Standing with the changemakers:

lessons from supporting women's movements



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Cover image: Womankind partner, FIDA Kenya, has grown a movement of Maasai women to champion the rights of women and girls
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This page: Marisa from Kajiado Country in Kenya, campaigns against Female Genital Mutilation as part of the movement of Maasai women supported by FIDA Kenya.
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About Womankind Worldwide

Womankind Worldwide is a global women's rights organisation working with women's movements to transform the lives of women. Our vision is a world where the rights of all women are respected, valued and realised. We support women's movements to strengthen and grow, by providing a range of tools, including technical support, communications, connectivity and shared learning, joint advocacy and fundraising.

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Definitions

Women's rights organisations (WROs): These are women-led organisations working to advance women's rights and gender justice.

Women's movements: These are broad social movements led by women and their organisations that campaign for women's rights and gender justice at national, regional and international levels. They include WROs and other actors including activists, academics, journalists, lawyers and trade unionists.

Women human rights defenders (WHRDs): This term encompasses women who work to defend human rights, as well as any other human rights defenders, working to protect and advance women's human rights and gender justice.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG): This is a violation of women's human rights which takes different forms (e.g. physical, psychological, economic) and stems from structural power imbalances between women and men in society.

Unpaid care work: This term refers to the daily activities that sustain our lives and health, such as housework (food preparation, cleaning, laundry) and personal care (looking after children, older people, those who are sick or have a disability). Unpaid care work is disproportionately carried out by women because of gender roles and stereotypes.



Left: Members of the Dalit women's movement in Nepal, organised and mobilised by Womankind partner, Feminist Dalit Organization, are empowered to understand and campaign for their rights.

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1. Introduction

In her theory of change, Womankind Worldwide asserts that progressive change happens when diverse and independent women's movements have vision, strength, resilience and collective power. Change is sustained when these women's movements thrive and flourish over time.

Women's rights organisations (WROs) and movements are vital to a just world where the rights of all women are respected, valued and realised. Their impact is threefold:

- ensuring policies and laws that tackle discrimination and protect and advance women's rights are developed, adopted and implemented;
- promoting social change that supports the achievement of women's rights;
- providing services that support the realisation of women's rights.

During almost three decades of working directly to support WROs, and working for change as part of the global women's movement, Womankind has witnessed the impact that organisations and movements have had. From changing the lives of individual women to pushing for legal and social change that supports the realisation of women's rights, WROs and women's movements have made significant progress in advancing women's rights. Throughout our history, we have learnt how best to support these changemakers and listened to the challenges they face in working for deep and lasting change, from overcoming resource scarcity to resisting backlash. Our new strategy[1] focuses on supporting strong, vibrant women's movements. In this briefing, we focus primarily on laws and policies but look also at the role of WROs and movements in challenging social norms and empowering and organising women for social change.

This briefing builds on our 2013 Leaders for Change report[2], bringing in new analysis and examining the roles and impact of women's rights organisations and movements in advancing women's rights. Desk research commissioned by Womankind in 2017 analysed secondary literature, including journal articles, blogs, reports, news articles and policy briefings from academia, civil society, international organisations and media. Our research team also carried out in-depth interviews with key informants from women's movements. These findings aim to support donors, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and the international community to recognise and understand the pivotal role of women's movements in advancing women's rights, including the challenges they face, and to consider how best to support them.

"Throughout our history, we have learnt how best to support these changemakers and listened to the challenges they face"

1. Womankind Worldwide (2016), Women's movements: a force for change. Womankind Worldwide's Strategy 2016-2021. Available online at https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/womankind-worldwide-external-strategy-summary-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=0

2. Esplen, E, Womankind Worldwide (2013), Leaders for change: why support women's rights organisations?, available online at https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/briefings/leadersforchange-final.pdf?sfvrsn=6

2. Context: women's rights in a changing world

Right now, a global backlash against women's rights is on the rise. In the words of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, this comes with a "renewed obsession with controlling and limiting women's decisions over their bodies and lives, and views that a woman's role should be essentially restricted to reproduction and the family"[3]. Whilst women's movements have pushed long and hard for women's rights to be enshrined in international policies and frameworks, with notable success, the current global political landscape risks a serious regression on progress made.

Selected international frameworks and agreements protecting and promoting women's rights

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979);
- Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993);
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995);
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), 1820 (2009) and related UN Resolutions;
- Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and targets relevant to women's rights throughout Agenda 2030 (SDGs, 2015);
- Regional women's rights protocols:
    - Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará 1994);
    - Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol, 2003);
    - Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention, 2011).

On the one hand, global agreements (see box above) are a substantial victory for the promotion and protection of women's rights, at least on paper. In tandem, the number of women lawmakers has doubled in the past two decades, from 11.7% on average in 1997 to 23.5% in 2017[4]. But this hasn't created a shift in gender relations; instead, the power dynamics that drive inequality between women and men remain in force at all levels. Reviews of progress made under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Beijing Platform for Action highlighted that a lack of political will and investment stifled the creation, revision and implementation of national level laws in accordance with international instruments and agreements on women's rights[5].

In addition, although progress has been achieved for some women, profound inequalities remain for women belonging to marginalised groups and who face multiple and intersecting discrimination because of their gender and other aspects of their identity[6]. This example from the Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) in Nepal highlights the everyday impacts of intersecting oppressions on marginalised women:

"Dalit women suffer from triple discrimination as we are oppressed by the so-called high caste people (which affects both male and female Dalits), the design of the Hindu patriarchal system and Dalit male counterparts. We face the problems caused by Untouchability, caste and gender-based discrimination in our daily lives, and are excluded from both the public and private spheres.

