of HTPs and capacity to support survivors and prevent new cases. Trained community facilitators carry out awareness raising training and dialogue activities with key stakeholders such as religious leaders, community representatives, CBO leaders, government officials, business owners and elders through monthly community conversation sessions. Key activities include:

- Forming anti-HTP Committees at kebele and district levels.
- Training community facilitators and Committees to facilitate community conversations.
- Organising community conversation groups to raise awareness and develop actions.
- Training community conversation members to conduct awareness raising and dialogue in their own constituencies.
- Training SHG members on HTPs and VAWG issues, as well as reporting mechanisms.

(ii) Increasing the skills and capacities of poor women in self-help groups to address HTPs within their families and communities.

- Forming 80 self-help groups.
- Facilitating regular meetings, groups discussions and encouraging rotational leadership.
- Facilitating meetings with self-help group members to discuss engaging with local government.

- Providing training on business development, leadership skills and assertiveness, awareness raising on gender issues, and VAWG including HTPs.
- Providing information and support to self-help groups to access micro-credit and loans.

(iii) Supporting the community to respond to VAWG, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and other HTPs.

- Encouraging community members to support survivors to report cases to community institutions or government authorities.
- Supporting survivors to access legal support services.
- Referring survivors to medical and counselling services.

(iv) Increasing awareness amongst local government officials about HTPs and building capacity to improve services. Key activities include:

- Conducting workshops and training sessions for local government officials.
- Organising meetings with government departments to discuss specific actions they can take.

(v) Establishing self-help groups and community conversations as sustainable, self-governing community institutions. In Year 3, the project created eight Cluster Level Associations in each kebele. These function as the higher-level body of self-help groups, comprised by 10-12 self-help groups in each kebele. They coordinate self-help group activities, supporting women to establish further groups, and providing training to women on leadership and business management. A Cluster Level Association Federation has also been established as a legal entity enabling self-help groups to carry out human rights work within the CSO legislation. Specific activities include:

- Supporting Cluster Level Associations with training on helping women to set up self-help groups.
- Training Cluster Level Association members on leadership and management of clusters.
• Supporting members to develop business plans and budgets.

(vi) Sustainability: In Year four, the project is strengthening the existing 80 self-help groups and community conversation sessions in eight kebeles. The project considers that its sustainability lies in:

• The work of Cluster Level Associations to support self-help groups.
• The continued functioning of the self-help groups.
• The increased skills, capacities and empowerment of women.
• The continued functioning of anti-HP committees.

Siqqee’s programme theory is as follows:

• Supporting women through providing information on their rights, safe spaces, and economic empowerment initiatives enables women to assert these rights, contributing to a wider shift in power relations in the household and community.
• Supporting female and male community conversation members to become informed of women’s rights enables members to identify and put in place local solutions, integrate these practices into their own lives and support a wider change in the practices of community members.
• Together changes will contribute to a wider shift in social norms surrounding gender roles, and violence including HTPs amongst direct and indirect programme participants in intervention areas.
5.2 Ghana: The Nkyinkyim (COMBAT) programme

The programme approach in Ghana is a multi-pronged community mobilisation prevention and response intervention, which seeks to bring about change in individual knowledge and behaviours as well as broader social norms by working at different levels: individual, couples/families, community and authorities. The two key outcomes specified for the Nkyinkyim programme were: (i) Reduction in domestic violence by at least 40% in the two target communities; (ii) Women in two intervention communities have greater access to justice and other services. The main interventions of the programme are:

(i) Selection, training and mentoring of Community-Based Action Teams (COMBATs): The COMBAT model developed by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (GSHRDC) has been used for over a decade in Ghana to work on a variety of issues at community-level including HIV prevention, improving water and sanitation, promoting gender equality and securing women’s rights. Community members help to select a team of 10 community members – five women and five men – to be trained to take actions to prevent and respond to VAWG. The 10 individuals are chosen to represent different groups within the community – for example by age, religion – and as individuals that are well-respected and known to be non-violent. The COMBAT members undertake a series of training modules on: Violence Against Women; Counselling; Conflict Resolution; the Rural Response System; and family laws. Their role is to provide a community-based mechanism to complement, link to and strengthen the work of state agencies and traditional rulers to form a functioning Rural Response System. In addition to the training they receive the COMBATs are mentored by Window of Hope Foundation staff through COMBAT reflection sessions twice a month. This involves documentation and review of cases and how they were handled, ongoing training and lesson learning.

(ii) Community sensitisation sessions: The partner women’s rights organisation (WRO) Window of Hope Foundation also conducts a series of community sensitisation sessions working with the COMBAT teams in each community. This often takes the form of a community gathering where specific topics are discussed and might integrate the use of drama or may involve a representative of a state agency (e.g. police) coming to talk about their role and work, and the laws. There are also sessions which provide opportunity for community members to give their views on the implementation of the Rural Response System, the work of the COMBATs and the changes they are seeing in the community.

(iii) Sensitisation with traditional and religious leaders: Window of Hope Foundation also undertakes specific work with community traditional and religious leaders – initially to gain their support for the project to be implemented in their community and then to try to shift their knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to champion change in the wider community.

(iv) Training and dialogue with State Agencies: Window of Hope Foundation undertakes a series of training sessions with key state agencies (e.g. police, Social Welfare Department, Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice) which undertake both prevention and response work. The aim is to connect them with the COMBATs at community level to

Key terms

COMBAT: Community-Based Action Teams consisting of men and women community members selected by their communities and then trained to take action to prevent and respond to VAWG.

Rural Response System: A mechanism and set of agreed procedures to be followed by the COMBAT and other communities to deal with VAWG cases, ensuring cases are referred to the relevant authorities where appropriate.
form a functioning referral network (Rural Response System) and to ensure they have the capacity to respond to reported and suspected cases of violence against women and girls in line with the law and respecting women’s rights.

There is no documented theory of change for the Rural Response System/COMBAT approach. However, there is an established and systematic approach to work at community level and a very clear guide authored by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre, which sets out the approach to establishing a Rural Response System with the COMBATs. This sets out the logic of the approach in terms of the problems to be addressed and gives a step-by-step guide to setting up the Rural Response System and COMBATs. It also sets the following list of interim results for the approach:

- Increasing visibility of VAWG
- Establishing community-based response teams
- Developing referral systems
- Strengthening traditional systems to resolve violence against women
- Developing a graded sanctioning system

## Roles of the COMBATs

- **Crisis intervention:** When a VAWG survivor reports a case of violence to a COMBAT member, the COMBAT will intervene to provide support, information and guidance for the survivor. Traditional leaders also sometimes call on COMBATS.

- **Accompanying survivor to report to state agencies:** As needed, COMBAT members accompany VAWG survivors to seek other services e.g. reporting to the police, seeking medical attention or reporting to other state agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare. They also try to maintain a network of contacts with state agencies.

- **Providing counselling to VAWG survivors:** On the basis of their training, COMBAT members explain all available options to the survivor and support her to make her own decision.

- **Mediation and follow-up:** At the request of the survivor, COMBAT members can provide mediation in a case with a view to preventing further violence and coming to a resolution. They will also engage in follow up and visit the survivor and her partner and/or family following the mediation.

- **Implementing sanctions, where applicable:** The COMBAT can work with the community and traditional leaders to develop a system of graded sanctions for perpetrators of violence. For example, this might include obliging a man to pay maintenance to his children.

- **Sensitising community on issues on violence against women:** The COMBATs also undertake primary prevention work to create awareness and sensitise the community about harmful effects of violence, the benefits of a relationship based on equality and the importance of women speaking out about violence. This is achieved through community meetings, undertaking activities at community festivals or in religious institutions and through house-to-house visits.

## Mentoring and support: GSHRDC and WHF

The Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (GSHDRC) is an NGO established in 1995 to address the pressing need to integrate women’s concerns and perspectives into mainstream programmes, projects and policies addressing social and development issues in Ghana. The GSHDRC has been developing and refining the Community Based Action Teams (COMBAT) model over the last 12 years. The GSHDRC approach is not to implement the model directly in communities, but to work with local women’s right organisations within or close to communities. In the case of the Nkyinkyim project, GSHDRC worked in collaboration with Window of Hope Foundation (WHF), an organisation with a ground-level presence in the targeted region.

GSHDRC mentored and supported WHF to roll out the project across the two communities and used its expertise to facilitate the training of the COMBATs. GSHDRC also led on the monitoring of the project and used learning from the community work to inform its advocacy at the national level to call for the implementation of policies and resources to ensure women and girl survivors of violence can access justice. This approach draws on the strengths of local women’s rights organisations to promote the rights of women and girls, but recognising that they are often unable to access funding alone and that a partnership with a national women’s rights organisation enables this to happen.
5.3 Zambia: Popular Education for Community-led Mobilisation Approach

‘[G]ender equality in social, political and economic development, which is evident through improved livelihoods, claim making with duty bearers, participatory exchange of knowledge, increased women’s and youth participation in decision making at all levels, increased assertiveness, enhanced skills among women and youth, reduction in maternal death, reduced cases of early and unwanted pregnancies, access to health services, influencing policy formulation and implementation.’

(WFC’s definition of gender equality)

WFC adopts a community mobilisation approach based on long-term popular education methodology and movement building at the local level to work for the goal of gender equality. The aim is to raise a critical mass of people that are able to demand their rights and increase gender sensitive and human rights focused citizen-led interventions. Women For Change’s (WFC) approach is strongly rooted in a women’s rights-based approach, which aims to foster women’s economic and political empowerment through community-based organisations that are self-sustaining. WFC’s approach is characterised by the quality and depth of the engagement of the field animators with the communities involved—often over a number of years — for periods of three weeks at a time. These interventions are not directly a response to incidences of VAWG, but they target the root causes of and risk factors that contribute to VAWG, especially harmful gender norms and discriminatory practices that marginalise women and children. WFC works simultaneously at the personal, family, village and societal levels through the following mechanisms:

- **The formation of Area Associations at the local level in rural areas:** The key positions of Chairperson and Treasurer are held by women, while other positions are competed for equally between women and men. The Area Associations are formed when 10-12 Groups (lowest level structure) come together and are represented by an Executive Committee comprising two representatives from each group.

**Key terms**

**Area Association:** Locally based association of community groups, formed by community members as a result of training and support by WFC. Led by women, but open to men and women to participate. The goal of these structures is to empower women and girls to act as agents of transformative social, political and economic change. Area Associations work at the individual, family and community levels, providing direct support to survivors of VAWG and their families; and also work to address the causes of VAWG.

**Field animators:** Field animators are WFC staff that promote community-led development by living and working in rural areas for extended periods of time. Field animators are highly trained facilitators and educators and use a range of popular education and participatory approaches to provide gender training. They support the creation of Area Associations and other community-led groups.

**Popular Education Methodology:** This approach draws on popular education and participatory practice in development. According to the WFC manual on popular education methodologies, they work to support empowerment and collective learning to help people develop sustainable strategies for social change. Topics covered through the WFC popular education manual include:

- The difference between participatory education and traditional education;
- Learning styles and popular education;
- Levels of awareness and consciousness about social issues (from closed consciousness to liberating and transforming consciousness);
- Participatory analysis tools (the development tree, River Bank role play, critical analysis);
- Planning tools
- Facilitation

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133. Woman for Change Theory of change strategy draft (n.d.)
“Being able to earn an income, and increased status within the household, has enabled women to develop greater confidence”

In districts where there is a long-standing presence of WFC, such as Mazabuka, Area Associations have come together to establish District Development Associations to coordinate the work of the Associations. Membership in the group is open to both men and women though the majority of members are women because of WFC affirmative action.

Groups, Area Associations and District Development Associations are created through a process of participatory education focused on gender equality, human rights (including the rights of women and girls), and economic empowerment through sustainable livelihoods strategies. The goal of these structures is to empower women and girls to act as agents of transformative social, political and economic change.

Community members form the Area Associations with support and mentoring by WFC field animators and programme staff. The intention of WFC is that these women-led community groups become independent entities that are self-sustaining. They are encouraged to establish new linkages and join alliances that would help bring about the desired social change.

The Area Associations function at several levels:

- **At the individual level**, in terms of the personal transformation and education of women and men around gender norms and rights, and the development of women's capabilities of leadership and expression, the training of other community members in gender issues, and increasing skills for livelihoods.

- **At the level of families**, through direct interventions by the Area Associations in situations related to violence (and other gender issues) within families that are brought to their attention, and through providing training and support in sustainable livelihoods for female and child-households.

- **At the level of group formation and collective action** by creating the sustainable capacity for collective action at the local level in rural areas around issues of women's political and economic empowerment, and by providing opportunities for exchange with other groups and networks in other districts and countries in the region.

