“Towards Developing a Methodology to Work With Men Against Violence of Women in the Horn of Africa”

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Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa
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1. Methodological Approach

The approach taken towards the training of the women’s rights group working with men in relation to combating violence against women was pedagogical and sought to broaden the scope through which participants could think about and understand violence against women (VAW). Emphasis was firstly placed on the need to think of violence beyond the conventional framing as violent acts (e.g. battery, rape, abuse). Such an approach automatically renders the man as the aggressor/violator, and the woman perpetually as victim. Rather, the framework suggested would sought to move participants towards a conception of structural violence, which interrogated how it is we understand the objective violence of different structures of society, the different conditions under which both women and men exist, and lastly, the violence of institutions within which different communities function on a daily basis (e.g. institutions of state like government departments, hospitals, schools, public offices, and institutions that regulate society such as religion, the workplace, and social sites). In other words, participants were tasked with interrogating the ways in which social, political, economic and cultural sites might produce gendered violence, and in what ways women become vulnerable to violence within these gendered sites. Methodologically, the participants were firstly required to be acquainted with various gender concepts and forms of violence that form the spectrum of violence against women. Secondly, the participants were be invited, through dynamic group exercises, to reflect jointly upon the ways in which different societies produce gendered violence which co-opts men (and in some cases women) as perpetrators of violence against women. Thirdly, the male and female participants were guided in thinking through and articulating various collaborative strategies by which violence against women could be identified, exposed and curtailed as part of a long-term strategy for combating violence against women in the Horn countries.

Our approach from the onset considered the objective of working with men on the issue of VAW as being a priority, and a number of thematic arguments were identified as forming the basis of this prioritization and framed the discussions in the course of the 4-day training:

- Firstly because the religious, political and cultural traditions that subordinate and dehumanize women in the Horn region are deeply patriarchal and male-dominated, and as such, activist projects that seek out male perspectives and cooperation have a higher likelihood of dealing with the root causes of violence against women;

- Secondly, because there are contradictions inherent in the fact that violence against women is an outcome of gendered, misogynist and sexist systems of domination, yet at the same time is also a reflection of unequal (capitalist) relations in society which affect both men and women. This is tied to the concern that the NGOisation and woman-centeredness of VAW work has had the effect of obscuring the fact of shared forms of oppression between women and men;

- Thirdly, because of popular misconceptions that women’s rights seek to antagonise men, and accompanying perceptions of women’s empowerment as being a threat to men’s actual or perceived power. A complementary, rather than a competitive approach towards the question of gendered violence in general is beneficial, especially since both men’s rights activists and women’s rights activists are both seeking to address questions of power and autonomy, albeit differently.

Course content: The training involved six countries in the Horn of Africa: Somalia, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda. The areas of training and discussion covered during the workshop included the following: a) Gender concepts of violence against women; b) VAW in the Em”power”ment and Disem “power”ment binary; c) Interrogating the question of women’s rights; d) Country presentations on the constraints of involving men in VAW work; and e) Country strategies for coalition building between women and men against VAW.
2. Introduction and course content

Working with men and supporting men to develop and acquire awareness on violence against women, what it means and how it affects societies has been one of SIHA’s agenda for a number of years, yet the question remains; how to undertake this approach in line with SIHA’s position as a women’s rights organisation. SIHA’s work has so far focused on supporting women to enhance their voices and capacity for activism to be able to stand for themselves and oppose acts of subordination injustices and violence based on our mandate and commitments to the women we are working with across the region. However, we are equally concerned about the lack of awareness of concepts of women rights among the male population in the Horn and the dynamics which prohibit men from understanding or relating substantively to the challenges women are facing. To this effect, SIHA organised a men’s training from 21st -24th November 2013 in Kampala, Uganda. A total of 17 male human rights activists from SIHA member organisations, including SIHA male staff attended. The first two days of the training centred on critical thinking, guided by a two main questions: i) What structural challenges are we as women’s rights advocates up against in our specific regions? ii) In what ways can men best collaborate with women who advocate for women’s rights without usurping the agenda of women? Days three and four of the training focused on formulating strategies for collaboration based on the course content and participants’ presentations and discussions. The goal of the training was to critically engage men in a discussion of women’s human rights, encourage them to interrogate their own assumptions about this work, and to outline a methodology to help SIHA to develop a substantive approach towards realistically integrating men in SIHA’s women’s rights program. The training sought to deepen the capacity of participants towards understanding various dimensions of violence against women. Participants were (re)introduced to various concepts of gender violence and masculinities, and were encouraged to be as critical and as open as possible in their contributions to the discussion.