"The levels of exclusion, deprivation and discrimination faced by Dalit women are chronic and multidimensional. Extreme poverty, illiteracy, landlessness, restricted livelihood options, poor access to resources, discouraged entrepreneurship, and poor participation in political and decision making processes are key problems faced by Dalit women, leading to very poor development indicators.

"We are subjected to caste and gender-based discrimination, physical, sexual and psychological abuse; prone to trafficking and child marriage, victims of accusation of witchcraft, boycotted by the society during inter-caste marriage and likely to undertake unsafe migration."[7]

3. Statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein – 08 March 2017., available online at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20474

4. http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm

5. UN Women (2015), The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20: summary report, available online at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1776The%20Beijing%20Declaration%20and%20Platform%20for%20Action%20turns%2020.pdf

6. Paz Arauco, V. et al (2014), Strengthening social justice to address intersecting inequalities post-2015, available online at https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9213.pdf

7. FEDO, (2017), Concerns of Dalit women in High Level Political Forum-2017 on Sustainable Development, available online at https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/briefings/fedo-lobby-document.pdf?sfvrsn=0

Below: A group of women who are supported by Womankind partner, Women for Human Rights, through the economic, political and cultural empowerment of single women in Nepal.

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Global policy regression that impacts on women's choice and control has far-reaching implications. The Mexico City Policy, or the Global Gag Rule as it is known, reinstated by the US government under President Trump, blocks federal funding to non-governmental organisations that provide abortion counselling and referrals or advocate for increased access to abortion. However, the current version of the policy goes further than previous Republican governments to additionally include restrictions on public health related funding for Zika, malaria and HIV. This policy directly threatens the lives of thousands of women and girls in the global South[8], and will lead to an estimated 3.3 million more abortions, most of which will be forced to occur in unsafe settings, 15,000 more maternal deaths and 8 million more unintended pregnancies[9].

The rise of organised, conservative resistance to women's rights also takes more subtle but equally dangerous forms. The Observatory on the Universality of Rights, a joint project run by feminist and human rights groups, has been monitoring the efforts of conservative and religious fundamentalist groups to undermine international human rights agreements. Its 2017 report sheds a light on the rhetoric, strategies and impact of such groups and maps their affiliation and relationships. These range from concerted lobbying of member states to organising youth at national level and promoting alternatives to comprehensive sex education in schools. These groups will intervene in the deadlocking of negotiations and the watering down of agreements. The UN Commission on the Status of Women, always a conflicted space, has seen renewed, emboldened conservative action[10].

Rising religious fundamentalisms, economic and ecological crisis, political turmoil and nationalism, conflict and civil strife, and backlash against feminism combine and conspire to roll back the gains made by women's movements. It is clear that the realisation of rights for all women requires continued and concerted activism and action.

8. Ford, L., (2017), Women will die: Trump leaves Ugandan women in jeopardy available online at https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jul/27/trump-global-gag-rule-sexual-health-women-ugandan-in-jeopardy

9. International Planned Parenthood Federation, (2017), Policy Briefing: the GGR and its impacts, available online at http://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/2017-08/IPPF%20GGR%20Policy%20Briefing%20No.1%20-%20August%202017_0.pdf

10. Shameem, N., (2017), Rights at risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights trends report 2017, available online at https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf

3. Women's movements as changemakers

Women's movements and WROs: what they are and what they do

Women's movements are broad social movements led by women and their organisations that campaign for women's rights and gender justice at national, regional and international levels. Women's movements throughout history have campaigned for votes for women, equal pay and protection from domestic violence, and against sexual harassment. Time and again, movements have proven to be successful in bringing about meaningful change due to their ability to unite and mobilise large groups of women, and make their collective voice heard.

Women's movements are not homogenous: the strongest are made up from a broad cross-section of women, and many bring a feminist perspective and practice into broader social movements such as those campaigning for labour rights or the environment. Women's movements typically employ a range of innovative and context relevant strategies, build alliances from the community to national levels and beyond, and provide rapid and holistic support to women when their rights are violated.

WROs are often the backbone of movements. They are, put simply, women-led organisations working to advance gender justice and women's rights. They comprise a huge spectrum and diversity of focus and approach. Some operate primarily at the grassroots level, set up by women to organise in their community. Others are active in advocacy and accountability work at national, regional and international levels. Some represent the interests of specific groups of women such as young women, rural women, indigenous women, farm workers, women living in urban settlements, domestic workers, lesbian, bisexual and trans women, migrants, Dalit women and women with disabilities[11].

The links between WROs and movements is documented by feminist scholar Srilatha Batliwala, who highlights that "organisations are sites from which movements are built and supported. But organisations, even though they are part of movements, are not in themselves movements. Movements operate at a scale that no single organisation can operate at."[12]

Women's movements and impact: what the evidence says

> *"Few of the normative advances on women's rights would have been possible without the advocacy of women's rights organisations and movements to raise public awareness, pressure governments for change, and hold governments to account for implementation of laws and policies."*[13]

A growing body of evidence demonstrates the impact that strong, vibrant women's movements have on the realisation of women's rights. An important study by Htun and Weldon (2012), which researched over 70 countries over 40 years, found that autonomous feminist movements were the most critical factor in achieving progressive policies on violence against women and girls (VAWG)[14].

Women's movements play a pivotal role in ensuring that laws and policies are implemented by raising awareness, influencing elected officials at local and national levels, mobilising communities, building the capacity of duty bearers, and monitoring and holding governments to account in international arenas. In the absence of autonomous feminist movements, governments tend to ratify treaties but do not follow up with meaningful action[15].