- **At the district level**, Areas Associations hold open community workshops on gender, including sensitisation on GBV; they work with traditional leaders to challenge negative traditional practices that perpetuate VAWG; and they conduct public communication (through drama, radio, and billboards).

- **Building relationships with local power holders**, including traditional leaders, religious leaders, educators and representatives of district government to support gender equality. Field animators also work to establish relationships of trust with key local stakeholders in the regions where they are supporting Area Associations. They involve these stakeholders in their activities in order to build alliances with them that support the goal of gender equality.

- **Advocacy at the national level through networks and civil society platforms** to press the Zambian government for gender sensitive laws and policies. The goal of this element of the work is to move towards a society that supports and upholds women's rights.

WFC began working in Mazabuka area in 1992 and community members formed the first Area Associations in the region around 1994. Although there is a long history of WFC’s interventions in Mazabuka, this report refers mainly to activities undertaken between 2007 and 2010, when WFC received funding from Comic Relief via One World Action, and from the European Union. During this period, WFC operated primarily through core funding for the organisational approach described.
6.1 Factors that support VAWG or act as barriers to change

Across the three programme contexts, there were a number of **recurrent and common factors** that made VAWG perpetration more likely or acted as barriers to reducing the incidence and prevalence of VAWG and improving gender equality:

**Discriminatory gender norms:** These include norms which proscribe women a lower status than men and where dominant forms of masculinity stress male entitlement to discipline and control of women, including through violence. Norms act as powerful motivators either for or against individual attitudes and behaviours, largely because individuals who deviate from group expectations are subject to shaming, sanctions or disapproval by others who are important to them.

“My husband used to undermine me, thinking he was the greater one, and using his power to abuse me. He harmed me thinking I am not important, and that I couldn’t hurt him back.”
(Woman self-help group member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

“Our fathers taught us that men were head of the house and always have the last word. This is why they are authoritarian with women. Because of this men did not do the work in the house that they could do. Also if a woman wanted to trade, the man would say no.”
(Male COMBAT member, Daekrom, Ghana)

“[W]hen I say the relationship is traditional, it means the relationship is very clear. Meaning it is a kind of biased relationship, so I am a man, you are a woman, I am a boy, you a girl; so the man,
the boy is looked upon as someone who should gain this, gain that, lead us (girls and women). The woman is just supposed to follow what she is told.
(Religious leader, Mazabuka District, Zambia)

Women's economic status: Women's economic dependency on men and men's actions that try to prevent women from achieving economic independence. Social norms also legitimise male control of assets and limit women's ability to engage economically outside of the home.

“They [men] need women to fail; they do not want women reaching for the goals because they think 'I will not get her if she reaches a good position’.”
(Female self-help group member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

“Women are often not allowed to be financially independent. Men try to keep women from this.”
(Male COMBAT team member, Daekrom, Ghana)

“I see the main cause [of VAWG] was the lack of consensus on finances. It combined with the male attitude and patriarchal culture of 'since I married you, you are mine to control. And since you work for me, I have the right to pocket and control use of all resources coming to us’.”
(Male traditional leader & COMBAT member Mpatasie, Ghana)

“I realised that what was happening to me was a violation of my rights. My husband did not allow me to have my own field where I could grow crops and earn money from”.
(Female Area Association member, Nkonkola, Zambia)

“When family members discuss gender based violence, they always consider the remaining family members who have not been abused and fear that if the abuser is arrested there will be no one to take care of the rest of family. Usually these abusers are the breadwinners in the family so they are feared and respected so much that no one dares to report them to the authorities. That is reason why most of the women whose rights are violated choose not to claim their rights.”
(Women for Change programme staff member in focus group discussion, Zambia)

Women's status: Woman's status is culturally linked to marriage and there is a strong emphasis on the preservation of marriage – even if this means that the woman stays in an abusive relationship.

“I decided to tolerate the beating rather than allowing my children to be disturbed. We all know that children love both their father and mother; and so we have to tolerate our beating and sacrifice ourselves for the sake of our children.”
(Female community conversation member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

“When a violence case is referred to community elders, as much as possible an effort is made to return the woman back to the home through advice.”
(Community elder, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

“DOVVSU has the mandate to maintain peace in the home... but we need to decide whether if we send the offender to court, will this bring peace? This is our dilemma... at the end of the day, our role is to maintain absolute peace in the home.”
(Police Officer (male), Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit, Kumasi, Ghana)

“Most [women who are physically abused] will come to report to us, but then in the course of the investigations, the family will intervene due to the fear of a broken marriage. Because of this, not all assault cases go to court... unless the complainant is willing to pursue despite all the pressure.”
(Police Officer (male), Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit, Kumasi, Ghana)

“Here society frowns on divorces and separations, especially in religious communities.”
(Male representative, National Commission on Civic Education, Kumasi, Ghana)

Acceptance of harmful traditional practices: In Ghana and Zambia, if a woman's husband dies, her in-laws will often eject her from the house without giving her any land or other property. There is also a tradition that the brother of the deceased husband can have sexual access to
the widowed wife. In Ethiopia, FGM is widespread, and is practised in the belief that it controls girls’ sexual activity, keeps them from being unruly and ensures they remain faithful to their husbands.

“There are women who say that it is shameful not to circumcise their girls. There is also peer pressure among girls themselves.”
(Community conversation group member, Darge kebele).

“In fact, there are girls who are naturally very fast/active, and community members suspect that they behave in this way because they have not been circumcised. FGM is widely considered to keep girls from becoming unruly, and to control their sexual activity.”
(Husband of self-help member, Ethiopia).

Tolerance of domestic violence: Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is seen as a private family matter and is often tolerated in communities with a culture of silence surrounding violence in the home.

“Who will take her to legal bodies if a woman does not even tell her mother about the violence?”
(Self-help group member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

“We women, we do not want to expose private issues in public. For example, your husband will hit you and when a friend asks you, you do not want to expose these private issues. We cherish our marriages so much, because of our children.”
(Female representative of Girls Education Service, Kumasi, Ghana)

“The women cannot speak for themselves. Thus she did not get help from anyone.”
(Female member of Area Association, Nkonkola, Zambia)

Lack of knowledge of rights: Women have little knowledge about women’s rights and may not understand certain acts as violent.

“[F]or them beating a wife was normal, if you don’t beat your wife it means you don’t love her, and are not concerned about her. And the women themselves were proud of being beaten, they used to say, what’s wrong with my husband beating me, because am like his child. They were deeply rooted in their traditions; they didn’t believe there was anything like gender based violence, for them it was normal.”
(WFC programme staff member in focus group discussion, Zambia)
Parallel legal systems: Many VAWG cases are settled using customary and traditional systems of justice, which often discriminate against women and girls. Sometimes, cases are reported to the formal system, only to be withdrawn due to family pressures to follow traditional mechanisms. In addition, formal justice can be inaccessible (in terms of distance, formality of procedures and language). Cases are also sometimes withdrawn from formal justice hearings because of the time, cost and complex procedures.

“If the woman sends the case [physical abuse] to DOVVSU, sometimes the man, when he realises there is a problem, comes here and asks me to intervene and I will sometimes go to court and withdraw the cases. I will then call the woman and the mother and father of the woman and persuade the woman that it is better to keep the peace at home. If she agrees, I withdraw the case and then the judge asks me to report on how it was settled... This happens a few times a year that I am asked to withdraw cases from court and mediate instead.”
(District Assembly Member for Daekrom and Mpataste, Ghana)

“In some areas, when I was a counsellor I took it upon myself to report such issues directly to the police. And sometimes I could even make people be apprehended and taken to the police, but I faced a lot of disappointments, you’ll find that you report the matter to the police, but at the end of the day, you will find that those people have settled the matter out of court.”
(Male former Ward Councillor, Nkonkola, Zambia)

Lack of capacity of state actors: State actors lack the capacities, skills and resources to respond effectively to violence, which can perpetuate impunity. In some cases, state officials are also corrupt – eroding women’s access to justice and undermining confidence in formal state processes.

“A little girl of 10 or 12 was raped by a boy. She accused him, but the case was closed by corruption and the boy went unpunished. Since then, everybody says ‘what happen to the perpetrators – nothing’.”
(Self-help group member, Darge kebele, Ethiopia)

“So in fighting this problem GBV, we find the challenges like transport. Chivuna police post covers a vast area with a population of approximately 16,000 people, and the area is too vast. The only transport that we depend on is Mazabuka transport; as you can see, we do not have any transport around this area.”
(Male police officer, Nkonkola, Mazabuka Police Post, Zambia)

Lack of long-term and core funding: Lack of services for survivors of violence, particular shelters/refuges, severely curtails the options available to women if they decide to leave a violent partner. This is aggravated by the lack of long-term, sustainable and core funding for VAWG work, including for specialist WROs, which result in gaps in services for survivors and inhibits the ability of organisations to deliver long-term social change which requires sustained investment. For example, lack of core funding for Siiqqee has resulted in:
- Limited capacity to recruit additional skilled programme support.
- Lack of access to basic equipment required to access communities for example vehicles.
- Inhibits ability to take a holistic approach.

Reprisals: Fear of reprisals often limited the ability of women and girls to report crimes. Reprisals could be carried out by women’s partners, extended family, traditional leaders or other members of the community. In some cases reprisals were carried out by a combination of these groups.

“One of my neighbours, who used to be a Siiqqee member, was abused by her husband who had also taken another wife. One day the husband attacked her with a knife, so she ran away but had to leave her child behind. She reported the case to the police and the husband threatened to kill her during the night. The husband’s parents also got involved, saying that she should have tolerated the violence and
that they would get revenge from her and family for reporting to the police. In the end she had to sell her property, and is now living in Adama.”
(Community conversation group member, Darge kebele, Ethiopia)

There were also a number of factors and barriers identified specific to each programme context:

**Perceived lack of knowledge:** In Ethiopia, it was perceived that women lack knowledge or abilities to contribute to society outside of childbirth or the home. Women in turn internalised these attitudes.

“People perceive women know nothing. There is a saying that women can do nothing outside the kitchen. This still influences women and that is why they are forced to live being economically dependent on men.”
(Religious leader, Nekemte town, Ethiopia)

“Traditionally it was said that ‘dubartiin beekaa hin qabdu beeka dhalti malee’ – there is no wisdom in woman; but she bears wise men.”
(Community conversation group member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

**Lack of women only spaces:** In Ethiopia, there was also a lack of opportunities for women to come together, exchange ideas and start joint economic or social initiatives.

“She does not go the death ceremony. She does not go to the marriage ceremony. She does not talk to people. She has no relationship with the women in the community. She does not go to community meetings. She does not drink coffee with us. She stays in the home always.”
(Community conversation group member Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

**Tensions over household finances:** In Ghana, there is often a lack of transparency between women and men over income they each earn from sales of vegetables or cash crops or trading. This has caused significant mistrust.

“[P]reviously when I went to the farm, the man said do what you can and when the money came, I did not tell him and used the money just for the children. There was no coordination in the house, just disagreements.”
(Woman direct participant, Daekrom, Ghana).

**Lack of recognition of girl’s rights:** In Zambia and Ethiopia, there was a lack of recognition of violations of girls’ rights, including sexual violence.

“[The father] denied the charge [of rape/incest] claiming that no one had rights over his daughter. He said that he was the one who brought this child on earth and therefore could do whatever he wanted with her.”
(Female Area Association member, Tuyake, Zambia)

“If someone steals a mobile, the owner will report the thief, and the thief may be punished. However, the family of a girl who has been harassed will not give this any importance. The girl herself will not think to accuse/charge her harasser.”
(Police officer, Nekemte town, Ethiopia)

**Lack of family support:** In Ethiopia, there were markedly few examples of women experiencing violence turning to their families for support. Most women rely on neighbours to support them in reporting violence, mediating between a woman and her husband, or giving women a place to stay when they need to leave the house.

6.2 Factors that Enable Change

Across the three programme contexts, several common factors and processes were identified that enabled positive changes in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals and helped to shift social norms:

**Awareness of VAWG:** Increased individual awareness of the negative consequences of VAWG for women, men, children, families and communities through personal experience or sensitisation work.

“Siiqee’s awareness raising has made women less tolerant of violence from their husbands, and increased their awareness about seeking their rights through the formal legal system.”
(Self-help group member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)
“The community will be stigmatised if there is violence against women. It will block the development of the community and be a burden on families and the community.”
(Female community member, Daekrom, Ghana)

“I have also determined from that personal experience growing up, to unite firmly with my husband to support and maintain our children. And we are united in doing this. He has a paid job but I do not have a stable job. We try our hands at everything, farming, trading anything to bring in an income to maintain our children. So our father [who neglected her and her siblings] taught us a terrible lesson.”
(Female community member, Daekrom, Ghana)

“The knowledge we have about how to deal with such cases [of violence against women and children] was our strength.”
(Female Area Association member, Nkonkola, Zambia)

**Modelling new behaviours:** Community members (individuals and couples) modelling new behaviours that influence others.