3. Overview of gender dynamics in (participant) Horn countries

Participants in the course were encouraged to break away from normative conceptualizations of gender violence, and to think through how subjective positions such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, class and so on, render some women more vulnerable to violence than other women within the same setting. Participants from Somaliland observed that age is a factor mainly because of traditions and culture: the younger a woman is, the more prone she is to violence. In South Sudan too age is a factor, although the dynamics differ in that younger people feel that older people are trying to impose culture on them, hence conflict there is largely mediated by resistance of young people to cultural and traditional norms. In Ethiopia, the issue of ethnicity is a factor that deepens tensions between men since there are around 85 different ethnic groups, and these tensions often play out on women’s bodies. This is explained through literature (of rape especially in the context of war or conflict) that shows that women as markers of ethnic and national boundaries are rendered vulnerable to violence when men from one ethnic communities violate the women of a rival community in order to ’soil’ them, humiliate or render them unclean. Ethnicity was not found to function in a similar way as a motivation for violence in Somaliland since it is a more ethnically homogenous society.

Participants were also encouraged to think of violence against women based on a set of unique social, political, historical and economic dynamics that differ from country to country, or community to community. The discussions indeed showed that it is useful for human rights activists to develop a clear understanding of the particular contexts within which they work and the futility of making generalizations regarding the conditions of women across societies or the ways in which violence manifests in different contexts. For instance, participants from Somalia found that a major challenge was the patriarchal culture of ‘gate-keeping’ by men to be a great hindrance to defending the rights of women, as it is more common
for the testimonies of men regarding VAW are more readily believed and accepted than the testimonies of women. The risk therefore is that integrating men into VAW work might deepen paternalistic attitudes of men towards women and reinforce already gendered hierarchies which suggest that women cannot look after themselves, or must be protected on unequal terms by men.

Participants from Somaliland attributed the primary challenge of working with men on VAW to structural questions of poverty, idleness among young men, and the emasculation that accompanies such conditions. The economic condition of joblessness and abjection is leading more young men into drug addiction. Participants view these facts as directly responsible for the new forms of violence being observed in Somaliland over the last five years, which include gang rapes. In Uganda, participants argued that in the past, the most common form of violence against women was physical violence, but this is reducing due to greater awareness and willingness of victims to report, and also because perpetrators fear being imprisoned. However, even physical violence has reduced, increase is observed in other forms such as psychological and economic violence, which are more challenging to address and campaign around. In Eastern Sudan, participants shared that cultural norms not only place restrictions on the social relations in society as far as young women are concerned - for example, younger girls cannot marry before elder girls, and in case of death of the older sister's husband, it is still common practice to forcibly marry off the younger sister to the widower. Under the same cultural restrictions, girls' education is restricted and women's participation in the public sphere is highly dictated by normative cultural interpretations of women's inferior status.

Participants were also encouraged to think through the notion of violence against women from a perspective that interrogates changes in the global political economy and the ways in which these changes impact on local realities. One example given here was the gender relations around land and landed resources, which for many African communities is a key resource, and is for women a primary source of livelihood. In this regard the discussion focused on the ways in which VAW becomes more pronounced due to changing political, social and contextual aspects. In Africa in general, land has contributed to violence notably in countries like Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. It has engendered a lot of competition over scarce resources, instability and insecurity in homes, while at the same time communities are being displaced. While under customary tenure systems, women might in some cases enjoy user rights, meaning that they can access and use land for subsistence purposes even when they do not have titles to the land, these forms of access have become less reliable due to the marketization of land and the increasing trend of land grabbing, observed in countries such as Ethiopia. The move by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to 'secure' women's rights to land by giving them titles has been found to have the effect of increasing women's vulnerability to loss of land since it becomes easier for this land to be bought and sold in the market. In these ways, power shifts from the hands of poor women to those able to buy land in the market. With loss of power comes greater vulnerability to abuse as women struggle more and more to sustain themselves, their families and their communities. The crucial point here is to understand that societies are not static, and that changes happening on a global and national level affect poor, rural women in very nuanced ways.

Government policies can also disempower women when the cultural practices at the local level are gender biased. In Sudan for instance, when the government makes a residential plan, land is distributed to young men and not young women because culturally, it is the man who prepares a house and marries the woman of his choice. This means that women remain fundamentally disadvantaged when state politics are not articulated to cultural dynamics at the local levels at which women and men relate, and as such, those working to prevent VAW must target responses at both local and national levels. State practices in many of the Horn countries have tended to underestimate the barriers that prevent reduction of violence in general and violence against women in particular. Apart from culture, another most significant barrier to violence reduction in majority of the Horn countries is religion. In many of these countries, formal laws function side by side with religious doctrines and Sharia law. As observed by many of the participants, religion and

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1 See forthcoming report on SIHA study on gang rapes in Somaliland.
the notion of gender equality seem to be irreconcilable. As a step towards breaking down these prejudices, participants agreed on the need to interrogate their own assumptions and male power positions with regards to the Qur’an, and to seek ways of substantively relating the notion of human rights to an interpretation of human freedom as carried within the Qur’an, in such ways that do not place limitations of which rights women can or cannot enjoy. The contributions to this vigorous discussion referred to classical Christian and Islamic texts, and sought to affirm the fact that Islam teaches respect for women and education of women.\(^2\)