Similarly, True (2016) found that the emergence of anti-VAWG laws in Asia and the Pacific, including those outlawing domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and trafficking, has been due in large part to feminist advocates (working both inside and outside the region) being trained in CEDAW[16].

In a report for Comic Relief on the added value of investing in women's rights organisations, Helen O'Connell found that ***"women-led organisations have opened spaces for women and girls from diverse backgrounds and situations to meet, learn, strategise, speak for and represent themselves. Women-led organisations take a rounded view of the rights and lives of women and girls, linking personal to political, micro issues to macro matters, and advocating for practical, policy and structural changes."***[17]

Womankind's contribution to movement strengthening

Engendering the constitution in Zimbabwe

Ahead of the 2013 referendum on the new constitution in Zimbabwe, Womankind supported the women's movement to increase women's participation and ensure women's rights were clearly defined within the new constitution. Four organisations funded by Womankind – Musasa, the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ), the Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU) and the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) – played an important role in an intensive series of activities to mobilise women across the country to influence decision makers. An effective range of strategies was used, from community dialogues and public awareness campaigns, to research and documentation, training, and advocacy and lobbying of key political actors.

Using these tactics, the women's movement was able to secure between 75-95% of the demands made by women, including a clear gender equality clause and language in the constitution that ensured customary law could no longer discriminate against women. For the Zimbabwe women's movement, reaching a shared set of goals through consensus building and the forging of alliances set an important precedent for future collective action[18].

Ahead of the 2018 election and building on previous work, Womankind is supporting WCoZ to mobilise the women's movement to strengthen women's election preparedness. Strategies include feminist analysis of the election process, election strategy development, women's manifesto development, engagement with the media and candidate training.

Barriers to change: the challenges facing women's movements

The current backlash against women's rights (see Section 2) does not spare those organising for change on the ground; it forms the backdrop to all their work. Too often women bear the brunt of backlash for their activism, sometimes with tragic consequences. In 2015, at least 31 women human rights defenders (WHRDs) were murdered as a direct result of their activism[19]. Countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Brazil, Nigeria, South Africa and the USA have witnessed an increase in threats and violence against WHRDs[20].

WHRDs are targeted by violence because of the work they do, whether it is defending women's rights, LGBT+ rights, indigenous rights, the environment, land or democracy. They face further violence because of their gender and their work to tackle patriarchal social norms and expectations of a woman's role in society. Attacks are perpetrated by state and non-state actors, and have a profound negative impact on women's health, relationships and families[21].

The work of WHRDs is often not recognised, which prevents them from accessing existing protections for human rights defenders[22].

Additionally, violations against WHRDs are not systematically documented by governments, which limits prospects for special protection measures for them[23]. Although many international declarations and commitments exist to protect the rights of WHRDs, including the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998), political will to defend WHRDs is lacking and accountability for violations is woefully insufficient[24] .

Alongside the inherent danger faced by WROs, movements and WHRDs, women's movements face financial pressures with limited funds and lack of donor support for their agendas. In 2011 the Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID) surveyed over 1,100 WROs from around the world and found the median annual income of 740 of these to be USD 20,000.

The women's rights organisations that Womankind has partnered with over the past 28 years have consistently highlighted the lack of core, flexible, long-term funding as a serious impediment to their impact on women's rights. As pointed out by Bandana Rana of Saathi, Nepal:

"We now run three shelters for women [survivors of VAWG] in different parts of the country – but over the years it has been difficult to find sustainable financial support to run them.

11. Womankind Worlwide (2013), Leaders for Change: why support women's rights organisations?, available online at https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/briefings/leadersforchange-final.pdf?sfvrsn=6

12. Srilatha Batliwala, quoted in AWID (2009), Forum 08 in review: the power of movements, page 18, available online at https://www.awid.org/publications/report-awids-2008-forum-power-movements

13. OECD DAC Nework on Gender Equality (Gendernet) (2016), Donor support to southern women's rights organisations: OECD Findings, available online at https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/OECD-report-on-womens-rights-organisations.pdf

14. Htun, M. and Weldon, S.L. (2012), The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975-2005, American Political Science Review, 1-22.

15. ibid

16. True, J., (2016), 'Ending Violence against Women in Asia: International Norm Diffusion and Global Opportunity Structures for Policy Change', UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) Working Paper 2016-5, available online at http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/(httpPublications)/0AE05C2AE73E998DC1257FD10051838E?OpenDocument

17. H. O'Connell (2012), What added-value do organisations that are led and managed by women and girls bring to work addressing the rights, needs and priorities of women and girls?

18. Wilson, P. et al., (2013), Women's successful struggle for equal rights in the Zimbabwe Draft Constitution: an internal evaluation of the advocacy work of Musasa, the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, Women in Politics Support Unite and the Zimbabwe Women's Lawyers Association with support from Womankind Worldwide.

19. AWID, (2015), Infographic: Women human rights defenders killed in 2015, available online at https://www.awid.org/resources/infographic-women-human-rights-defenders-killed-2015

20. Action Aid, 23rd Jun 2015. Women's Rights Activists Increasingly Under Threat, available online at https://www.actionaid.org.uk/latest-news/womens-rights-activists-increasingly-under-threat

21. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 29th Nov 2016, Press release – For International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, available online at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20938

22. AWID, (2014), Our Right to Safety: Women Human Rights Defenders' Holistic Approach to Protection, available online at https://www.awid.org/publications/our-right-safety-women-human-rights-defenders-holistic-approach-protection

23. Ibid

24. Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRD-IC), 29th Nov 2016, WHRD-IC Statement On International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, available online at http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/2016/11/29/women-human-rights-defenders-international-coalition-whrd-ic-statement-on-international-women-human-rights-defenders-day-29-november-2016/



Above: Women from Godawari, Nepal, are supported by Womankind partner, Saathi, through savings groups and income-generating skills trainings.