“Siiqqee’s project has shown the community that women can work in the same way as men, and these are real changes.”
(Husband of self-help group member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

“There was one female circumciser who broke her razor in public saying that she will not do it again because of Siiqqee’s awareness raising education.”
(Community elder and community conversation member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

**Commitment by community leaders:** Strong commitment to and leadership of change by community leaders – particularly traditional leaders in these three contexts.

“If we want a coffee cup cleaned, we will order the girl and not the boy. Often boys have nothing to do other than sit around and eat. We should ask boys to share the workload, so that he cleans the cup while she makes the coffee, and he grinds the coffee after he has roasted it.”
(Community elder and community conversation group member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

“Some things have changed. For example, when a child falls sick, we advise men to take their child to the hospital and some men now do this.”
(Female traditional leader, Daekrom, Ghana)
Public condemnation of VAWG: Community members and leaders speaking out publically to condemn VAWG or to act against it.

“There are still some problems in the community regarding FGM. For instance, there are women who say that it is shameful not to circumcise their girls. When I hear this, I speak out loudly against such attitudes, and such types of women.”
(Community conversation group member, Darge kebele, Ethiopia)

Women offering mutual support to one another, for example intervening to stop violence or supporting women to get medical and other help.

“I have been involved in several mediations in cases of domestic violence. If I hear that a woman in my neighbourhood needs support, I am the first to arrive there to stop the violence.”
(Self-help group member, Kese kebele)

“I am among the many women who assist other women who need help.”
(Female Area Association member, Tuyake, Zambia)

In addition, there were a number of factors and processes identified that were specific to each programme context and supported change:

- In Ghana and Ethiopia, there was evidence that family and community members will sometimes act to protect women’s rights and condemn violence, even without the support of the self-help groups or COMBAT team. For example, parents sometimes intervene when their daughter is mistreated by her husband or another man. In Ghana, community members might intervene to offer resources and support a woman who is being ejected from her in-laws home when her husband dies. In cases of child sexual abuse in Ethiopia, community members support the survivor by calling the police, catching the perpetrator, taking the child to hospital, and giving evidence in court.

“There is a woman in my neighbourhood who has been highly oppressed by her husband for a long period and eventually attempted suicide. Her life was saved by neighbours. As I heard the case from my wife, I reported the case to women affairs office where they called him and advised/warned him after which he began to respect her and live peacefully now.”
(Husbands Focus Group Discussion, Ethiopia)

“The woman reported the issue [her husband neglecting their children] to her father who in turn met the man’s father. The women’s husband was invited by his father and his response was that he was no longer interested in the marriage. Her family decided to enquire why the man was behaving that way. Upon his response, the family asked about the property they had acquired – the cocoa farm. They went and shared the farm...she got her rights recognised by receiving her portion of the property.
(Woman community member, Daekrom)

6.3 Impact of the three programmes on change

6.3.1 Changing knowledge and attitudes of individuals on gender roles and VAWG

(i) Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, there is evidence that Siiqqee’s programme has made a significant contribution to shifting the knowledge and attitudes of some individuals on gender roles and relations that relate to VAWG and more generally. This is the case particularly with the members of the women’s self-help groups and community conversation groups (comprised of traditional and community leaders and government officials) which were directly targeted. The shifts have largely taken place around particular aspects of gender norms, the distribution of responsibilities within the household, the value and status of women, and the understanding of the meaning and significance of gender based violence.

For example, the self-help groups and community conversation group members directly targeted by the programme in both communities – as well as government officials reached by the programme – mostly demonstrated good knowledge about the forms of VAWG, the effects of VAWG
including FGM, the laws and policies relating to VAWG, and the channels for seeking redress.

“Before my involvement in awareness raising activities by Siiqqee, I used to laugh at those people talking about gender issues. But now that has totally changed.” (Self-help group member, Kese kebele)

“We have learned that, if a woman is circumcised, it will be difficult for her during birth. I know that female genital mutilation has an effect on women’s health.” (Self-help group member, Kese kebele)

In Darge kebele however, where the project has experienced challenges in maintaining engagement and attendance in the self-help groups and community conversation group meetings, some group members stated that VAWG was caused by the actions of women and girls themselves – for example their clothing, frequenting hotels and bars, and not obeying their parents. In contrast to Kese kebele, self-help group members in Darge kebele also stated that people in the community still support FGM. A community member from Darge gave the example of her daughter who was bullied at school for not being circumcised – demonstrating that there is still further work to do to shift attitudes of some programme participants.

“If you observe the clothing style of girls in this area, it is this which attracts the interest of men, and forces them into being violent, and to rape. It is said that they are walking naked. The other one is dancing houses. Dancing houses also which cause violence. All university students and high school students spend their time in these dancing houses. And violence occurs mostly there.”
However, while the self-help group participants (direct programme participants) in the community workshops demonstrated good knowledge of VAWG issues and women’s rights and needs during the collective discussion, most women found it difficult to apply this awareness when telling their own stories. For example, when talking about the effects of VAWG, most women focused on the impact on the family, while almost no one spoke about the effect of violence on themselves, and how it was a violation of their right to physical integrity and safety.

Among indirect participants in Kese kebele most community members not directly involved in Siqqee’s activities and husbands of self-help group members interviewed demonstrated good knowledge of the forms, causes and effects of VAWG, suggesting that the programme has also reached beyond direct participants. By contrast, there were mixed attitudes amongst indirect participants in Darge kebele. While some of the participants demonstrated progressive attitudes towards gender equality, others blamed VAWG on the actions of women and girls themselves. Also, whilst some participants suggested that FGM is one of the most important forms of VAWG, one person suggested that the ideal age for practicing FGM on a girl is between the ages of 10 to 15 and another agreed that it should be performed on older girls – suggesting ongoing support for the practice. Also, in Darge kebele, when talking about the needs of women and girls, many participants felt that these were fully respected, stating that women were free to work outside the home, make their own reproductive choices and to report violence. Others argued that it is the responsibility of women to live harmoniously with their husbands, and if they do so, their rights will be respected. Overall, this suggests that where the programme has been implemented in a more consistent and sustained manner, there has been a greater degree of change. A number of participants talked about girls being teased or bullied at school for not being cut. One participant even said that she knew of a girl who had demanded to be cut so she wouldn’t be bullied anymore. This suggests that more focused work is needed to ensure girls themselves become agents of change and to target the school context.

“Girls face violence if they don’t protect themselves from bad things. Having bad friends, and not being cautious when going about their work can result in girls experiencing harm. If girls protect themselves, they won’t experience any problems.”

(Community member, Darge kebele)

In terms of the status of women, many of the self-help groups and community conversation group members, wider stakeholders, and the husbands of the self-help group members referred to men’s sense of superiority over women as a key cause of gender discrimination. Both women self-help groups and male community conversation participants highlighted men’s reluctance to allow their wives to work. Examples were also given where men had prevented their wives from joining the self-help groups, and many who joined initially had been forced to leave. However, some of these direct participants also said that once men saw the benefits that the women were receiving from participating in the groups, they became more willing for their wives to participate and to engage in income generation. They also spoke of how women’s economic activities and public participation had made them realise that women are just as capable as men, especially as they are able to contribute financially to the household.

“If they are willing to work, there is nothing that can keep women from accomplishing their goals.”

(Self-help group member, Kese kebele)

A large number of self-help groups and community conversation participants, and husbands of self-help group members, referred to the distribution of responsibilities within the household as an example of inequitable gender norms. They agreed that women often bear a disproportionate burden and that it is unfair to expect girls to undertake household chores after returning...
from school, while boys are free to play. This shows an awareness of gender roles and their consequences.

“I know that men and women are equal. My wife and I are not living together at the moment but when we were, I felt superiority, and that I could order her to do things. I did things without informing her, and we often argued. When I think about that now, I wish had discussed more with her. When we meet in a few years, I will do all that. I will share responsibility for everything – I can even start from cleaning shoes.”

(Police officer, Nekemte town)

It was also clear that being able to earn an income, and increased status within the household, has enabled women to develop greater confidence. Furthermore, another key factor in increasing women’s confidence has been that the self-help groups provide them with a women-only safe space to interact with other women. Various participants stated that participating in the groups had shown women the benefits of working together to solve their own and the community’s problems.

(ii) Ghana

In Ghana, there is evidence that the Nkyinkyim programme has increased the knowledge and awareness on VAWG of community members who have been directly exposed to project activities. The majority of women who participated in sensitisation sessions or sought advice or intervention from COMBAT members in both communities (Daekrom and Mpatasie) showed awareness of different types of VAWG and that these were an abuse of their rights. The fact that several women had also sought help from the COMBAT suggests that there has been a shift in attitudes and that these women no longer viewed violence as justified. Some women also spoke about their change in attitudes towards their children, for example stopping beating them and ensuring girls and boys could attend school. In many cases, women directly attributed their improved knowledge and changed attitudes to the COMBAT project.

“I attended all the durbars by COMBAT when they came to this town. COMBAT taught us very strongly that even if you gave no children to the man in the
Interviews with community members who did not participate in project activities revealed their relative lack of knowledge and awareness of women’s rights and VAWG compared with the direct programme participants. This suggests that the programme has had a positive effect on those who directly participated.

The majority of COMBAT members in both communities also showed a good knowledge and awareness of women’s rights, VAWG and some of the provisions of the law in these areas, which many directly attributed to the training they had received during the programme. Most of the traditional leaders interviewed in both communities expressed a high level of support for the programme and demonstrated good knowledge and awareness of women’s rights and VAWG.

“With the programme we have all learnt that the man and woman have to be united and share the burden of care/responsibility to ensure unity and peace. Men should not be given sole responsibility of care and maintenance as such complete control does not produce good practices of care. The women should hold half the power of care to ensure things run correctly for the entire household. The woman should join the man in deciding how to use money and for what – children needs, education, illnesses and any need of the family that may rear its head. This consensus in responsibility and decision-making has brought about the change not just in poor marital relationship but also in the incontinent lifestyle that was resulting from total male control.”

(Male traditional leader and COMBAT member Mpatasie, Ghana)

Nonetheless, amongst both the COMBAT members and the traditional leaders, there were indications that some individuals still held traditional ideas about gender roles. This suggests that further work is required with these individuals and the programme strategy might need to adjust to account for different levels and paces of change amongst stakeholders.

Male leader 1: “With the farming, it is the man who should clear the land and get things ready, So if he decided this year, not to clear then that is his decision.”

Male leader 3: “In the household, when we have children it is the man that decides what the children should do. I mean what trade they should do. Even if the woman can discuss it, the final decision is the man’s.”

(Discussion with traditional leaders, Daekrom, Ghana)

Despite, COMBAT members receiving training on supporting survivors to make their own choices, several COMBAT members and community leaders placed a strong emphasis on protecting marriages and seeking to avoid marriage breakdown. Whilst this is not in itself problematic, there are questions about how much pressure is put on women, even if not direct, to stay in an abusive marriage.

Given that there were no other programmes in these two communities working on gender and VAWG issues, this suggests that the Nkyinkyim programme has had an important impact on direct participants. It is less clear, however, how many individuals the programme has reached in each community beyond those who participated directly in project activities, in terms of changing knowledge and attitudes – as the programme did not measure this.

Other key stakeholders interviewed – including DOVVSU police officer and other state agencies – also showed a good awareness of women’s rights, VAWG and the laws. Most had been involved in the programme training and activities and said that this had helped them to understand VAWG issues and deal with cases. However, these state representatives have also had other training from other organisations so it
is difficult to attribute impact. One gap identified was the District Assembly member responsible for the two villages who had limited contact with the programme – despite the efforts of Window of Hope – and who had a lower level of awareness, including of how his own approaches might actually infringe women’s rights rather than protect them.

(iii) Zambia

In Zambia, Women for Change (WFC) has made a substantial contribution to shifting individual attitudes on social norms and gender roles that relate to VAWG, particularly among members of the Area Associations and with some of the traditional and other local leaders directly targeted by the organisation. This contribution has been focused around particular aspects of gender norms, including women’s and girls’ rights, the distribution of responsibilities within the household, the role of women and men in caring for children (e.g. through education), and the understanding of the meaning and significance of “gender-based violence” (this term is used in the Zambia context).

“We live together in peace and share responsibilities and duties equally. We live according to the knowledge we acquired from Women for Change on human rights and gender rights. Because of this knowledge there is a great improvement in our relations and the way we raise our children. We have also learnt how to be self-dependent and productive.”