Another aspect exposing women to violence is paradoxically to be found in the spaces that are opening up for women's political participation. In South Sudan for instance, participants shared the fact that the 25% quota for women's representation is being implemented using methods that actually disempower women, since men appear to be in charge of selecting women using unorthodox means. The phenomenon of "rooms or hotel interviews" are, for example, the cases whereby women are compelled to submit to all forms of sexual harassment and violence in order to guarantee them positions which the law has already allocated to women. These practices show that even educated, elite women are vulnerable to violence in sexist and misogynous societies where women are only given nominal power under the law but have no real power to exercise their rights. The implication here is that men campaigning against VAW must also target law makers - through exposure and documentation of the hidden ways in which women, even those perceived as being powerful, still become exposed to violence.

In Somalia, participants shared the ways in which women have become more vulnerable to violence through the practices of forced/early marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM) and domestic violence. Participants observe that in the current traditional system in cases of rape, men are simply required to pay a given number of animals e.g. camels to the girl's family. Although the state legal system and legal non-governmental organisations are aware of this practice and the challenges it places on their work towards protection of women and girls, the traditional system is much entrenched, thus making it much more difficult for the justice system to work effectively as most families prefer to settle cases of sexual violation in this traditional practice of mutual agreement between male heads of families. Partly these practices are presumed to preserve family ties and social cohesion in society, yet this is clearly done at the expense of women and girls, whose security and wellbeing is not being privileged.

In Ethiopia, the trafficking of women and girls is becoming a major problem, due mainly to the high poverty incidence in the country. Families are also complicit in this trade as many desperately poor families have sold their young girls in exchange for money. Participants observed that there are brokers in many different states who give these women and girls empty promises, only to end up in precarious positions in foreign countries, particularly in the Gulf states, working under enslaving conditions as domestic workers and sex slaves, and in the process, facing extreme forms of harassment, sexual and physical violence. Human trafficking is particularly problematic since the state does not seem to be able to effectively legislate against it, let alone control the points of entry and exit into the country. This problem is not just affecting the victims, but also whole families and even the state, whose corrupt officials are offered bribes to issue identity documents to under-age girls (below the age of 18 years).

The thrust of these discussions was to make visible the multiple ways in which women become vulnerable to and experience gender violence. The sources of gender violence range from structural factors to prevailing cultural attitudes and social relations in society, to state-perpetrated violence. The participants offered many keen insights into their own societies, and discussed how one context differs from the next. Nevertheless, one conclusion that was shared by most participants is that violence against women has a direct impact on men: or as stated by one participant, "women are our mothers, sisters and wives," referring to the impossibility of men remaining unaffected by violence that is meted out against women on a daily basis.

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\(^2\) Some reference books were suggested to participants during this discussion, including: *The Jesus papers* and *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent; and *Women in the Arab World* by Fatima Mernissi
3.1. Masculinities and manifestations of violence against women

Numerous theorizations of masculinities in different social, political and economic contexts suggest the difficulty of ascribing a singular dimension to this question, or why masculinities manifest violently against women. One dimension suggests violent masculinities occur and recur when young men, especially among the poor, can no longer enjoy the privileges of patriarchy. There is more than ever before an unequal redistribution of the dividends of manhood, and struggles over access to women are dramatized by high levels of rape and various forms of sexual violation. This central point of this narrative is to suggest how the projection of virility and entitlement to the bodies of women works as the marker for power, and the ways in which women’s bodies become the terrain of a patriarchal battle between young (disempowered) men and patriarchs who wield power in society. A core aim of the discussion of masculinities during the training was to destabilize the notion of masculinities as being static, but rather to raise consciousness among participants of the ways in which violent masculinities are constructed, are dynamic, and most significantly, that masculinities do not have to be violent and can be transformed. As such, when talking about masculinity, men and women should both be addressed to understand the dynamics and results of why violence is resistant and related to masculinity. Masculinity needs to be presented to the men themselves as being in crisis (masculinities in crisis): that is, men are not born perpetrators and women are not born victims. The suggestion here is that masculinities are learned, transmitted and natured. There is thus need to retain new perspectives (positive traditional forms) which encourage non-violent masculinities. Women also need to be educated more about the fact that masculinity does not have to be a negative concept, but rather as something that functions as a gender identity. What we see at the moment is the ways in which violent masculinities are influenced and defined by the cultural set-ups in which they manifest.