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The government has only recently begun providing partial support to one of our shelters. In spite of everyone believing in the importance of the service there is no support to run it – whether it is donors or national governments."[25]

The financial challenges facing WROs and movements need to be understood in the context of two powerful trends: 1) visible rhetoric on the importance of achieving gender equality and women's rights, and 2) pressure to deliver results and value for money through development interventions[26]. These pressures are challenging for WROs to navigate, as tackling the root causes of gender injustice involves long-term social change, yet they are expected to deliver tangible results in the short term.

In addition, local WROs, in particular those serving marginalised women and located outside capital cities, face fierce competition from INGOs which have more capacity to satisfy donor requirements, including the ability to bid for funding, meet compliance and implement large-scale projects. While WROs implement programmes to deliver gender mainstreaming and components of standalone women's rights programmes, they have no space to shape their own work or advance their agenda because of limited funding opportunities[27].

Recent data from the OECD Gendernet Secretariat confirms the challenging financial landscape is unchanged: in 2014, only 8% of aid focused on gender equality went to Southern civil society, of this a negligible amount reached WROs[28].

25. Bandana Rana, Saathi Nepal, interviewed for Womankind Worldwide (2015), At the crossroads Women's rights after 2015, available online at https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/reports/at-the-crossroads-womens-rights-after-20156d1e4d1e0c8663e39143ff00009d7e70.pdf?sfvrsn=8

26. AWID (2013), Watering the leaves starving the roots: the status of financing for women's rights organizing and gender equality, available online at https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/WTL_Starving_Roots.pdf

27. See note 6.

28. OECD DAC Network on gender equality (2016), Donor support to southern women's rights organisations: OECD Findings, available online at http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/OECD-report-on-womens-rights-organisations.pdf

4. Changing a patriarchal world: approaches and lessons from women's movements

Women's movements take a holistic approach to changing women's lives and to understanding and addressing their subordination under a patriarchal social order. They understand gender as a social construct and gender inequality as a power imbalance, underpinning and shaping relations, norms and laws, institutions and resource allocation. There is much to learn from their analysis, strategies and actions. This section highlights some common approaches and tactics taken by women's movements and WROs.

A human rights approach

Women's movements and WROs use a human rights approach in their work, which is critical for deep and lasting change:

> *"A human rights approach is comprehensive and progressive, because it explicitly envisages all women as agents with inherent dignity and entitlement to a range of rights – rather than just as mothers, workers, or engines for greater productivity or efficiency."*[29]

For change in women's lives to be meaningful and long term, it must go beyond alleviating the 'symptoms' of gender inequality, and focus on the root causes – including social norms, behaviours and attitudes, and gendered power dynamics in both public and private spheres – to transform societies that place women in a subordinate status. To be deep and lasting, change needs to take place at individual, community and systemic level and across the full spectrum, ranging from informal beliefs and attitudes to formal laws, policies and resource allocation[30].

Ensuring national legislation is based on human rights principles, such as equality and non-discrimination, self-determination, autonomy and participation, has potential to create long-lasting transformational change for women[31]. A human rights approach establishes rights, responsibilities and mechanisms for accountability via a process of legal change, based on agreed international norms on gender equality, such as CEDAW[32]. This explicitly and legally obliges state parties to take all appropriate measures to achieve substantive equality and transform unequal power relations[33].

A human rights approach therefore classes states as main duty bearers under human rights law, which is a critical factor in creating change[34]. It also enhances accountability by allowing women to legitimately claim their rights, while holding policymakers responsible for their policies and actions (or lack thereof) as established in international treaties[35] .

Women's political participation

Changes in the lives of women are often complex, non-linear, realised over a long-term trajectory, and most of the time require a combination of multiple enabling drivers of change. Whilst there isn't always a linear correlation, women's political leadership has been shown to have a positive impact on the achievement of women's rights. For example, a study of 100 countries identified that national parliaments with higher proportions of women have increased efforts to improve gender equality[36].

A higher than average presence of women lawmakers influences broader policies, not just gender equality. For instance, there is evidence of a correlation between women's leadership and climate change policy: out of the 70 most developed countries in the world only 18 reduced or stabilised carbon emissions between 1990 and 2004. Of these countries, 14 out of 18 had a higher than average number of female elected representatives[37].

As stated by O'Neil and Domingo[38], there are two main reasons why women's political participation is a key driver in advancing gender equality. Firstly, it creates a strong symbolic message that women can be leaders and hold positions of power, challenging widespread norms that men are the leaders and women should be at home. Secondly, women politicians, working with feminist bureaucrats and activists, have effectively enabled legal and policy reforms that advance the rights and wellbeing of women and girls in many countries.

Women's movements have a critical role to play in promoting women's political participation at all levels – by advocating for more women in positions of power, providing training and platforms for women, and enabling spaces for collective action and women's organising. After many years of campaigning and mobilisation in the

29. Sepúlveda Carmona, M. and Donald, K., (2014), What Does Care Have to Do with Human Rights? Analysing the Impact on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. Gender & Development, 22:3, 441-457. London: Routledge, available online at http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/what-does-care-have-to-do-with-human-rights-analysing-the-impact-on-womens-righ-333381

30. Batliwala, S., (2012), Changing their world: concepts and practices of women's movements, available online at: https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/changing_their_world_2ed_full_eng.pdf

31. Ibidem

32. Marcus, R. and Harper, C. (2014) Gender justice and social norms – processes of change for adolescent girls: Towards a conceptual framework 2. London: ODI, available online at https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8831.pdf

33. See note 30.

34. Ibidem

35. Ibidem

36. M. Hallward-Driemeier et al., (2013), Women's Legal Rights over 50 Years. Progress, Stagnation or Regression?, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 6616, available online at https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/21474

37. MacGregor, S., (2017), Moving beyond impacts: more answers to the 'gender and climate change' question, in Buckingham, S. and Le Masson, V. Understanding climate change through gender relations, Routledge: Oxford.