(Male Area Association member, Hanzalaa, Zambia)

WFC’s focus on gender analysis has helped members of the Area Associations to identify the rights that they believe women and girls should have. Across the three workshop sessions with Area Association members, there was a consistent list of rights produced, which corresponds to the material covered in the WFC approach (set out in their participatory education methodology and gender training documents). At the community workshops, it was clear that the knowledge of their rights was an important element for members in enabling them to feel confident about actions that they take, as it gives them a sense of certainty on which to base their actions. This demonstrates that the training and activities that WFC has carried out have been understood and recognised by the members. The critical stories of change also showed specific examples of some Area Association members intervening in cases where rights were being violated. This demonstrates that some members are able to relate this awareness of rights into concrete and specific actions.

Recognition of VAWG and awareness about the problem is a key contribution of WFC. Many of the stories, discussions and interviews refer to a ‘culture of silence’, or the social norms that make it very difficult for women and girls to speak out about their experiences. In relation to this, WFC’s contribution is crucial as Area Association members are able to identify and publically challenge instances of violence that are often seen as normal within the Zambian context and are able to help other women in their communities to do this.

WFC’s approach to GBV considers a broad definition of violence, which includes emotional, physical and sexual violence as well as structural forms of violence (examples identified by the participants included lack of food, destitution, not being allowed to make decisions in the home). WFC’s approach also involves recognising violence in all its forms as it affects women, girls, men and boys. Whilst women dominate the Area Association groups in membership and leadership, the experiences of men who have been affected by violence are also recognised and acknowledged. The research demonstrated that the understandings of violence within the Area Association are consistent with WFC’s approach to gender and gender equality more broadly. This has helped to create a broad base within the Area Association groups for addressing violence as it is inclusive of all members of the community.

However, the research also pointed to some important gaps. First, the level of knowledge about rights was uneven within Area Association groups. Members who joined in the last three years were less confident in their knowledge of rights. This shows that time is required for new members to understand/internalise this knowledge, and
that turnover within the Area Association can potentially weaken its capacity to act on rights. Some of the stories and subsequent discussion of the rights involved show that Area Association members interpret rights in very different ways from their legal definition, or do not understand how rights can apply to their situation. Finally, the research also demonstrated that knowledge of rights is important but not sufficient to ensure positive outcomes for women and girls in terms of reducing violence. In addition to knowledge about their rights and recognition of VAWG as a problem, community members need to have the capacity to act to claim these rights. The attempts by the Area Association to protect the rights of women and girls were undermined in some cases by other factors, such as the persistence of traditional courts that discriminate against women, police posts that do not respond adequately to cases brought by the Area Association, and the distance between the rural communities and urban centres.

6.3.2 Effectiveness of the project/approach in changing behaviours of individuals on gender roles and VAWG

(i) Ethiopia

There is evidence that the Siiqqee programme has contributed to shifting individual behaviours relating to gender roles and VAWG. For example, different direct programme participants (self-help groups and community conversation groups) reported a number of changes in their own behaviours to prevent or respond to VAWG or promote gender equitable behaviours:

**Negotiating solutions in their own households**: There were a small number of examples of group members using discussion and negotiation within their own households to resolve conflict and end the use of violence.

“My husband used to drink, and abuse me and beat me. He would undermine me, thinking he was the greater one, and using his power to abuse me. He harmed me thinking I am not important, and that I couldn’t hurt him back. My marriage disturbed me very much. It made me anxious and worrisome, and I couldn’t look after my children properly. And then I joined Siiqqee, and I learnt about the
Some women spoke of the considerable effort required to report and follow through a case of violence.

Importance of saving, how to develop self-confidence, how to make decisions in the home, and the like. I had started working as a housemaid, but getting involved with Siiqqee allowed me to stop doing that and start saving. At the same time as improving my life, I also learned about my rights and responsibilities, and I came to know that my husband was violating my rights with his behaviour. I separated from my husband for a time, during which time we negotiated on the issues.

(Self-help member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

"Siiqqee's training has taught us that rather than being aggressive and saying some bad things when our husbands come home, we should be calm, and try to talk to him the next day when he is less tired. So, we have learnt to be patient with each other."

(Self-help group member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

Advising community members against FGM and to protect themselves against HIV: There were various examples of self-help group and community conversation group members saying that since receiving training from Siiqqee they are vocal in advising community members not to conduct FGM and to use condoms.

"I tell young women to carry condoms to protect against HIV AIDS and pregnancy – this is something I learnt from Siiqqee."

(Self-help group member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

Reporting FGM and VAWG cases to the formal justice system: There were examples given demonstrating that women and community members are more willing and likely to report FGM and VAWG cases. Government officials said that Siiqqee has been instrumental in connecting them to the community through sensitising community institutions (i.e. the self-help groups, the Idir, and community leaders). Women can report cases, or get further information from, the kebele administration and the Women’s Affairs Office. Participants also gave examples of women speaking up in court, organising their papers, and defending their case, and Siiqqee staff accompanied particularly vulnerable women to court. There are various examples of women taking property, divorce and violence cases to the courts and being successful. This cannot be wholly attributed to Siiqqee but it can be argued that greater awareness of rights and reporting channels, greater solidarity with self-help group members, neighbours and community leaders means women have confidence to report and engage with the justice system.

"Siiqqee's awareness raising has made women less tolerant of violence from their husbands, and increased their awareness about seeking their rights through the formal legal system."

(Self-help member, Kese kebele)

"Because of the awareness work of Siiqqee and the MoE, if people witness violence, they will not ignore it, they will report it to the kebele."

(Self-help group member, Kese kebele)

"Men often assume that if women leave the home, they are having an affair. My husband didn't allow me to leave the house. I had to go to market and come home immediately. Still, my husband would come home in the evening and beat me, always. When I started going to Siiqqee, I started learning about my rights and participating in the community conversation groups. And then I started to challenge him about beating me. I told him I knew my rights and responsibilities, and that he had no right to beat me. Then I took him to court. It was Siiqqee who gave me this confidence – they taught me how to save, and how to take credit, and gave me economic opportunity. The beating stopped after that and we started discussing peacefully. He stopped being violent after I challenged him and took legal action. If he ever beats me again, I'll take him to court."

(Community conversation member, Kese kebele, Ethiopia)

However, there were also indications that community members have to exercise caution when reporting violence. One male community conversations group member from Kese kebele said he has to be careful about approaching women experiencing violence in
case there is a backlash from the husband. Another self-help group member said that women come to her in secret to tell her about the violence that they are experiencing for fear of reprisals from the husband. For the same reason, she reports the case onwards in confidence.

Generally, participants were positive about the increasing accessibility of security and justice mechanisms. Many of the government and police officials who have received training from Siiqqee on VAWG, including female genital mutilation, stated that they now take VAWG seriously, and try to process them quickly. However, a few participants talked about issues with the quality of services provided by the hospitals, courts and police. For example, during the research, some women spoke of the considerable effort required to report and follow through a case and there were some examples of where women had been discouraged from pursuing their cases by officials at the district court. Various reasons were suggested for this: that police don’t take VAWG seriously, that police or legal services collude with husbands to block a case and that the government fears that progressing all such cases to court will result in high divorce rates. Indeed some participants said that women feared reporting cases because they felt they would not be believe by the courts. In addition, women are reluctant to talk about violence to the police or courts because of stigma and shame. It can also be costly to pursue a case at the district court level. There were various examples of kebele courts referring cases to community elders for mediation. Some concerns were also raised about corruption within the courts.

“There is a problem with police officials not accepting what the woman is saying, and taking the side of the man because they know him and relate to him.”
(Federation member).
Also, some participants argued that many women still do not report violence – due to an ongoing lack of knowledge about their rights, the lack of support networks and fear of reprisals.

More survivors reporting violence to traditional authorities: Siiqqee has worked with the Idir traditional authorities and has included them in the community conversation groups. This has resulted in increased numbers of community members reporting violence to the Idir traditional authorities. However, there is limited evidence of the content and outcomes of community elders' mediation activities. In fact, there were various stories in both kebeles of community elders who have had IPV cases referred to them, and advised the women to return to abusive husbands or tolerate the violence. This may indicate that Siiqqee’s activities aren’t reaching all community leaders or they are not all responding positively to them. Equally it may be reflective of the strong social value attached to keeping marriages together as well as the lack of options – temporary or permanent – for women who decide to leave their husbands, making it difficult for elders to advise them to report or leave abusive husbands.

“We have resolved around four or five cases using traditional conflict resolution mechanisms with the help of community elders. We reconcile the couple since after divorce the woman mostly may not have the income to support herself, and this may have significant implications for the children.”
(Government employee, Nekemte town)

“When a girl is abused, her relatives and elders will advise her to forgive the man rather than go to the police. Most of the time the elders will protect the abuser, and tell the woman that if she does go the police they won’t be able to do anything about it except refer the case back to the elders for resolution. They undermine her, hide her case and pressure her into not reporting by telling her that it is normal for a man and a woman to fight.”
(Federation member)

Husbands reducing violent behaviour: Various participants stated that husbands are now more aware that they can be punished for committing violence against their wives and are changing their behaviour. Many participants also shared examples where violence was reported to the police or kebele authorities, and the husband was ‘warned’ about the consequences of continuing violent behaviour. In many of these examples, participants reported that this resulted in the couple being able to live in greater harmony.

“Now men are afraid of women because they fear the women will take them to court and they will be in jail tomorrow if they abuse her today.”
(Federation member)

Changes in the way parents treat their children – for example, ensuring both boys and girls are involved in domestic duties.

“Siiqqee taught me how to treat children. I learnt how to treat boys and girls in our home.”
(Self-help group member, Kese kebele)

New community sanctions created against VAWG: The Idir has also developed rules on excluding men and women engaging in intimate partner violence or FGM from its membership, as well as from social events in the community. No examples were given of the laws being applied in practice.

Increase in women’s role in household decision-making: Many of the self-help group members (and their husbands) talked about being able to save for new houses, babies, furniture and electrical goods for their homes, to send their children to good schools, and to help their husbands and sons to improve income-generating potential, for example by securing drivers’ licences. Several women said that this has led to them participating in household decision-making and/or the sense of being more valued by their husbands.

“Since Siiqqee started its activities and women joined the self-help groups, those couples have started to discuss more how to manage their household. In the past, it was women who were responsible for grinding grain, but now some couples have agreed that the husband will take grains to the mill house for grinding. Now
“Women have started to participate in public meetings, discuss gender and VAWG issues with government officials, religious leaders and community leaders”

men buy the charcoal, whereas in the past it was considered a woman’s role. This is a good change.”
(Community elder / community conversations group member, Darge kebele)

Changed division of labour in the household:
There were various stories of the husbands of self-help group members taking on a greater share of household responsibilities to help them with their income-generation work. Various self help group and community conversation group members also talked about changing their behaviour in terms of allocating household chores to sons and daughters. None of the participants indicated that they had faced any backlash from the community in response to their changed behaviour.

“My wife works outside and when I get home, I make coffee or make a fire. In the previous times I never used to do that kind of work in my home.”
(Community elder/ community conversation group member, Kese kebele)

Increase in community participation:
The self-help groups have allowed women to interact with other women, and various participants stated that they have shown women the benefits of working together to solve their own and the community’s problems. Women have started to participate in public meetings, discuss gender and VAWG issues with government officials, religious leaders and community leaders. Because of their better social standing, various participants said that they are also called upon to contribute to community affairs.

“Back then, I did not have friends like I do now. It is after Siiqqee came that I start to go to public places. They are the ones who pulled me out of my house into public places. Now I understand things, and I even stand for others. Back then, I did not have experience of speaking and I was shy. I did not have the experience of standing in front of people or talking with people as I am doing now with you.”
(Federation member)

“Women who have joined Siiqqee are also influential and feared in the community.”
(SHG member, Kese kebele)

Women taking up leadership positions:
self-help groups members have also benefited from the opportunity provided by the programme to take up leadership positions, including positions of responsibility within the self-help group or as Cluster Level Association or federation representatives. After joining self-help groups, 433 women have taken up leadership positions, the majority as members of the Council of Kebeles.