Participants discussed the ways in which they observe masculine aggression manifesting against women in their various cultural and social contexts. Participants from Somalia gave an illustration in which they noted an idea prevalent in their society that men are more important in the homes as compared to women. Partly this is due to the socialization of men, who are raised to think of themselves as warriors whose function is to ‘protect’ and to fight. These are patriarchal notions of gender identity formation which have the effect of making women feel inferior to men and incapable of looking after themselves. In this sense, any man can have a claim on women’s bodies and women’s private and public space, and violate women under the pretext of protecting them. Participants from Uganda discussed the ways in which the masculinized possession over women has been cemented by the institution of bride wealth. There, the exchange of bride price for women is a common practice in many parts of the country. Originally, bride price was used as a way of cementing two families that came together, as a token that symbolized the relationship between husband and wife. A woman would feel a sense of obligation to her parents, brothers and extended family, forcing her to stay in the marriage relationship whether it was good or bad. This fact would minimize women’s options of formally accessing justice due to the obligation she would feel to stay within the marriage. The institution of bride price is also said to have provided an incentive for young men to work hard to get cows to pay for marriage. On a negative side, bride wealth has now been largely commercialised as a source of wealth for parents, an outcome that has lead to increased levels of violence against women who are often viewed as property. The institution of bride wealth has also promoted widow inheritance - a practice through which women whose husbands die are passed on to her husband’s brother since she is seen as belonging to the whole family. In cases of separation the family of the bride is compelled to refund the bride price.

In Somalia, masculinity is manifested through a patriarchal culture that never considers women as elders: this is a privilege reserved only for men. In cases of dispute handling or where conflicts are to be settled

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that involve both women and men, the male elders will invariably rule in ways that protect the interests of men rather than women. Unfair decisions are made between powerful clans and minority groups, also in ways that exclude women from the decision making process. Ethiopian women are similarly excluded from decisions regarding their personal lives. For instance, a woman there has no right to marry the person of her choice and is even usually forced into marrying a complete stranger. In the case of forced marriages women are subjected the will of the husbands, are undermined and suffer psychological trauma and in some cases death, which the women's rights activists in Ethiopia consider to be a new form of VAW.

In Sudan, women are also subjected to early marriages which activists view as a leading cause of violence as the young women are often harassed and treated inhumanely. Girls are married off at a young age with no opportunity to complete schooling, and as a result are not able to develop careers, let alone find work. A system has developed where women become completely dependent on their husbands, who go out to provide for the family while women stay at home looking after the home. The fact of women's complete dependence also makes them more vulnerable in cases of divorce, and the fact that the decision to divorce is usually a unilateral one made by the man means that women have no safeguards and their right to security can be violated at the sheer will of men. It is a double-edged violence to be forced into a marriage and forced out of it. In South Sudan too, all household and social chores - including cooking, cleaning, looking after children, visiting the wife's family - are left to women. Even working women and women holding public office are not exempt from this heavy burden of responsibility.

3.2. Concept of empowerment/disempowerment vis a vis VAW

Participants were encouraged during the course to think through the instances when women can be considered as being empowered, and when women might conversely be considered as disempowered. Both empowerment and disempowerment are a relational phenomenon and one cannot explain power empowerment without having actors of empowerment. It is in this relation that we have the powerful and the vanquished. In a power relationship, power reduces the capabilities of the vanquished. The power of men reduces the capabilities of women. When women are deprived of their capabilities, disempowerment prevails. As such, capabilities are essential for existence, human and animals all have the capabilities to exist in this world.

Categories within these capabilities:

- Economical - where we see lack of basic material needs, food, health care etc
- Social - viewing humane and egalitarian values, norms (harmful practices abolished)
- Political - entails the representation and having policies that create and enable empowerment
- Ideological - the enhancement of knowledgibility, education, science etc

We need these categories for human beings to exist. These phenomena are interrelated and you cannot explain one without explaining the other. We can only have empowerment when these various capabilities are done coherently.

State of disempowerment

- Women are not economically empowered
- There is a high rate of unemployment amongst women
- Women are not given equal pay for (equal) work compared to men.
- Women have no property rights (peasant livelihood systems); that is why in rural Africa, powerlessness of women is described by landlessness despite the work that women carry out in farms.

Ideological capability is the most important weapon of patriarchy, and its aim is to make the woman unknowledgeable. Women are indoctrinated through religious schools, deprived from having access to any
literature or any form of knowledge. Right from when they are born, women are taught certain values and norms to follow which rationalizes VAW. They are clearly discriminated against in public. At the political level, women are hardly represented. What is important is the gender perspective being represented not physical women that represent women.

A society that perpetrates VAW is compared to a man who lifts a rock and hits his feet: it is society that is affected by this.

Deprivation of women leads to disempowerment, poverty and underdevelopment. You cannot have empowerment without doing away with disempowerment. An increase in disempowerment is a decrease in empowerment. The secret to empowerment of women is being knowledgeable.

“As men the first thing to do is try to put ourselves in the position of women and try to understand how things would be different if a man did things differently.”

Consequences of VAW

- Subjects women to live under constant submission;
- Traumas manifest at individual and family levels - VAW is a societal problem, not a ‘woman’ problem;
- Domestic violence affects women’s behaviour and can have long-term impacts;
- Impacts social development and entrench violence in society.