38. O'Neil, T. and Domingo, P. (2016), Women and Power: Overcoming barriers to leadership and influence, available online at https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10443.pdf

post-conflict period by FEDO and many others in Nepal's women's movement, the 2017 Local Level Election Act stipulated that at least two out of the four members of each Ward Committee must be women and one should be a woman from the Dalit community. Thanks to these efforts, in September 2017, large numbers of women, including over 6,000 Dalit women, were elected to local government for the first time. According to Renu Sijapati of FEDO:

> *"The local level elections constitute a significant achievement for our country as a whole and the representation of Dalit women is a remarkable achievement for us. After a long struggle and campaign by FEDO to politically empower Dalit women and increase their representation in state structures, to integrate them into national development processes, the local level elections have finally provided an opportunity."*

The value of women-only spaces

Women's participation and leadership is not limited to formal political positions. Participation and leadership in community-based structures is an important pathway to securing women's rights, as well as a possible springboard for women entering formal politics. Womankind's research[39] in Afghanistan, Ghana, Nepal and Zimbabwe, as part of the Dutch government funded FLOW programme, highlights the value of women-only groups as incubators of change.

In particular, women-only spaces:

- provide a safe place, which is critical to building women's confidence, self-esteem and agency. Through these spaces, women research participants in all countries felt inspired and confident to take action in their communities as well as to contest for leadership roles;
- increase women's understanding of their own rights, in particular equal right to participate meaningfully in mixed groups, talk to husbands and other male relatives about issues important to them, such as working on farm land, and approach decision makers to solve local issues;
- act as a catalyst for women to take on leadership roles in other spaces in the community. In Zimbabwe, women started attending and speaking at village head meetings, while in Nepal, participants joined the Dalit rights movement and political parties.

Triangles of empowerment

Political opportunity reform is particularly ripe when there are feminist advocates in elected office, state bureaucracy (in well-resourced gender ministries and in the civil service more broadly) and autonomous feminist movements. Feminist scholars have referred to this as 'triangles of empowerment'[40]. Montoya emphasises that these conditions can drive meaningful change for a number of reasons. Firstly, feminist advocates inside the government understand and have access to the process and politics of policymaking. Secondly, the presence of feminists in the civil service can increase the chances of WROs and movements being included in the policymaking process, which is necessary for ensuring that policies are grounded in local women's needs. Thirdly, the presence of feminist advocates within all three spaces significantly improves the prospects of VAWG laws and policies being monitored and enforced. The combination of robust state feminism, strong autonomous feminist organisations and progressive leadership in Spain in 2004, led to some of the most extensive VAWG policy reforms of any EU country.

However, it should be noted that the relationships between feminist advocates inside and outside the state are not always positive and constructive. In many cases, the women who are represented in government are privileged, elite women who do not work to include poorer and marginalised women in policymaking processes, making it difficult to build alliances. Poor relations can also occur when feminist advocates on the outside criticise those on the inside, without appreciating the challenges and constraints of their bureaucratic location and the party political pressures placed upon them. Feminist advocates who have worked both inside and outside of state structures have stressed the importance of building relationships that are based on mutual trust and respect as well as constructive challenge. This is essential for creating the strong state-civil society coalitions needed to drive domestically led progressive reforms.

39. Womankind Worldwide, (2015), Creating new spaces: women's experiences of political participation in communities, available online at https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/reports/creating-new-spaces-women's-experiences-of-political-participation-in-communities.pdf?sfvrsn=0

40. C. Montoya, (2013), From Global to Grassroots: The European Union, Transnational Advocacy, and Combating Violence against Women, Oxford University Press: Oxford, page 28.

Lessons from Uruguay: feminist organising for the "right to care"

Care provision became a central part of the public policy agenda in Uruguay when a wider process of social reforms was introduced in 2005. UN Women, United Nations Population Fund and other development agencies carried out time use surveys in 2007 and 2013, which proved that women spent two thirds of their week on unpaid work, and only one third on paid work. For men, the reverse applied[41]. The data supported critical shifts in debate and policymaking: the notion of "right to care" played a major role in creating changes to the health system, social security and tax reform. Civil society and academia in Uruguay repositioned care as a collective and societal issue, taking it out of the private and family sphere and positioning it as a human rights issue. In November 2015, the Care Act (No. 19,353) – a flagship policy of President Tabaré Vázquez – was adopted by the Parliament[42].

Analysis of the process that led to this landmark Bill discovered several key factors acting together as levers of change:

- A progressive party resisted the dictatorship, had strong leadership and participation among women, and had support from the human rights movements;
- Women's leadership and participation in trade union activism significantly increased the presence of women in decision making positions, which in turn opened up space for feminist agendas in national politics and public debate[43];
- The concept of care was repositioned as a human rights issue, which played a major role in creating changes to the health system, social security and tax reform;
- Women's movements pushed for wide-reaching and fundamental advances, including influencing implementation of international treaties and creation of national laws and policies, pushing for human rights approaches and increasing women's political participation.