Women’s improved entrepreneurial and business skills and income generation:
One of the most significant changes is that all self-help group members are using savings and loans from the self-help groups, as well as the entrepreneurial and business skills training and experience that they have gained as a result of Siiqqee’s activities. Self-help group members have been provided training on basic business skills (e.g. book-keeping, as well as livelihood skills; poultry farming, vegetable farming) and report that this has helped them in their economic activities and had beneficial knock-on effects such as increasing the willingness of their husbands to support them working. Some women demonstrated increased ambitions and aspirations for their business. In helping women to save, and supporting them to start businesses, Siiqqee has enabled women to become income-earners and fulfill their household needs. Various participants spoke of being able to buy furniture and electronic goods for their houses. Some spoke about helping their husbands and sons to get driving licences so that they could get better jobs. Other women said that they had been able to use the money they had saved or earned from business on the children’s education, with a number of women expressing hopes of sending their children to private schools or colleges. Many women also indicated that since joining the self-help groups they had not had to ask others for financial assistance and loans. Many women said that when their families are economically comfortable, their intimate relationships are less fraught, and there is less conflict.

“Like others, we faced financial problems a few years ago when we were relocated from our house. That was the year my wife joined Siiqqee, and that helped us get by.”
Now she’s taken a larger loan, and we are able to start thinking about another house. Before all these things were down to me.”
(Husband of self-help group member Kese kebele)

“Since the time we started the saving with this association, we haven’t asked other people to lend us money. Siiqqee is like a ‘mother’ to us. It helped us save and improve our life like a mother as she raises her children.”
(Self-help group member, Kese kebele)

“There are women who are roaming here and there working in people’s house for very low pay and being exploited. It is my pleasure to invite them to come to Siiqqee; and teach them how get money, save money, borrow for each other; and run a business. Siiqqqee has brought many changes; we are capacitated economically.”
(Community conversation member, Kese kebele)

**Mediating and negotiating solutions between husband and wife:** Various self-help group and community conversation group members said that they do not now ignore cases of violence in their communities. In cases of IPV, they try to mediate between the husband and wife. Some male community conversation group members talked about working with the husband to help him consider and address his own behaviour. However, they also admitted that few of these examples resulted in the violence ending.

“When there is violent conflict between a husband and wife, they will often come to us with their children. We try and mediate between them, and try to develop an agreement between them in which we outline their individual responsibilities. For example, we may tell the husband that he is responsible if there is any further violence, or we will tell him to give his wife money for household expenses and that he must ensure that their children don’t get sick or drop out of school.”
(Federation member)

**(ii) Ghana**

There is evidence that the Nkyinkyim programme has influenced some individuals to change their behaviours in positive ways. This includes women direct participants who have participated in sensitisation sessions or sought advice or intervention from COMBAT members in both Daekrom and Mpatasie who reported a number of changes in their own behaviours and those of their husbands as a result of the COMBAT programme:

- **Some women reporting cases of VAWG to the COMBAT** and asking for the COMBAT to intervene. However, it is important to note that the majority of the cases taken to the COMBAT were about the non-maintenance of children and there were very few cases of physical violence reported to them. It is unclear why this is as wider data suggests that rates of physical violence are high in this region and community members say physical violence has been a problem. This should be further investigated to explore and expand on these findings.

- **Some women taking the initiative to engage with their husband,** explain their rights and suggest they work together to change the dynamics of their relationship.

  “When COMBAT came here and we learnt about demanding our rights I have often approached mama COMBAT and discussed it with her. Then I told [my husband] one day when he once came home about the programme and the importance of managing our relationship by uniting to at least take care of the children. He then began coming home more often.”
  (Female community member, Mpatasie, Ghana)

- **Some women reported approaching other family members or neighbours to challenge their abusive behaviour towards women or children.**

- **Some women said they had changed their behaviours towards their own children** including more equal treatment of their sons and daughters, stopping physical abuse and starting to send their children to school.

- **Some men in the community have started to contribute to domestic and**
childcare tasks like bathing and dressing the children and taking them to school and sweeping.

- A few women reported that their husbands or ex-husbands had started to contribute more towards the upkeep of their children.

“So had madam [Window of Hope Foundation] not come with COMBAT TEAM to explain to us that we had some rights to exert/demand, we would not have known. Now the maltreatment has stopped. [My husband] now knows that if he misbehaves, madam will arrest him so he is no more maltreating… He said: “I’ve received your message about the COMBAT TEAM and that if I don’t take care of my children you’ll arrest me and I don’t want to be arrested.” This is money for your upkeep… yes we were so reconciled to the extent that we even had a child afterwards. So at that point, there was great joy.”

(Female community member, Mpatasie, Ghana)

- A few women reported that their husbands were less violent towards them because they knew that they might be publically condemned or taken to the COMBAT.

I came to learn it from COMBAT Team and I went to tell him about it and then I brought him to the COMBAT Team. COMBAT Team explained to the husband that is it unlawful to beat your wife. They settled the issues between us … COMBAT Team made it known to us all that there are laws governing such relationships and even if he should leave me he would be obliged to share proceeds of cocoa farm/property with me. As a result, he has now gone ahead and performed the marriage rites and I am enjoying the proceeds of the cocoa farm with him … so when COMBAT Team came in, he stopped the beatings. So now everything is fine. He’s even gone ahead to perform with the marriage rites, so we are legally married.

(female direct participant, Daekrom, Ghana)

Where women had invited COMBAT members to intervene to resolve a dispute or case of violence, in most cases, this had resulted in individuals changing their behaviour with positive outcomes. The main shifts in individual behaviour reported by women participants as a result of COMBAT interventions were:

- Some women reported that they and their husband had worked together to reduce marital conflict.

“I took the beating up with COMBAT and they called my new partner and asked if he will accept responsibility of his step child and he did. He has since consistently supported a child that is not his and it has reduced his violent attitude towards me.”

(Woman direct participant, Mpatasie, Ghana)

Some women reported that their husbands had stopped or significantly reduced physical violence towards them.

“We were farming on family land so I went to inform him of what I’d heard and asked him to go and perform the rites else I was quitting the marriage. At the time, we had already had a child. He came to join one of the sessions going on in the town and after listening, he realised the dangers involved in what he was doing. He was beating me on the slightest provocation. So I reported him to COMBAT TEAM who then invited him to explain to him that they are here to ensure women’s rights progress and development. They settled the issue. He’s stopped all the maltreatment: he is now doing the hard work whilst I cook for him, now there is peace in our home, and the children’s and my burdens are his as well. “

(Woman direct participant, Daekrom, Ghana)

- Some men and women talked about how they worked together with their spouse to share proceeds from farming and/or plan expenditures.

- In one case, a man stopped an extra-marital affair

- In two cases, men reduced their alcohol consumption as a result of the COMBAT intervention.
COMBAT members also related some similar changes in their personal and family lives as a result of their training and involvement in the project. However, there was no data to reliably establish whether similar behaviour changes have also occurred amongst those not directly involved in the project.

In terms of practices around the handling of VAWG cases, many women interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the interventions of COMBAT members. They reported that COMBAT members follow their training to make women aware of their options and then respect their wishes. However, one outcome of this is that in practice a few cases of physical violence – even quite severe – have been mediated by the COMBAT rather than referred to the police (DOVVSU) as outlined in the Domestic Violence Act. This again seems to be related to the strong emphasis by community members, COMBATs, state agencies and many women themselves on reconciliation and preserving marriages.

“When WFC came, a lot of men and women realised that what was happening in most homes were injustices.”
(Male Area Association member, Haanzala, Zambia)

Negotiating solutions between couples:
Another important role of the Area Association is to assist in negotiating and/or brokering resolution between husbands and wives, or with extended family in cases of violence. Many Area Association members described this type of intervention as restoring family unity. In practice, this took the form of talking directly to known perpetrators of violence (e.g. talking to men who are known to sexually abuse girls to persuade them to stop) and also talking to survivors of violence to help them to find a solution (e.g. supporting a woman to file charges against her husband). The research identified a number of cases where the Area Association arbitrated solutions between different parties involved. These solutions were often more favourable to women and girls than in other cases where the Area Association was not involved.

Supporting access to rights: The Area Association, through the support of WFC, has developed an approach that combines economic empowerment and access to rights with the transformation of gender norms. In practice, this means that it intervenes in particular cases where the economic situation or lack of adequate services is extreme. The Area Association also supports survivors of VAWG to directly access their rights. This included, for example:

- Providing direct financial assistance for women (and sometimes men) to cope with a crisis (like a funeral, lack of funds for schooling, hunger);
- Providing assistance to women affected by violence with establishing a livelihood (goats, seeds, fertilisers, training, access to markets);
- Taking survivors of violence to the hospital/for medical treatment.

Supporting access to justice: The Area Association has also played an enabling role in ensuring that survivors of VAWG secure access to justice, either through informal justice systems at the community level or
through the formal justice system and courts. It is very difficult for women or girls to get access to justice on their own without any support due to the risks associated with reporting violence and the barriers to making such reports. The Area Association’s role is crucial in accompanying these women and children to facilitate their access to justice. Examples of this include:

- Helping survivors to report violence to traditional authorities;
- Advocating with traditional leaders on behalf of someone affected by violence;
- Taking direct action against perpetrators of violence (in the form of retribution/punishment such as burning the crops of a man who was persistently beating his wife)

This range of outcomes demonstrates that WFC has been making important contributions to prevention and redress of VAWG through the Area Association. While these contributions are important there are some notable gaps in the ways that the Area Associations handle cases of VAWG. Firstly, there was a lack of articulation with the formal justice system including the police, the Victim Support Unit and the ASAZA. In many cases handled through the Area Association, women and girls would not take their father or relative to the authority or to the court of law because it is perceived to destroy family unity. Secondly, there was a lack of knowledge around the legal frameworks and specific legal rights to which women and girls are entitled.

There were also a number of positive changes in behaviour that members of Area Associations reported in their own relationships and within their own families:

Changes in distribution of responsibilities within the household between men and
Women, including how financial decisions are made and how children are supported. This was demonstrated in many of the critical stories of change, in which a positive shift occurred so that decisions were more equally shared between men and women, and women had more of a say over financial matters. Members of the Area Association are able to point to these specific changes (such as a woman having her own land to farm to generate income), and relate these changes to the gender analysis learnt through the Area Association with WFC.

Women are more able to speak publicly about VAWG and take leadership roles. A review of the Area Associations shows high levels of assertiveness in their interactions with WFC and with the research team, strong leadership by women in the group and a confidence in their response to issues.

Area Association members are able to mediate in cases of VAWG and can often ensure better outcomes for survivors of violence. This is in part due to the importance of personal relationships between the Area Association members and those experiencing violence. The Area Association members are also sought out by people with problems relating to VAWG, and the Area Association members are called up by the wider community to mediate resolutions to instances of GBV.

Girls are more likely to finish schooling, including girls who become pregnant returning to school. There are a number of examples where the Area Association was able to extend the period that girls and boys remain in school through supporting parents and girls and boys to continue their education.

However, it is important to note that membership in an Area Association is not a guarantee that these issues will be addressed within the family. There were several examples where women who were Area Association members faced chronic violence in the home and were unable to increase their own decision-making powers over financial issues or gain any financial independence. In some cases, the Area Association provided direct assistance to these women. In others, the situation remained unresolved. With the Area Association that had the least contact with WFC, there were a higher number of cases of VAWG reported which weren’t addressed.

Overall, WFC’s approach is having a demonstrable effect at the local level on tackling both the causes and effects of VAWG, but the approach is being limited and undermined by the wider and more systemic problems that restrict the scope of change (such as the lack of accountability of local leaders, the weakness of infrastructure and transportation links, the levels of poverty). This issue has been highlighted very strongly through the research: women and men in the communities studied do not feel that they have adequate access to state resources or formal systems that can address VAWG. As such, they are forced to rely on local and traditional systems, which can sometimes fail to address VAWG adequately. Even though the Area Associations are highly organised and are able to mobilise responses to violence at the local level, they face a huge gap in trying to access their rights through these government services. Services are concentrated in the urban areas and there is insufficient resources and possibly insufficient political will for them to reach rural areas. As a result, the articulation between the Area Association and more formal institutions remains weak.

This gap between the formal, primarily urban based governance and services system and the realities of women, girls, men and boys in rural areas heightens the significance of the Area Association and WFC’s approach within this context. To move forward from this, WFC needs to find the appropriate mechanisms to support the Area Associations in directly addressing these wider issues, and help them to articulate their relationship with institutional actors (such as ASAZA, the VSU, the formal justice system), to make these institutions more responsive and accountable to women and girls. This could be related to how the Area Association develops beyond working effectively as a local group, and becomes involved in addressing the issues at a wider scale in their district/province.
Box 8: Examples of the direct interventions of Area Associations

Referring to a story of a woman whose leg was cut off by her husband: “The [area] association was set up to spearhead development projects in the area following the community’s identified needs. The association consults the community on what they need and also the community is aware of the possible areas of conflict that need to be avoided. Based on our principles, the association went on to help the amputated woman to a hospital. This is how it all happened. I witnessed the incidence with my own eyes.”