Who informs us/teaches us VAW

- Ideological disposition - therefore the need to deconstruct patriarchy by questioning everything that has been perceived as the norm;
- As human rights activists we should never stop learning;
- The necessity of distinguishing between culture and customs/culture and religious thoughts;
- Being conscious of the fact that the problem is not religion, but rather, its interpretations; customs derive from the main culture.

Remember that:

- Tactics are not strategies;
- Consider that gender as a discipline is fundamental to social development;
- Patriarchy is in the mind and should start with ‘me’;
- De-feminizing gender - that is, gender is about both women and men.

Why involving men in the work of ending VAW is important

- The ‘self’ emancipation from mental slavery - men are also not ‘free’ until all of society, including women, experience freedom;
- The creation of a critical mass of activists is necessary for social development;
- It is critical to involve intellectuals in processes of gendering social change, as they are respected in society;
• Gender leadership - both women and men can lead a gender agenda, and this should not be the problem of women alone;
• Men enjoy more strategic positions of influence in the cultural as well as political spheres, and as social leaders respected in society, they can exert influence and pressure for change.

4. Course outcomes/Strategic approaches (per country) to men working on VAW

Participants from each country made group presentations in two parts: i) the key ways in which violence against women is manifesting in their societies, and ii) suggesting possible strategies for men's active participation in ending VAW. Participants were required to integrate the discussions and tools shared during the first two days of the course, and to think critically and realistically discuss the challenges that men might potentially face in working on VAW given the political, social, cultural dynamics specific to their countries.

4.1. South Sudan

Core issues of gender-based violence and VAW identified by South Sudanese participants include:
• Dowry
• Forced and early marriages;
• Rape and other forms of sexualized violence;
• Economic barriers for women / barriers to women's access to property;
• Abduction of women/girls;
• Physical violence;
• Religion is becoming an issue within the society with new sects coming up targeting women who leave home for days leaving their families behind;
• Cultural/traditional background differences breed violence among the people which affects the community;
• Men have been isolated in the bush (during the war) for so many years which makes them victims missing the etiquette, which leads to violence especially against women;
• Due to legacy of war, political and economic dispossession, the society is in general less educated which deprives them of a sense of normalcy;
• Tribalism and religiously conservative approach to women and gender issues;
• Citizenship issues - citizens especially those coming from abroad are divided by class (higher & lower classes). Women suffer more because for them class intersects with other social limitations imposed by their gender, age, religion, ethnicity - all of which disadvantage women;

Suggested strategies/contribution from other participants:
• Analysis of political situation-where is the gap/space to strategize? As a young state, the need to take advantage of the legislation process;
• Aspect of disarmament of former combatants to avoid violence as every home has a gun;
• Engage with government. Work with ministries like the Ministry of Gender;
• Men should celebrate women who have contributed to women’s rights;
• Networking among international organisations;
• There was never internal dialogue on what really happened (post conflict) - the need to (re)engage with what it means to be South Sudanese. This is a cultural as well as political process of nation-building and reconciliation;
• Utilize social media for far reaching and diverse anti-VAW campaigns;
• Sensitization among local communities.

4.2. Ethiopia
In Ethiopia, participants observed that issues differ based upon rural and urban, pastoral and agricultural communities:
• Physical violence abuse and abduction of girls is a major problem;
• Social conflicts;
• Early marriages which result into fistula in some cases;
• Child prostitutes and trafficking;
• Economic dependence on the men hence women have no say in the home (economic psychosocial trauma);
• In the pastoralist communities, women are considered less human - women are easily exchanged for cattle;
• Physical abuse that goes beyond beating - at times resulting in death;
• Gender discrimination in education - boys are sent to school while girls are not;
• Men who have more cattle can have more wives (class questions and emasculation of younger or poorer men, leading to frustration and violence);
• Women are considered cursed if there are widowed and are isolated/ banished from the area (Mingi culture);
• A wife cannot eat before her husband does;
• CSO law which led to the closure of many organisations, thus making it difficult for organisations to raise funds for VAW work.

Strategies for involving men in VAW work:
• Conduct a study on the situation of VAW;
• Build the capacity of different stakeholders;
• Use media - create male radio listening groups;
• GBV groups established by NGOs;
• Work with university students;
• Organize male engagement groups;
• Mobilize volunteers to spread awareness;
• Men in prison convicted of VAW incidents can be trained against VAW who can then be agents of change once they leave prison;
• Develop ICT materials to spread awareness, to reach international and national level of advocacy;
• Ethiopia has the best criminal courts, which is a benefit for rights of women.
4.3. Uganda

The political history of Uganda and the role of the state have impacted significantly on the nature and levels of VAW in the country.