In Uruguay, according to Batthyány, "information and knowledge have played a central role in recognising the care crisis and in placing the subject of care with a gender perspective on the public agenda, basically through indicators that have been provided by the time use surveys and the conceptual-dialectical contribution of academia".[44]

41. UN Women, (2017), In Uruguay, care law catalyzes change, ushering services and breaking stereotypes, available online at http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/2/feature-uruguay-care-law

42. Ibidem

43. Filgueira, F, et al., (2012), Welfare, Care, Gender and Generations in Uruguay. In Razavi, S. Seen, Heard and Counted, Chichester: Wiley and Blackwell.

44. Batthyány, K.D., (2015), Policies and care provision in Latin America. ECLAC – Gender Affairs Series No. 124, available online at http://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/37727

45. Equality Now, (2017), The world's shame, the global rape epidemic: how laws around the world are failing to protect women and girls, available online at https://www.equalitynow.org/sites/default/files/EqualityNowRapeLawReport2017_Single%20Pages_0.pdf

46. The petition gained the interest of the campaigning community organisation (Avaaz), which hosted the petition on its website and promoted it to its members globally asking for signatures in solidarity.

47. Extracted from interviews with Faiza Mohamed – Director of the African office of Equality Now, Jemimah Keli – Head of Programs at FIDA Kenya and Catherine Nyambara – Advocacy Intern at FEMNET.

Strategic litigation

Women's rights organisations, particularly those that take a legal reform approach, have successfully used strategic litigation as a tactic to force legislative change.

A recent example from Kenya includes the Justice for Liz campaign which was launched following the high-profile gang rape of a teenage girl. The Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition (SOAWR), led by Equality Now, The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) and FIDA Kenya, took up the case and highlighted the high prevalence of sexual violence across the country and the lack of redress for survivors.

The case sparked mass public outrage when the police initially ordered the offenders to cut grass as punishment for their crime. In response, SOAWR mounted a two-year legal advocacy campaign that led to the Kenyan courts convicting the offenders of rape and grievous harm and sentencing them each to 15 years' imprisonment[45].

Social media campaigning was a key tactic used to support the legal campaign, and demonstrates the importance of solidarity between WROs and movements in different contexts. An online petition started by an Ethiopian feminist advocate demanding that Liz's rapists be prosecuted went viral and achieved 1.3 million signatures from around the world[46]. This helped to propel the case into international and national headlines, which intensified the pressure on the Kenyan government to act in light of the failure of local authorities to adequately address sexual violence. The Justice for Liz campaign changed the legal landscape in Kenya. Interviewees from Equality Now, FEMNET and FIDA Kenya report that the case led to new policies on sexual violence and to amendments being made to Kenya's Sexual Offences Act to close some of its loopholes[47].



Above: Single women supported by Womankind partner, Women for Human Rights, run their own vegetable farm in Chapagun, Nepal.

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Tackling social norms

Patriarchal roles, behaviours, attitudes, cultural values, and moral and religious codes reinforce and reproduce gender stereotypes at all levels. Social norms are patterns of behaviour motivated by a desire to conform to the shared social expectations of an important reference group, and reflect deep social structures. Harmful social norms manifest in beliefs and behaviours that entrench gender inequality. For instance, recent data from nearly 60 countries reveals that many men and women still think that wife beating is justified based on women's behaviour[48]. Another recent study across Asia and the Pacific found the most common reason men gave for committing partner and non-partner rape was their belief that they have the right to sex, regardless of consent[49].

Changing social norms is a complex, messy and non-linear process – it can be rapid and abrupt, or incremental and unnoticed, or somewhere in between. Women's movements and WROs have historically taken social norms head on, and challenged patriarchy where it first manifests itself: in relationships at household and community level.

Womankind's evidence of community programmes to tackle social norms that perpetuate VAWG reveals that long-term approaches, led by WROs, can yield positive results. Work at community level by WROs in Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia, including raising awareness, creating safe spaces for women to discuss the issues affecting their lives and fostering collective action, have helped to change attitudes about gender roles and VAWG and behaviours of individuals[50]. In all country research sites, women involved in the programmes reported positive changes in the division of labour in the household, with men carrying out 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[51].

In Uganda, one particular approach called SASA!, a community mobilisation methodology developed by WRO Raising Voices to prevent VAWG and HIV by tacking social norms, has been the subject of a randomised controlled trial. The study found that SASA! reduced the risk of intimate partner violence against women in intervention communities by 52%[52].

48. UN Women (2015), The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20: summary report, available online at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1776The%20Beijing%20Declaration%20and%20Platform%20for%20Action%20turns%2020.pdf

49. Partners for Prevention, (2013), Why Do Some Men Use Violence against Women and How Can We Prevent It? Quantitative Findings from the United Nations multi country study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific, available online at http://www.partners4prevention.org/sites/default/files/resources/p4p-report.pdf

50. Womankind Worldwide, (2014), Prevention is possible: The role of women's rights organisations in ending violence against women and girls in Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia, available online at https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/reports/prevention-is-possible-(1).pdf?sfvrsn=2

51. Ibidem

52.Abramsky, T. et al., (2014), Findings from the SASA! Study: a cluster randomized controlled trial to assess the impact of a community mobilization intervention to prevent violence against women and reduce HIV risk in Kampala, Uganda, available online at https://bmcmedicine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12916-014-0122-5

53. Uganda: Domestic Violence Act: 2010, available online at http://www.ulii.org/ug/legislation/act/2010/2010/domestic_violence_act_2010_pdf_20398.pdf

Strategies and tactics: lessons from Nigeria and Uganda

Women's movements in Uganda and Nigeria successfully lobbied for extensive advances in the laws on VAWG. This section gives a brief overview of the changes and then highlights the common approaches and strategies the movements took to achieve change.