(Female Area Association member, Haanzala, Zambia)

Referring to a story of children orphaned when their mother died of AIDS: The area association through WFC took over the affairs of the children. The boy completed his education- which was good. The village grew, the children grew up. They lived their lives differently from their mothers/fathers.”

(Female Area Association member, Haanzala, Zambia)

Referring to a story about a case of forced incest between a man and his grandchild: “The only problem was that the parents to this child were ignorant about child rights, they still insisted the offender should pay a fine instead of reporting him to the police, however with the help of WFC, the parents agreed to report the matter to the necessary authorities and the offender was jailed.”

(Female Area Association member, Haanzala, Zambia)
6.3.3 Effectiveness of the project/approach in changing wider social norms on gender roles and VAWG

(i) Ethiopia

Although this retrospective research could not undertake robust measurement of wider social norm change, there are some indications that Siiqee's work has started to influence individuals beyond the direct programme participants and shift wider social norms. In Kese kebele, the direct and indirect participants demonstrated a good understanding of the forms, causes and effects of VAWG, as well as a strong understanding of how VAWG is related to gender norms and unequal power relations between men and women.

Community members are actively intervening in VAWG and FGM incidents, by mediating between husbands and wives, or monitoring the activities of circumcisers.

“There was a traditional circumciser who was travelling to another area, and I wanted to know what she was up to. So I and four other women followed her, and found that she had gone to circumcise a boy. Not a girl. We spoke to her anyway and told her that if she was circumcising girls as well, then that would be considered as if she was blinding them, the community would not tolerate it, and she would go to jail.”
(Federation member)

Women are increasingly reporting VAWG cases, and are being supported by the community to do so. The role of the community includes self-help group members, community conversation group members and Idir members advising survivors to report cases, reporting cases to community institutions or formal authorities, and accompanying survivors to access medical or legal services.

“We try to help with violence cases by finding out where the incident happened, catching the criminal and handing him over to the police. We also work with Women and Child Affairs officers to make sure they keep up the pressure in situations which are too difficult for us to handle by ourselves, and making sure the case goes to court. We also take child survivors to hospital for medical treatment.”
(Federation member)

Shifts in gender roles with men encouraging their wives to earn their own income, and supporting them by helping with the work or taking on domestic and childcare tasks in the household.

“I used to earn an income by selling injera. It was a difficult job – I had my baby on my back, and I earned very little money. My husband also used to think that I was roaming here and there, and committing adultery. In the end he made me stop. When I joined Siiqee, I had to convince him to give me the initial saving amount because I didn’t have any money. Eventually I was able to save enough to start a petty trading business. My husband encouraged me more, and I was able to expand my business. I have been able to buy household furniture, a television and a sofa. The success of my business has made him more convinced about the importance of my membership of the self-help group.”
(Self-help group member, Kese kebele)

“Initially some husbands wouldn’t let their wives participate in the self-help groups. But once they saw that other women were saving, taking loans and establishing their
own businesses, some let their wives join. Some husbands even give their wives money for the monthly saving amount. (Idir member, Kese kebele)

Women are speaking out to demand their rights and are participating in community matters. Self-help group members are using their increased confidence and leadership skills to advise other people in the community about FGM. They are engaging with government authorities around VAWG cases, and through the Cluster Level Associations and Federation lobbying for greater punishment for perpetrators in particular cases.

“Previously, if you went to court with a violence case, it would get buried. Only those who had the money and tongue were successful in getting justice. If you went to hospital after experiencing violence or rape, only those with money and speaking ability could get the help they needed. Siiqqee has enabled us to speak about this problem that exists, and also to challenge it.”

Self-help group member, Kese kebele

However, it is also clear that there are still large numbers of women in the two communities who still do not speak out about violence, and do not report it. Several of the stories told by participants at the community workshops were about friends, neighbours or acquaintances who were extremely marginalised, and unlikely to be able to access a community conversation or self-help group. Despite the gains made by government and civil society efforts on VAWG, for these women reporting violence would probably still not be an option. There are various reasons for this, including the fear of reprisal from the perpetrator, loss of the husband’s economic support and shame and stigma. The inaccessibility of the legal system, the lack of family support and the lack of supportive social relationships are also key factors.

While there is good evidence of the impact of Siiqqee’s work in supporting community leaders to raise awareness about VAWG in their constituencies, there were also various stories in both kebeles of community elders who have had IPV cases referred to them, but have advised the women to return to abusive husbands or tolerate the violence. This may indicate that Siiqqee’s activities aren’t reaching all community leaders or they are not all responding positively to them. Equally it may be because there are few options – temporary or permanent – for women who decide to leave their husbands, making it difficult for elders to advise them to report or leave abusive husbands.

(ii) Ghana

Again, whilst this research could not undertake robust measurement of wider social norm change in the absence of baseline and endline studies, there is some evidence that WHF’s work has influenced individuals beyond the direct programme participants and may have started to shift wider social norms. The majority of COMBAT members, community members and traditional leaders said they felt that the project had brought about significant changes in social norms in their communities, for example:

**Shifts in gender roles** with men increasingly taking on domestic and childcare tasks in the household and encouraging their wives to earn their own income.

“Previously our men would not assist us in our house work. Women had the heavy burden of waking up very early in the morning, cooking meals, cleaning up and getting the children organised for school. Men would have nothing to do before
going to farms yet will not assist their wives. Now we see them assisting a bit – at least helping get the children organised for school. They will now iron out the children’s school uniforms and get them ready in time for school.”

(Female COMBAT member, Mpatasie)

“With COMBAT we now have lots of our males providing capital for the women to trade. Thus women are now able to assist reduce the financial stress on the males in times of financial downfall. It also improves the marital relationships as the stress is reduced.”

(Female COMBAT member, Mpatasie)

Increased dialogue and joint decision-making over household income and expenditures between men and women.

“Now we make decisions together about what to do with the income. There is more consensus. Previously a man would tell a woman not to trade or earn income, but now there is an understanding that both need to contribute. COMBAT has encouraged couples to do joint accounts and put their money together and make decisions together… Also now, husbands have started to bathe the children and take them to the bus for school or to walk them to school.

(Female COMBAT member, Daekrom)

“There have been some changes, especially with the monies. Now we have realised that a married woman needs both to share the money she makes, to contribute and to decide.”

(Male traditional leader, Daekrom)

Greater transparency between men and women about the income earned from farming and selling cash crops and vegetables. However, this issue is something that needs to be explored further. Whilst transparency between husband and wife about income earned would generally seem to be a good thing, in the past women’s lack of transparency about the income they earn has been a key means for them to exercise some control over resources for them and their children. Thus the fact that women are now more transparent may have actually resulted in some cases in a loss of control and power, even if it has led to fewer marital tensions.
“[P]reviously when I went to the farm, the man said do what you can and when the money came, I did not tell him and used the money just for the children. There was no coordination in the house, just disagreements. But after Auntie Liz (WHF) explained that this was not right, that it was better to bring the man and create consensus, I realised that this was not right. Now we have consensus and we are happy.”
(Woman direct participant, Daekrom)

“Before COMBAT, some of us used to keep money from the man. We used to just quietly save it, for example, for when the children are sick. But when COMBAT came, we learned that we needed to let the man know about the money, to be more open about this.”.
(Woman direct participant, Daekrom)

**Improved and more equitable treatment of girls:** Increased numbers of parents sending their girls to school and treating their sons and daughters more equitably.

“Previously a woman would wake up and wake up the female child to assist with the house cleaning and chores. Now this is different. When the woman wakes up, her first chore is to wake the children up and get them to hurry up to go to school. So now when we ask the girls to wash dishes today, we get the male children to wash them the next day.”
(Female COMBAT member, Mpatasie)

“There was also a lot of violence against girls and boys. For example, a woman in another community was mistreating a child that was not her own. I told the woman that I would call the COMBAT and that they would come to arrest her and that she would be taken to court. The woman vowed that she would never do this again.”
(Woman direct participant, Daekrom)

**More women speaking out about the violence** they suffer and reporting it to informal or formal mechanisms.

Nonetheless, this research also suggested that there are still a significant number of women in both communities who still remain silent about the violence they suffer or will only confide in close friends or family members – due to fears of shame, backlash and loss of economic support from their husband.

Our research also demonstrated that although it is likely that a significant proportion of community members in both Daekrom and Mpatasie are aware of the COMBAT team and its role, there are some community members who don’t know. This is mostly those who are new to the communities and those who spend significant time out of the community for schooling or work – particularly young people.

**iii) Zambia**

In Zambia, due to the nature of long-term community education and mobilisation, it is difficult to demarcate the impacts in terms of direct and indirect programme participants. While the Area Association were originally created as a result of training conducted by WFC, it has been operating independently from WFC for many years (in some cases for more than 20 years). The membership of the Area Association has not remained static, and as new members have joined over the years, its impact has become wider and wider. As the critical stories of change were collected from members only, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the extent of the reach of the Area Association beyond the anecdotal evidence in the stories of members themselves. From their own stories, it is clear that the Area Associations have become a resource within their communities for women and girls, and are approached to help resolve problems including VAWG.

In terms of the influence of WFC programmes on traditional leaders, village headmen/women, and other local leaders, the evidence from the research is that the awareness of women’s and girls’ rights is uneven, even in places where the Area Associations have been established for a period of many years. One traditional leader interviewed was a strong proponent of women’s and girls’ rights, could clearly articulate what they were, and had specific ideas about how he could help protect these rights, and attributed his views to the work of WFC.
“If I found anybody beating the wife I shed tears, why? This woman is a human being she’s just like myself and she feels pain in the same manner I feel pain. Why? These are the questions that come to my mind, I said I must work hard and at least in my chiefdom this must come to an end. It must be stopped. That’s how I started it [ending GBV in his district]. Women for Change were also very instrumental; I worked with them very closely they were always here and encouraged me.”

(Male traditional leader, Nkonkola area, Zambia)

It is very clear that WFC’s investment in the relationship with the local chief has been important in terms of helping him to understand women’s and girls’ rights, and to take measures to protect these within his territory. However, other local leaders interviewed, including a local headwoman from the same area, had little to no knowledge of WFC or the Area Association, and was also not aware of the specific issues around women’s rights.

There is not sufficient data from the research to explain why this has happened in the absence of baseline and endline data. Given the relatively high level of knowledge about the existence of rights amongst Area Association members, this may suggest that the Area Associations have not been successful in passing this information on more widely in their communities. Or at least that some local leaders have not always been reached and/or have not responded positively to this approach.

6.4 The contribution of partner women’s rights organisations to the outcomes

As discussed above, the particular role of WROs in raising awareness and addressing the discriminatory social norms that condone and promote VAWG is increasingly documented. A number of findings from this research on the three programmes support this evidence:

Knowledge and understanding of target communities: In all three countries, the implementing WROs have detailed knowledge of the communities in which they are working. Often staff are drawn from the surrounding area and have a deep understanding of the social norms and cultural practices that impact on women’s rights.

- In Ghana, over time WHF and the COMBATS gained community acceptance to such an extent that the director of WHF became known as ‘Mama COMBAT’ in the community. Although this suggests significant dependence on individual staff members, this has proven an important ingredient in the positive outcomes of the programme.
- In Ethiopia, Siiqee’s prior experience and knowledge of working in the target communities, has allowed them to reach some of the poorest women for inclusion in the self-help groups, and to establish strong working relationships with community leaders, and government officials.
- In Zambia, the evidence from the current research shows that in the more-established Area Associations where there are high levels of knowledge about rights, and high levels of confidence, women are able to act directly to address these problems (and to help others to do the same.) This evidence points to the importance of WFC’s long-term approach in building a sense of empowerment and leadership for women through the Area Association in a sustainable way, and supporting members through practical and timely interventions that enable the women to act on their sense of empowerment. The success of this approach rests largely on the in-depth understanding of the local context by WFC.
onset of the project and gain their vital support for the project. The way that WHF managed the selection process for the COMBAT teams in both communities was widely praised. WHF then worked patiently over many months to conduct awareness raising durbars at community level and support the COMBATS in their role.

- In Ethiopia, Siiqee’s awareness raising activities use an approach that encourages a cascading of information through community, traditional and religious structures, as well as the creation of a strong consensus and commitment amongst community leaders and government officials to tackling VAWG. The research suggests that this has been instrumental in breaking the silence around VAWG and HTPs, and at least amongst its direct participants, has made a significant contribution to countering norms around the acceptability of violence. Siiqee has been successful in achieving shifts in understanding and attitudes of traditional leaders through their outreach work and ongoing relationship-building.