- Uganda ruled under a military regime, and the highly militarized society has manifested in lot of violence especially against women;
- The war in northern Uganda greatly affected women;
- Mainstreaming gender into health, education and other sectors, with the effect of gender being overshadowed by other policy issues;
- Greater emphasis is placed on human rights than on women's rights;
- The state perceives human rights organisations as being anti-government, and therefore policies are very strict on these NGOs, monitoring and controlling their source of funding;
- Collaboration among women's rights organisations is limited; there is no synergy;
- The Divorce Bill in Uganda, which could have brought an increase in women’s rights and a positive impact on VAW, was not widely supported in Parliament.

Concepts of masculinity in Uganda affect women in that:

- Family harmony falls on the woman, (if a marriage fails the woman is blamed...);
- Culture of silence is glorified among women even when experiencing domestic violence;
- Women have no say in family planning;
- Marital rape; men do not accept & acknowledge these things can happen.

Strategies for working with men on VAW:

- Effective role model development;
- Consistence in mass media campaigns;
- GBV is not just a women problem, both men & women are affected;
- Involving men for specific interventions;
- Gaps in methodologies used by human rights defenders; position of men in women’s rights;

4.4. Somaliland

Although Somaliland is still in the process of state building, women are facing a lot of difficulties and gender inequality. Part of the problem is a justice system that is based on Judicial/formal law, Traditional justice and Sharia law.

Forms of violence:

- Female genital mutilation;
- Rape & gang rape which is a new form of violence. Statistics collected for rape cases in 2010 only represented the big cities. In 2012, the number of children cases were more yet few of the perpetrators were arrested. There is not much analysis on gang rape as yet;
• A growing number of drug addicts - which is seen as increasing the levels of violence in general and VAW in particular;
• Limited awareness about the nature and forms of GBV;
• Security issues;
• There are many young men chewing khat sold by women due to frustration - women themselves part of the problem?
• Impacts of VAW include young girls becoming street strays and using drugs;
• Since elders take these matters into their hands faster than the government officials, there are still no GBV laws constituted. In 2009 there was a constitution written by clan leaders, which still has not been implemented and not practiced.

4.5. Somalia
• Women run away from their parents, marry and come back after 2-3 yrs;
• Lack of justice is contributing to gender based violence;
• corruption;
• There are funds from donors but lack of implementation of interventions;
• Women are deprived from openly talking about their situations because of cultural stigma;
• Cultural system of solving problems, victims don’t find justice to be fair;
• Marginal problem of domestic violence;
• Economic (dis)empowerment
• Lack of gender advocacy;
• The Al-Shabab conflict has greatly affected women; their everyday life is affected - victims of rape by militia men face problems of re-victimized, including by their families;
• Despite Somalia having 2 women minister, 20% women in parliament, still GBV remains high: failure of women's formal representation to translate to substantive gender progressive outcomes;
• The national and international organisations are not addressing the broader situation going on Somalia.

4.6. Sudan
Identified issues related to / perpetuating VAW include:
• State instigated violence –Public order Law, Harassment of women activists, child abuse and rape;
• Community violence;
• Religious violence
• Domestic violence;

Current interventions include:
• Improving women’s access to justice;
• Production of knowledge to counter fundamentalism;
• Women’s economic empowerment;
• Creating critical mass;
• Working with men.

Strategies for working with men on VAW:
• Mass mobilization - use of the media;
• Creation of critical mass - create forums for discussion on gender issues which can also serve as an informal network and replicate such forums to certain social groups like universities;
• Addressing academicians and scholars;
• It would be good for CSOs to work with government officials like MPs, ministries;
• Approach respected religious leaders or media personalities;
• Use art as a tool of dialogue;
• Actively involve religious leaders;
• Build a movement of gender sensitive men (men tend to listen to fellow men);
• Build evidence-based approaches that would appeal to both men and women-proper documentation of violations;
• Male engagement at all levels;
• Social media campaigning;
• Understand the barriers to involving men in VAW work

5. Recommendations based on training course and participant contributions

Some useful strategies have already been suggested above, based on participants’ critiques of the specific social and political contexts within which they are engaged in women’s rights work. The recommendations made here are therefore, structured around five major thematic issues around working with men on VAW that arose during the training. The aim is to provide broad outlines which SIHA Network members can adapt to their local contexts. The recommendations are by no means exhaustive, but rather are meant to stimulate further critique, discussions, and most importantly, provide an entry for strengthening SIHA members’ capacity of meaningfully integrating men into work aimed at ending violence against women.

Thematic issues:

5.1. Power dynamics: Male patronage vs. women’s autonomy

The important question for women’s rights activists and organisations to ask here (both at the organisational and activist level) is how to substantially involve men into work aimed towards ending violence against women, without losing sight of the unequal(izing) power positions that exist even among fellow human rights activists. The subtlety of these underlying gender power relations became visible in the course of the four day training. Through various role plays and in the course of discussions and participant presentations, it became quite clear that unless collaborative work between men and women is conscientiously planned and implemented, there is a risk that women might assume a subordinate and disempowered position relative to men. The privileges of patriarchy and male patronage might not always be apparent to even the most progressive of male activists. Similarly, women’s loss of autonomy and leadership over women’s rights work may occur in ways that are not easily visible and thus manageable. It is
therefore imperative for activists both within organisations and within communities do not replicate the very structures of inequality and disempowerment of women that they are fighting to dispense with.