In 2010, Uganda brought its landmark Domestic Violence (DV) Act into force[53]. Among the DV Act's provisions is the protection of survivors, punishment of offenders, and procedures and guidelines for the courts to follow[54]. The Act is firmly rooted in Ugandan women's struggles around unequal power relations in the household, which date back to the 1940s. Decades of pressure by the women's movement for the realisation of married women's rights led to the Ministry of Justice drafting the Domestic Relations Bill in the 1980s. This progressive Bill was shelved during the political unrest that occurred during the '80s and '90s and then finally resurfaced in a parliamentary debate in 2003[55]. However, it was fiercely attacked by conservative Christian and Muslim groups, which were opposed to its provisions banning polygamy, criminalising marital rape and recognising cohabitation as marriage[56]. President Museveni quickly withdrew the Bill and accused the women's movement of trying to impose western liberal ideals on a traditional African society – a common tactic among male power holders to vilify women's movements[57].

In 2008, WROs, academics, Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) and the Ministry for Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) formed the Domestic Violence Coalition specifically to advocate for the passage of the DV Act. In light of the controversy surrounding the rights-based Domestic Relations Bill, the WROs leading the coalition – Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) and the Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP) – strategically repackaged their demands for DV legislation using an instrumentalist policy framework[58]. Activists reportedly emphasised that ending DV would improve women's productivity, which would help Uganda to achieve the MDGs[59]. Not long into the campaign for the DV Act, there was a high-profile murder of an army general by his ex-girlfriend. In the wake of this incident, UWOPA members purposefully re-defined DV as a gender indifferent problem that could easily claim male victims[60]. While this move ran the risk of depoliticising domestic violence, it proved successful in securing the support of religious leaders and male politicians, which was necessary for the passage of the Act. This example illustrates the difficult decisions women's movements face when pushing for change in highly patriarchal societies. Such power struggles around framing of demands are not unique to the Uganda case and have been examined in the context of the passing of domestic violence legislation in Eastern European Countries[61].

Nigeria's Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 is an example of WROs building a strong movement for change[62]. This Act criminalises many forms of VAWG, including rape (not marital), early and forced marriage, FGM, abusive widowhood practices, spousal beating, forced financial dependence and forced eviction from home[63]. This achievement was the result of 14 years of vigorous campaigning by civil society organisations. In 2001, WROs, including Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria, international human rights NGOs and religious organisations came together to form the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women (LACVAW) to push collectively for national laws to tackle VAWG[64]. Over the following years, they researched, wrote and launched a prospective bill on violence against women, and campaigned for it to be adopted. After several years of rejections and pushback from parliamentarians and government, the coalition revised and relaunched the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Bill in 2008. They followed this with a sustained advocacy campaign which led to the Bill's passing in 2013 and then passage into law two years later.

There are important common lessons to be learnt from the two examples on strategy and approach.

53. Uganda: Domestic Violence Act: 2010, available online at http://www.ulii.org/ug/legislation/act/2010/2010/domestic_violence_act_2010_pdf_20398.pdf

54. Ibidem

55. Ahikire, J. and Mwiine, A.A., (2015), The politics of promoting gender equity in contemporary Uganda: Cases of Domestic Violence Law and the policy on Universal Primary Education, ESID Working Paper No.55, Manchester, Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, available online at http://www.effective-states.org/wp-content/uploads/working_papers/final-pdfs/esid_wp_55_ahikire_mwiine.pdf

56. Ibidem

57. Ibidem

58. Ibidem

59. Ibidem. Other feminist WROs also tactically employ instrumentalist framings of VAWG to capture the attention of male power holders. In her interview, Jemimah Keli from FIDA Kenya explained that her organisation stresses the economic costs of VAWG to male politicians, including by emphasising the value that women's health has on the country's overall development.

60. Ibidem

61. Krizsan, A. and Popa, R.M., (2014), Frames in Contestation: Gendering Domestic Violence Policies in Five Central and Eastern European Countries, Violence Against Women, 20(7), pp. 758-782.

62. Nigeria: Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015 (VAPP), available online at http://www.refworld.org/docid/556d5eb14.html

63. Ibidem

64. Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), 'Landmark Legislation on Gender Based Violence in Nigeria: How CSOs made a difference', in B.Combo, R.Sow and F.J.Mohamed (eds.), (2013), Journey to Equality: 10 Years of the Rights of Women in Africa, Nairobi, Equality Now , pp. 136-138.

These lessons include:

The use of global and regional frameworks

In Nigeria, LACVAW based its demands on the state's obligations to address VAWG under CEDAW, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In Uganda, the women's movement put the government under pressure by stating their obligations under various human rights treaties and using processes developed by consecutive UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Targeting those with law making power

In Nigeria, LACVAW hired a former MP to help navigate the parliamentary system and identify the most efficient tactics to lobby parliamentarians, including targeting them with a SMS campaign. In Uganda, the coalition mobilised UWOPA to lobby powerful male MPs to support the Domestic Violence Bill. The efforts of influential female MPs, such as Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga – who had long supported the anti-VAWG movement – were pivotal in driving the Bill forward.

Strategic use of media and communications

In both Nigeria and Uganda, coalitions trained journalists to keep domestic violence in the headlines and report in a sensitive, non-sensationalist, non-biased way. The campaigns for the Bills garnered support from the media, which helped to elevate and sustain them. Social media was also widely used: LACVAW developed a website, set up a Twitter page and Pinterest account, and created YouTube videos and an online petition for the Bill, all of which helped to raise awareness.