- In Zambia, WFC worked closely with traditional leaders from the outset, in particular the local chief and some local headmen and women, to gain their support. This meant that these traditional leaders used their authority to promote gender equality and communicated the importance of the work of WFC and the Area Association to the community. In some cases, the leaders intervened directly in cases of early and forced marriage and other examples of VAWG. Traditional leaders also referred cases to the Area Association.

Bridging the gaps between women and formal decision-making structures: This has been an important role played by the WRO in all three contexts, although it needs to be strengthened further in each context.

- In Ethiopia, Siiqee’s consistent work with self-help groups has filled an important gap in connecting women to national level laws and policies, and local level legal mechanisms.

- In Ghana, WHF engaged with state agencies based in the regional capital Kumasi and has started to bridge the gap between the community and these formal services, which are generally out of reach of community members. This needs to be developed further, however, to ensure sustainability.
In Zambia, government services function almost solely in urban areas and face major resource constraints. Given the scale of the problem in rural areas, WFC’s approach was critical in addressing this gap. The organised nature of the Area Association means that it is an essential step in terms of bridging the gap between women in rural areas and formal systems.

**Links between WROs – working as part of the women’s rights movement:** Links between WROs working at different levels can often prove to be an important factor in success.

1. In Ghana, both Window of Hope Foundation (WHF) and the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (GSHRDC) have worked together in an effective partnership to deliver the Nkyinkyim programme, demonstrating that matching a national WRO with a local, community-based WRO can be very effective. The GSHRDC has provided important training and technical support to the project activities as well as capacity building support to WHF.

2. In Zambia, Women for Change (WFC) has played an important role in building the capacity of local organisations in rural areas to work for greater gender equality. For members of the more established Area Associations, where there are high levels of knowledge about rights, and high levels of confidence, there was a strong sense that women themselves can make positive changes happen for women and that the role of the AA is to support...
“The wider community sees men and women working together to resolve violence

them in this. The woman must feel able to take the steps needed to address the situation. This points to the importance of WFC’s approach in building a sense of empowerment and leadership for women through the Area Associations, and supporting these through practical and timely interventions that enable the women to act on their sense of empowerment. Discussions with ‘weaned off’ Area Association groups also show that they have high levels of assertiveness in interaction, leadership and response to issues in general. By contrast, for the Area Association with the least amount of contact with WFC, members tended to suggest that the headmen is responsible for ensuring women’s rights on women’s behalf.

6.5 Factors that contribute to successful programming

Across the three programme contexts, there were several common factors identified which contributed to successful programming and improved the likelihood of positive, longer-term impact across the outcome areas:

Implementation by a local WRO: As the section above demonstrates, the contribution of the three WROs has been essential.

Using rights-based approaches that empower women: By ensuring access to women-only spaces (Ethiopia), supporting women’s control and access to economic assets (Ethiopia), placing women in leadership positions within groups, and emphasising a woman’s own right to choose how to respond to VAWG given her improved awareness and information, all three programmes empowered women, a critical component of VAWG prevention.

Gaining the full support of the traditional leadership from the onset: The substantive efforts made by WROs in working closely with traditional leaders to gain their support has meant that the traditional leaders have put their authority behind the project, communicated the importance of the project to the community, helped to mobilise the community and often referred cases that came to them.

“It has been important that we the leadership have gone around and given our support to the project and helped to mobilise people.”

(Male traditional leader, Daekrom, Ghana)

The presence of the intermediary teams and groups in the community, composed of members of the community. The members of the COMBATs, Area Associations, self-help groups and community conversation groups are all people elected by or selected from the community, well known to many community members and easily accessible by community members.

Community-based approach including men and women: This means that the wider community sees men and women working together to resolve violence and encourages community members to collectively take action to end VAWG. It also ensured that the focus was firmly on transforming gender power relations between men and women where both increase their knowledge and start to shift their attitudes and behaviours. Although, potential backlash was not specifically measured by any of the programmes we know from other contexts that involving whole communities is likely to reduce this.

There are also a number of specific factors that have contributed to the success of the projects in each individual context:
In Ethiopia, the self-help groups have empowered and enabled women to interact with one another, and to work collectively. This has meant that previously socially isolated women have been able to form support networks, and also understand the value of working together.

In Ethiopia, the economic benefits of women’s participation in the self-help groups, and members’ increased confidence, has had an important ‘demonstration effect’ to both men and women in the community, about the value of women.

In Ethiopia, establishing collaborative relationships between self-help groups, community leaders and government stakeholders has resulted in the creation of referral linkages which have been critical to ensuring that women are willing to report violence, and are able to get appropriate information and support. Influential stakeholders have also been able to speak with one voice on VAWG and develop collaborative solutions.

In Ghana, the follow-up provided by COMBAT has been key: After mediating a case, COMBAT members undertake regular follow-up visits to the household to check how things are going and provide further advice and mediation as needed.

In Ghana and Zambia, house-to-house visits have been important: This has been a key approach to ensure the maximum reach of the project across the community. This has enabled Area Association and COMBAT members to take time in a focused,
personal manner and to sit down with couples and discuss issues of gender roles, women’s rights and VAWG.

In Ghana and Zambia, the small size and relative isolation of the communities: This means that households are easily accessible, people interact all the time and thus, knowledge and information about the COMBAT and some of the sensitisation messages will spread easily. There is evidence that this has been more effective in Daekrom, the more isolated, rural and smaller of the two communities.

In Ghana and Zambia, the immediate response provided by the intermediary teams and groups: This has been very important in giving women the confidence that they will get an immediate response, rather than risk reporting and then returning to a husband who will abuse her further. Women know that they can go to a supportive group member at any time of the day or night for refuge and support.

“COMBAT is an excellent idea as most formal services are simply not accessible at community level. Even if they are accessible, people do not have the money to travel to access the services. It is the proximity of COMBATs which works. They are right on the doorstep of people. Also the constitution of the COMBAT is key – for example, some are chiefs or respected people, so their advice carries weight.... You know some of the formal services discriminate against less educated people... You go to an office, and the person looks at you from top to bottom.. Let’s face it. And you pay a fee when you go to social welfare.”

Mmale representative of the National Commission on Civic Education)

In Zambia and Ethiopia, the focus on economic empowerment through livelihood strategies has created more opportunities to address VAWG: By including concrete means to address poverty through livelihood strategies that favour women, Area Associations and self-help groups are able to help survivors of VAWG and contribute to prevention of VAWG. For example, in Zambia, if a woman becomes destitute because her husband dies and his family takes her property, the Area Association has been able to help that woman gain financial independence as a first step towards reducing her vulnerability to violence.

In Zambia, the length of time that WFC worked in the region (more than 20 years) was very significant in terms of outcomes. WFC’s approach is based on a long-term commitment to working with women and men in order for the changes to be sustainable. The research demonstrated important changes as a result of WFC’s work; these changes are the result of an approach that WFC take – not the result of one programme intervention – it is a long-term approach/commitment by WFC to the people in a particular rural community.

6.6 Implementation challenges

There were also a number of common challenges identified for the women’s rights organisations in terms of implementing the programmes in each context:

Reaching all members of the community: It has been difficult to reach everyone in the community – including vulnerable and marginalised women, youth, those who are more mobile (e.g. due to work that takes them outside the community) and new community members.

“Women’s rights organisations need greater resources to sustain engagement with communities over a longer period”
Social change needs long term funding: All three of programmes had limited access to long-term funding, however social change requires sustained investment over a long term period.

Lack of core funding: The smaller women’s rights organisations – especially in Ghana and Ethiopia – are vulnerable to loss in capacity as soon as project funding ends because of lack of core funding.

Programme sustainability after the withdrawal of funding: In Ghana and Zambia the COMBAT and Area Association teams were still active, although at a reduced level, more than one year after the programme end, which is testament to the work of the women’s rights organisations ability to ensure change is rooted in, and owned by, communities. However, not all members were equally active and some had moved out of the community. In Ethiopia, the self-help groups in the phased-out communities are still active, however the community conversation groups less so.

Ongoing training and mentoring for community groups: The research suggests that there is a need for periodic refresher training and a low level of ongoing mentoring and support for community teams and groups over the longer term so they have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice, refresh their skills and update their knowledge. For example on new laws, services. However, for this to take place the WROs need greater resources to sustain engagement with communities over a longer period.

Building and sustaining links with state agencies: A key challenge was how to ensure closer coordination between informal community mechanisms and formal response (police and other state agencies) mechanisms to ensure that survivors access comprehensive and appropriate support in line with the law and that respects their rights. Also, there is a need to ensure that prevention work is coordinated between state agencies and community groups.

Measuring impact on prevalence of VAWG: There was limited measurement regarding the impact of the programme interventions on the prevalence of VAWG. There was also a tendency by some programme staff as well as intermediary community members to equate reductions in the number of cases reported as evidence that violence has reduced. However, we know from other contexts that when violence becomes less acceptable at community-level, then it may simply continue but in more hidden ways.

Documentation of the project: All three projects had documented some aspects of the project approach and implementation, but this was patchy, in part due to lack of funding and capacity issues.

Measuring potential backlash: In all three contexts, none of the projects undertook robust assessment of the unintended consequences of their interventions, including a potential increase in violence against women who benefit from the programme and become more confident and independent.

Assessing programme effectiveness and impact: This is a significant challenge for WROs implementing community-level projects with small budgets. There are inadequate resources to invest in robust endline and baseline studies to enable the measurement of results at different levels or to conduct ongoing research and monitoring to draw conclusions on how programmes are operating and how and why impacts are or are not achieved.
There are also a number of specific factors that have created challenges for the implementation of the project in each individual context:

In Ethiopia, Siiqqee’s commitment to involving the poorest women in the self-help groups has meant that the project has had to provide intensive ongoing support – particularly in terms of revisiting and refreshing training to ensure programme participants were supported and understood how the groups operate SHGs. This has put a strain on the project’s limited resources.

In Ethiopia, the gaps in service delivery – particularly around providing shelter and welfare support to survivors – is a critical factor affecting reporting of violence, and Siiqqee has also identified that there is a critical need for a shelter or refuge in its target communities.

In Ghana, compensation / motivation for COMBAT members (and others): COMBAT members are unpaid volunteers which is important both to ensure that those who join the COMBAT are genuinely motivated by providing a service to their communities and to ensure longer-term sustainability when project funding runs out. It is also clear that COMBAT members gain respect and status for their role and that this provides an important motivation. Nonetheless, the reality is that when COMBAT members undertake their COMBAT work, they are using time that cannot then be spent on income-earning activities, and this can act as a disincentive for some COMBAT members.

“One improvement is that the COMBAT groups need more motivation… they also need to farm and because it is entirely voluntary, it is a limitation to the project. They need to be motivated, but this is not just about money, There are intrinsic rewards – they are selected and voted and this brings confidence and status. And there are extrinsic rewards and some want payment – this is the reality.”
(Male DOVVSU police officer)

In Zambia, sustaining the level of involvement/commitment required of field animators: The field animators are the foundation of WFC’s work – they have strong relationships with the Area Associations and with other local leaders. This is both a strength and weakness for WFC. It requires an immense personal commitment by the field animators, and by WFC, to sustain this level of involvement. For example, in an interview with two field animators, they described the long period of time that they needed to spend living in the community and talking to people informally, for the community members to see them as peers and educators, rather than people coming in offering them money. This kind of relationship does not lend itself to a narrow project framing, the dominant form of funding for aid.

The profile of the field animator is very important. They have a deep understanding of the local context and therefore know the needs of the people they are working with. The Area Association members are then able to use the participatory tools and the information in an ongoing way. However, this also means that there is considerable pressure on the field animators as individuals to sustain these relationships. There is also increasing pressure on WFC to articulate how this approach works in a way that interests potential donors.
7.0 Conclusions

The three research studies in Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia identified common enabling factors in preventing VAWG, and common barriers. Although the studies were not designed to draw conclusions about whether the prevalence of VAWG had decreased in any of the communities, they were able to generate evidence of intermediate changes that the programmes have contributed to, including addressing key risk factors known to support perpetration of VAWG:

(i) Changing the knowledge and attitudes of individuals with respect to gender roles and VAWG: In all three contexts, there is evidence that the programmes have contributed to a significant shift in the knowledge and attitudes of several individuals with respect to gender roles and relations and VAWG. Improvements in knowledge about the types, causes and consequences of VAWG, as well as more positive attitudes to women’s rights and lack of tolerance of VAWG, were evident in the cases of many of the direct participants of the programmes. These were: members of the self-help groups and community conversation groups in Ethiopia; members of the Community Based Action Teams (COMBATs) – as well as women who had attended community sensitisation sessions or sought help from the COMBATs – in Ghana; and members of the Area Associations in Zambia. Comparison with other community members who had no or limited involvement in the programmes confirmed these differences in attitudes, at the same time demonstrating the programme impact, but also its limitations in terms of reaching other community members who were not directly targeted. It was also evident that a long-term, sustained approach makes a difference as, in a minority of cases, some direct participants expressed attitudes unsupportive to women and girls – reinforcing the need for donors to give long-term funding for social change work. All three programmes also engaged with traditional and religious leaders and representatives of state agencies, and in some, but not all, cases there was evidence of positive shifts in knowledge and attitudes.