While there is no simple strategy that can be applied towards deepening the level of consciousness of both women and men with regards to avoiding the replication of gender hierarchies, a useful question which activists can pose to themselves, constantly, as a form of self-reflection and interrogating personal biases is: Is it about empowering women to work with men or empowering men to recognize and interrogate their privileges and gendered prejudices without perceiving this as a loss of power? In what ways can an equitable collaboration between women and men proceed on an equitable basis without disempowering women? Some strategies in this regard are suggested below:

- Beginning from the organisational level to strengthen collaborative work through a constant peer-review mechanism. For example, organisations or groups can engage in monthly 'sharing' sessions where women are enabled to speak freely and express their opinions, views and experiences of working with male counterparts;
- The challenges or highlights expressed in such sessions can then be translated into action points with indicators that show areas in which the working relationship needs improvement, and what aspects of collaboration are proceeding well;
- Training participants should organise workshops and training sessions in their own locations with a focus on power dynamics between women and men. There should be a mechanism of experience sharing across countries with the aim of formulating best practices for working with men as equals.

5.2. Structural dynamics around VAW work

Presentations by participants from all six countries highlight various ways in which different structures and institutions (of state, religion, education, culture and traditions) function to perpetuate violence against women either directly or indirectly. One of the difficulties of identifying structural causes of VAW is the fact that social relations and modes of daily existence are very deeply intertwined with these institutions. Oppressive gender relations therefore are easily obscured by our daily interactions with these institutions and structures. The training revealed the fact that men generally enjoy greater access and visibility within these institutions that structure daily existence in many countries across the Horn. Men can therefore, stand at the forefront of activism aimed at changing the gender-biases within these institutions. Focus can be directed towards influencing and changing the gender discourses within the state, cultural, religious, and educational spaces, achievable through:

- Public platforms such as social media, engagement with faculty and students at universities and community gatherings where gender-sensitive men lead conversations to raise awareness regarding the institutionalised nature of VAW;
- Intellectual and scholarly engagement - for instance, SIHA Network can dedicate a special issue of its journal towards gathering men's perspectives on VAW. The idea would be to generate and moderate a long-term conversation that can be widely disseminated in policy circles including through local and international NGOs, donors, governments, religious organisations, universities, and contribution to constitutional debates.
- Indicators can also be developed for this process to monitor how much of this work is being cited, practiced or discussed in formulating policy positions and shaping gender discourses aimed at fighting VAW.

5.3. Organic/grassroots integration of men into VAW work

Another important issue arising from the training is how to encourage the local participation of men in VAW work. The task of working with men towards ending violence against women cannot be a top-down process, but rather must be organically supported at the local community levels by growing a critical mass of men who are willing to champion the rights of women in public and support organisational efforts toward the
same end. The question then is how to grow this critical mass, given that while the participants are already women’s/human rights activists with education and awareness of VAW, many young and old men in the local communities might have little or no appreciation of violence against women, or for that matter, the need to end it. Some strategies for working with men at the grassroots level may include:

- Regular open sessions at which male activists mobilize different groups of men (including youths/elders/community leaders) with the aim of sharing personal experiences, education and raising awareness. These should ideally be men-only sessions - because in most patriarchal cultures, men will be reluctant to speak openly about VAW in the presence of women. Further points of action can then be developed following such sessions;
- Identifying male role models in society, documenting and sharing the stories of men whose lived examples or work has had transformative impact on tackling VAW in the local community. This is a form of leadership by example, with the aim of inspiring similar actions among other men and sharing positive reflections of gender-sensitive men with other men to show that men can also bring about change that favours women.

5.4. Broader public engagement

Since violence against women pervades all sectors of society, the work on VAW cannot afford to focus on only a few areas while neglecting others. This requires as broad engagement as possible with a cross section of men - or the wide representation of women’s rights issues. Participants already mentioned many areas where male activists could be integral in campaigning and deepening the public discourse on women’s rights and VAW in particular:

- Public campaigns and messaging that is strategic and aimed at a wide audience to spark debates, allow men and women to interrogate their power (or disempowered) positions, and to keep the consciousness of the public connected to ongoing work on VAW;
- Greater engagement with the state - for example, targeting male politicians, state bureaucrats, and Members of Parliament to be spokespersons for anti-VAW campaigns. Incentives for such campaigns could be linked to constituency-building/ political mileage for politicians, among other factors;
- Utilizing the arts as a means for greater cultural integration and harmony. This is an avenue that is available and accessible to many from the local level to state (Ministry) level. Regular artistic interventions in local communities can act as a powerful tool for stimulating dialogue on VAW, as illustrated by examples from South Sudan;
- On the question of negative prevailing religious interpretations of women’s position in society, male activists, with their access to mosques, imams and religious scholars - can be integral in influencing more progressive readings of the Qur’an. These religious prejudices are held even by male human rights defenders, who impose a ceiling on how far women’s rights can go. Therefore, this process of unlearning and re-learning Islamic texts should begin with the men working with women on ending VAW. Male activists must themselves be converted before they go out seeking to convert the attitudes of others.