Galvanising the women's movement

Coalitions in both countries made the most of key international moments, such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign and International Women's Day, to shine a light on their demands by stepping up media work and mobilising women.

In Nigeria, a number of LACVAW member organisations were also part of SOAWR that was set up specifically to pressure governments to ratify and domesticate the Maputo Protocol. Through their involvement in SOAWR, these organisations took part in Oxfam's Raising Her Voice campaign, from 2009-2012, which aimed to improve political participation of women living in poverty. These organisations gained access to and galvanised many more organisations working on VAWG, helping them to amplify demands for the Bill at local, national and regional levels. This was pivotal in driving the Bill forward.

In Uganda, the coalition mobilised rural women: keen to build an inclusive movement, it supported over a thousand women from the countryside to march to parliament to demand legislation against domestic violence.

Enlisting allies

In Nigeria, LACVAW engaged with a range of stakeholders to garner their support for the bill, including traditional and religious leaders and groups, and 'male champions'. They also reached out to international allies; international organisations including Justice4All, UN Women, Ipas, UNICEF and UNFPA actively supported the campaign. In Uganda, the coalition worked with the police to develop a pilot project in Kampala to demonstrate the workability of the proposed law. It also managed to get backing from diverse international organisations, including the Club de Madrid, Plan International, UN Women, UNFPA and the Catholic Church of Ireland.

Raising public awareness

In Nigeria, a range of strategies were deployed to raise awareness of VAWG among the public, such as mock tribunals to showcase abuses of women's rights, debates in schools and market places, and songs and slogans with simple, catchy messages. In Uganda, recognising the President's political power, the coalition repeatedly played audio recordings of him problematising domestic violence to boost the campaign's profile and credibility.

5. Conclusion

Below: Women from the Maasai community are part of a movement to end violence against women and girls in Kenya.

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Whilst the backlash against women's rights is current and growing, so too is the determination of women's movements and WROs to tackle the patriarchal structures that oppress women, and to resist and make gains. Women's movements have the skills, experience, vision, leadership and passion to shift the world on its axis, and create a fundamentally better one.

This paper has provided a background to the work of women's movements and WROs, highlighted the challenges they face, including threats to their safety and the chronic funding crisis, and shown, despite those challenges, the strategies they use to campaign for legal and social change on women's rights.

Investing in WROs and movements and enabling them to follow their own agendas is both a matter of urgency and necessity. We call on donors, the international community, INGOs and allies to take immediate action.

"Women's movements have the skills, experience, vision, leadership and passion to shift the world on its axis, and create a fundamentally better one"



6. Recommendations for the international community

Recognise the value of women's movements in achieving sustained change and the role of WROs in building women's movements:

- Embed a commitment to support WROs and women's movements in organisational strategies, including funding plans. Where a commitment exists already, ensure it remains meaningful and actively look for ways to strengthen it.
- Listen to and be led by the agendas of WROs for movement building and strengthening, and support their strategies and priorities.
- Consult with a diversity of WROs when it comes to the development of funding mechanisms, programmes; and monitoring, evaluation and learning initiatives. Make sure they have a seat at the table and a space to speak up – take a step back.
- Work with WROs and movements representing marginalised women to understand the barriers that women face, the intersectional nature of discrimination and solutions for change.
- Increase WROs' resources to identify their own strategies for movement building and strengthening.

Build stronger partnerships:

- Recognise and trust the expertise and experience of WROs and women's movements, including those representing marginalised women.
- Support specialist WROs to pursue their own agenda based on the needs and wishes of their members.
- Increase protection for WHRDs by integrating gender responsive security and protection mechanisms into funding streams and working with specialist WROs to assess and address risks.
- Place pressure on governments to fulfil commitments to the protection of WHRDs, including fully resourced action plans that address effective protection measures, impartial investigations to bring to justice those responsible for violence, and the strengthening of national and regional laws in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.
- Where appropriate, offer capacity building initiatives to WROs and women's movements based on their own needs.
- Actively listen to and learn from the experiences of WROs and women's movements by adopting their recommendations.
- Actively create opportunities for specialist WROs, women's movements and WHRDs to have a voice in national, regional and international forums, including organising their international travel and using technology to facilitate dialogue, for example, by playing video testimonies.
- Meaningfully consult specialist WROs and WHRDs when developing policy positions on women's rights and sustainable development, and fund the organisations' time participating in consultations.
- Support and fund collaboration among WROs to encourage movement building and strengthening.

Increase funding:

- Increase the accessibility of existing funding streams to WROs and women's movements, particularly funds targeted at human rights and civil society organisations.
- Increase devolved funding through women's funds and specialist intermediary organisations that have strong partnerships with southern WROs, women's movements and WHRDs.
- Place greater emphasis on core funding, where possible, based on WROs' plans and budgets, and provide sizable grants. Small amounts of money can stimulate innovation but do not enable vital expansion, scale-up and strengthening of organisational and operational capacity.

Support evidence and learning:

- Provide support for WROs and movements to carry out research and documentation to evidence the impact and value of their work.
- Strengthen your agency's understanding of the kinds of quantitative and qualitative indicators and methodologies that capture complex social change towards women's rights and gender equality, based on the experiences of WROs and women's movements.
- Ensure adequate funding is allocated for monitoring, evaluation and learning and that chosen methodologies are suitable to the nature of the work WROs and women's movements undertake.



Right: Nabulu campaigns against Female Genital Mutilation in Insinya town, Kajiado County, with support from FIDA Kenya.

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