(ii) Changing the behaviours of individuals with respect to gender roles and VAWG: In all three contexts, there are examples of changes in individual behaviour relating to gender roles and VAWG, which multiple stakeholders attribute to the programmes. In all three cases, direct programme participants reported a number of similar changes in their own behaviours to prevent or respond to VAWG or promote gender equitable behaviours: acting to negotiate solutions to violence in their own family relationships; intervening to mediate tensions between other couples (in the case of trained individuals such as the COMBAT, Area Associations and community conversation members); speaking out against VAWG including harmful traditional practices; increased reporting of cases of VAWG to informal mechanisms (e.g. COMBATs, traditional leaders) and to the formal justice system (e.g. police, magistrates). In addition, in all cases, several women reported positive changes in the division of labour in the household with men being more involved in domestic tasks and looking after the children. There were also individual women programme participants in all three contexts who reported that their husbands had stopped or reduced the perpetration of physical or emotional
violence. In all three cases, the community-based mechanisms had accompanied some VAWG survivors to access support services, especially medical treatment. Finally, in all three contexts there were examples of women becoming more visible in community and household decision-making, and leadership positions, although there is still a long way to go in this area. In addition, in Ethiopia, programme participants reported improved entrepreneurial and business skills leading to greater income generation and increased roles in household decision-making as a result. In Ethiopia and Ghana, some direct programme participants reported improving their parenting by supporting their children to go to school, reducing the harsh use of discipline and ensuring both boys and girls participate in domestic chores. In Ghana, there were several examples where husbands or ex-husbands had started to contribute more towards the upkeep of their children, as a direct result of the COMBAT intervention. In Zambia, the Area Associations have also been able to provide economic support to VAWG survivors including direct financial assistance and support to re-establish a livelihood.

However, in some cases, there were examples where programme participants had struggled to change their behaviour or take action on the basis of their greater knowledge or changed attitudes, an important reminder that attitude change does not necessarily lead to behaviour change. It was also impossible for the research to judge how widespread these changes in behaviour were beyond the examples given by the participants in workshops.

(iii) Changing wider social norms with respect to gender roles and VAWG: Although this type of retrospective research could not undertake robust measurement of wider social norms change, there were indications in some cases that the programme had started to influence individuals beyond direct participants. For example, in Ethiopia and Ghana, stakeholders consistently reported that gender roles and decision-making processes were shifting to be more gender equitable – in households and the community more widely – as a result of changed attitudes and new behaviours modelled by those involved in the programmes. Similarly, in these two contexts, stakeholders agreed that more women across the community were speaking out against VAWG. However, it is also important to note that in all three contexts, it was clear that cases of VAWG continued and some women remained silent about the abuse they experienced. There was some evidence of a community-wide shift in the importance attributed to girls’ education and a relative rise in girls attending school. In Ethiopia, stakeholders consistently said that more community members were intervening in VAWG, including FGM cases and were supporting women to report violence.

However, the research also demonstrated the complexities in shifting social norms around gender roles and VAWG. For example, in Ethiopia and Ghana, women’s status is strongly linked to marriage and almost all stakeholders interviewed expressed the desirability of preserving marriages. Further, a lack of support services for women survivors means that
maintaining their marriage is often the only option. As a result, both informal and formal justice mechanisms tend to mediate in the majority of cases of intimate partner violence and there were some indications (needing further investigation) that women can be pressured to stay with their husbands and ‘resolve’ issues to preserve the marriage and ‘keep the peace’. Indeed, in all three contexts, both the new community mechanisms established (e.g. COMBATs and community conversation groups) and traditional and religious leaders mediated the vast majority of cases of intimate partner violence, including cases of physical violence.

Across the three contexts, the research identified a number of factors that contributed to programme successes:

- **Implementation by local WROs:** The WROs brought vital knowledge and understanding of the target communities and how to engage with traditional leaders and local decision-making structures, an ability to bridge the gap between women and formal decision-making structures, supported self-led change, recognised the importance of women’s empowerment and participation, and a link to the wider women’s movement working for change at a national level.

- **Using rights-based approaches that empower women,** placing women in leadership positions within groups and emphasising a woman’s own right to choose how to respond to VAWG resulted in a process that empowered women.

- **Promoting self-led change** to support women, for instance through COMBATS and Area Associations, to be empowered to make changes in their communities.

- **Long-term commitment to communities:** The women’s rights organisations have a long-term commitment to the communities. In Zambia, WFC has over 20 years’ relationship with one community which took part in the research and the research has found this is was very significant in terms of outcomes.

- **Gaining the full support of the traditional and religious leadership from the onset** to ensure they put their authority behind the project and help to mobilise the community.

- **The presence of the intermediary community-level groups,** composed of community members (COMBATs, Area Associations, self-help groups, community conversation groups) which are easily accessible to the rest of the community, can sustain regular sensitisation work and ensure immediate response and follow up to VAWG cases.

- **Use of a community-based approach including men and women** which ensures that the focus is firmly on transforming gender relations and discriminatory gender norms.

Nonetheless, there were also a number of common challenges for the WROs in terms of implementing the programmes in each context; many of which are inherently linked to the limited core and long-term funding available for WROs:

- **Reaching all members of the community:** e.g. marginalised women and girls and new community members. In Ethiopia, Siiqqee has successfully engaged with marginalised women – however, this has put a strain on Siiqqee’s limited resources.

- **Social change needs long term funding:** All three of the programmes struggle with a lack of long-term funding; however social change requires sustained investment over a long-term period.

- **Lack of core funding:** The smaller WROs – especially in Ghana and Ethiopia – are vulnerable to loss in capacity as soon as project funding ends because of lack of core funding.

- **Programme sustainability after the end of funding:** In Ghana and Zambia, the community mechanisms established were still active more than one year after the programme ended, which is testament to the work of WROs ability to ensure change is rooted in, and owned by, communities. However, this was at reduced levels: there was attrition and not all members were still active.

- **Ongoing training and mentoring for community groups:** There is a need for
periodic refresher training and low level ongoing mentoring and support for community mechanisms – and this needs funding.

- **Building and sustaining links with state agencies**: A key challenge was how to ensure closer coordination between informal (community mechanisms) and formal response (police and other state agencies) mechanisms to ensure that survivors receive comprehensive and appropriate support.

- **Gaps in service delivery**: This was particularly the case in Ethiopia and Ghana where many services – particularly shelter, legal and economic support – were not available for VAWG survivors, and even health and police facilities were far away.

- **Measuring impact on prevalence of VAWG**: None of the programmes undertook measurement of the impact of the interventions on VAWG prevalence – adequate funding is not available to women’s rights organisations to measure prevalence of VAWG.

- **Documentation of the project**: Documentation of the projects was patchy at times (e.g. lack of information on mediation of cases) and more resources are needed to properly track programmes.

- **Measuring potential backlash**: None of the projects undertook robust assessment of the unintended consequences of their interventions e.g. potential increase in violence against women programme participants.

- **Assessing programme effectiveness and impact**: There were inadequate resources for the WROs to invest in robust endline and baseline studies to enable the measurement of results and impacts.
8.0 Recommendations

8.1 For all actors (donors, national governments and INGOs):

Increase efforts to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG), by:

- Prioritising transformative change which takes a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to preventing VAWG, including across individual, interpersonal and family relationships, community and societal levels and across economic life, education, health, justice, security and health sectors.
- Including by:
  - Ensuring that programmes address the underlying gender inequalities and discriminatory social norms that increase the risk of VAWG.
  - Supporting community-based and rights programming which includes interventions to empower women and girls, engage men and boys and work with community leaders.
  - Ensuring programmes draw on models of promising practice and innovation as well as being based on a robust analysis of the specific context, the scale and particular risk factors for VAWG, and which interventions are most likely to be effective in that context.
  - Increase efforts to fully incorporate measures that recognise, tackle and address intersectional and multiple discrimination throughout programmes and policies.
  - Ensuring programmes measure the impact on the prevalence of VAWG as well as VAWG risk factors to continue to increase the evidence base on which interventions are effective in which contexts. Including by:
    - Strengthening agencies own understanding of the kinds of qualitative and quantitative indicators and methodologies that are appropriate to capture complex social change.
    - Recognising that VAWG is a continuum and addressing all forms of VAWG.
    - Recognising that sustainable prevention of VAWG is a long-term process and ensuring programmes have adequate timeframes and long-term funding.

8.2 In addition, donors should:

Provide adequate support to women’s rights organisations to prevent and respond to VAWG, by:

- Increasing technical, financial and political support to women’s rights organisations in recognition of the key roles they play in preventing VAWG.
- Providing long-term funding (10 years +), including core funding, to ensure organisational capacity is built and sustained and the long-term nature of changing gender norms is recognised.
- Ensuring that funding streams are accessible to national and local women’s rights organisations, for example by following guidance from the OECD DAC Network for Gender Equality, which recommends that applications can be in any language, application forms are kept short and simple, extensive evaluations are not imposed and reporting processes are flexible and not time intensive.
- Supporting learning and partnership models, i.e. a national women’s rights organisation working with a local organisation to provide capacity and assistance; a regional women’s network supporting learning across countries.
- Ensuring civil society funding streams include gender-responsive protection measures for women’s rights organisations and women human rights defenders.
Increase funding for specialist women’s shelters and other services for survivors of violence.

8.3 In addition, national governments should:

Develop National Action Plans on Tackling VAWG, with sufficient budgets and political will to ensure their implementation.

Strengthen, adopt and enforce laws to cover all forms of VAWG; including intimate partner violence and partner and non-partner sexual violence.

Ensure state agencies are responsive to VAWG cases. Including by:

- Providing regular and up-to-date training for police on VAWG laws and how to appropriately, in line with best practice, handle VAWG cases.

Support women’s access to justice. Including by:

- Assessing and addressing gaps in women’s access to formal justice mechanisms, including distance and cost.

Increase survivors’ access to a range of comprehensive services. Including by:

- Providing training for prosecutors and judges on the appropriate handling of VAWG cases.
- Working with women’s rights organisations to understand barriers for women survivor’s access to justice and support and enable coordination between women’s rights organisations’ programmes and the formal justice sector.

Support and recognise the role of women’s rights organisations in the prevention of VAWG, including by:

- Establishing and implementing meaningful formal and informal consultation mechanisms for women’s rights organisations to share their
expertise in the development of policies and programmes on VAWG.

Implement international and regional obligations on the full spectrum of women’s and girls’ human rights; including access to education and political participation.

8.4 In addition, International NGOs should:

Support women’s movements and women’s rights organisations to prevent and respond to VAWG, by:

- Giving a platform for women’s rights activists to speak at public events, at national and international levels.
- Adopting funded partnerships with women’s rights organisations that recognise and address power imbalances and support women’s rights organisations to pursue their own agenda.
- Ensuring advocacy efforts are based on meaningful consultations with women’s rights organisations.
- Taking a partnership/accompaniment approach that supports women’s rights organisations’ organisational development and is a long term relationship. This should include providing technical and financial support to women rights organisations to deliver monitoring and evaluation and theories of change.

Seeking financial support for robust (qualitative and quantitative) monitoring and evaluation of women’s rights and VAWG programming to measure key outcomes at different levels and provide evidence of impact.

8.5 For Women’s Rights Organisations

Based on the learnings in this research of the factors that contribute to successful programming and the identified implementation challenges, when delivering programmes that aim to prevent VAWG, WROs should consider:

- Ensuring programmes include a strong focus on empowering women and girls; this can include women-only spaces, supporting women’s control and access to economic assets and placing women in leadership positions.
- Gaining the support of traditional leadership; ensuring that traditional leaders put their authority behind the project.
- Effective strategies to mobilise members of the community into action groups; this should include support for those groups to assess their own norms and attitudes and training on VAWG laws.
- Taking a community-based approach; that supports the wider community to work together to end violence.
- Ways to strengthen initiatives to link informal community mechanisms and formal service providers to ensure a functional referral network to support women VAWG survivors to access support services and to facilitate the coordination of informal and formal prevention work.
- Methods to reach all members of a community; including women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting discrimination.
- Effective ways to measure impact in prevalence of VAWG and to document the project; and how to capture learning and share promising practice with the wider women’s rights sector.
- Assessing, measuring and responding to potential backlash as women become more empowered through the programme.