5.5. Ideology and intergenerational dialogue

The work of substantively engaging and working with men on ending VAW is, as the training showed, more challenging especially when dealing with an older generation of men whose attitudes and perceptions of gender and women’s place in society have been shaped over a long period, and under very different cultural and political times. The current conditions in the Horn countries present newer, of not more
complex challenges for women’s rights, and working on these issues requires willingness to adapt, change and challenge fixed positions. Targeting a younger generation of men - not yet fixed in their views or benefitting from the spoils of patriarchy - can be one way to ensure that women raise and influence a generation of feminist men. Some spaces for this intergenerational approach is through:

- Targeting campaigns at schools, universities, playgrounds, youth sports events, art interventions and through popular music;
- Gradual development of educational curricula or reading materials that expand the ways in which young boys and girls perceive and understand violence in society, and which raise the consciousness of young men regarding how VAW affects both women and men.

6. Impact: Participants’ reflections and feedback on training

A cross section of views shared by participants at the end of the four-days training provide a glimpse into the sort of impacts the training had on them at a personal level. These views could also be translated into points of action, since they symbolize shifts that are already occurring in the men themselves as activists:

Mohammed (Somaliland): "This training has changed my way of thinking. It has given me a new perspective on how men can work alongside women on VAW. The people who commit the crimes are men and men changing their character will bring a positive effect in changing the attitude of men against women”. Mohammed believes that at his place of work there is going to be more thought on how the women can be empowered and in what other ways they can be helped psychologically. He feels he has a better understanding of the dynamic of power.

Solomon (Ethiopia): Shares that he has gotten to realise that there is indeed (possibility of) a paradigm shift when men are involved in the fight against VAW. His thinking has changed and he now understands why more men should be involved in fighting VAW. If women are economically empowered, they can have more voice at family and community level. Gender is not an issue of just women therefore: both men and women should be made aware of this. "Experiences shared from different participants have really been a lesson. Equally, the challenges shared and how these have been overcome was interesting to capture”. The different approaches of addressing VAW are helpful and Solomon hopes to apply this in his country. The documentary (They Slept With Me) gave him an insight into what women who experience rape go through. “We have a duty to implement this training and make it practical”.

Mohammed Sheik (Somalia): Mohammed believes that men can play a role in ending VAW. He has been fighting VAW for a long time and that is why he has faced problems in his community. It is better to work together as a group and not alone to achieve a common goal. Men who support women publicly and fight for women’s rights are shunned in the communities: “change has to be seen in us first before demanding to see change at the community level. We need to come up with new ideas that can assist the human rights activists reach the community level without being shunned”.

Abdifatah (Somalia): Abdifatah says he has gained value added knowledge on the issue of women's rights and will try to apply the statutes that have been suggested. He has also acquired zeal to work harder to curb violence against women.

Gaafar (Sudan): Gaafar believes that the training has been useful to him and the group. He has worked on women’s rights since early 2007. He has learnt to approach the people on issues of violence. In his experience, the right language and questions should be used, for example, begin with a concept that is acceptable to the people - use proper language that will not intimidate the community. “I will try to encourage people to talk about sexual violence and discuss this freely with the community as well”.

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Suleiman (Sudan): Suleiman comes from and extremely patriarchal tribe, but he has realized that violence against women creates more violence, while respect for women leads to a productive relationship. The training session has introduced him to new concepts which he was not very conversant with, like the concept of patriarchal ideology. He benefitted a lot from all experiences shared.

Dr. Justin (South Sudan): He has benefitted a lot from the training and would like to share more with the women in prisons. He has learnt different ways of how to express oneself, and to critically analyze situations.

Ramadan (South Sudan): Ramadan believes that this has been a turning point in his life especially on the issue of women. He hopes to put into practice some of the things learnt.

Cera (South Sudan): Cera simply state that "I will have a work plan and an action plan on GBV when I get back home".

Ismail (Uganda): "I have learnt that if you want to avoid VAW, work with women but not for women. Violence is not necessarily for women only but also for men". There is nothing wrong with the rights of women because they also deserve their rights.

David (Uganda): "The discussion on patriarchy was very helpful. I have begun to reflect more deeply on the concept of patriarchy beyond physical actions". Working with women will depend on the understanding towards gender and gender equality. David says he has learnt a lot from listening to the experiences from the different countries represented: "I will use this information in my organization and share with other men in the communities where I work".