

Annex: Short case study from South Africa RHV

Context: South African society has made a lot of progress over the last 17 years with regard to the political leadership and economic opportunities of women but gender inequalities remain, and high levels of violence against women and abuse adds to women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. South Africa has a good legislative framework to address gender based violence, but the needs of women are not addressed in an integrated way, and patriarchy is so entrenched that women's issues are not taken seriously by many law enforcers and consequently women do not feel safe or comfortable reporting cases to the police. RHV partners, POWA, recognised a need to translate the principles and values entrenched in laws and policy into the private spheres of women's lives – exploring specifically the intersection between poverty, HIV/AIDS and gender based violence and thus women's needs and issues as multidimensional. This is in line with the overall objective of the Raising Her Voice Project to promote the right and capacity of 'poor women' to engage effectively in governance, and with the evaluators' proposed theory of change.

Approach: the project in South Africa was designed to strengthen the practical and conceptual linkages between different sectors affecting women and their access to rights: gender based violence, HIV and AIDS, women's rights.

Beginning with a baseline survey which identified current efforts and approaches used by government and civil society to address the intersection, partners developed a conceptual framework to guide implementation of the project, drafted with participation of women directly experiencing the intersections. This has been used as the basis for training women activists and organisations, developing campaign and advocacy materials on the Maputo protocol and women's lived realities, and building a network of organisations working on the different sectors. Monitoring, evaluation and sharing of learning between partners have also been important parts of continual review and development of the strategy and action plan. Training outcomes include:

- Learning about advocacy and networking was an important outcome for organisations covering different women's rights issues: A TAC activist who attended RHV trainings stated that: *"I have learnt other means of engagement and that networking with other organisations helps. I have learnt that other organisations can be used to get into spaces that we cannot get into on our own - as TAC we have managed to raise our voice at the African Commission through POWA."*
- Being trained on the relevant regional and international instruments has helped participants understand their work better, as one participant from the TAC noted: *"When it comes to the laws nationally, regionally and internationally I did not have much information on them. So by being part of RHV, I have been empowered and I am now doing my own research to find out what a certain law or policy means and then simplify it to the community and this is making my work easier."*
- Some participants were able to integrate the learning and intersectional analysis in their own work. One woman activist who runs a support group for HIV positive women said that: *"I was in the project only to find out that women are not facing HIV AIDS alone as they are facing problems like poverty and gender based violence and you can find that those three things can be in one woman.... I have realized that this is who I am now and I have to stand by it and I have to include these things in my program because all those people who come to me they are women at the end of the day. So my group is focusing on a lot of women and not one group and that makes a lot of change like there is*

Who are the partners?

POWA is the implementing partner. They have informal partnerships with:

- Positive Women's Network working on HIV/AIDS
- Aganang working on GBV advocacy and awareness
- Let us Grow working on HIV/AIDS, GBV and more
- Treatment Action Campaign working on HIV/AIDS policy, communication and literacy
- Sikhula Sonke Farm Workers' Union with a focus on women on the farms.

no discrimination.” Aganang deals mainly with violence issues and would refer their clients to other organisations for issues relating to HIV/AIDS. Through RHV they obtained information that has enabled them to be able to integrate these issues into their organisation’s work and address them from a holistic approach: ‘as we were doing door to door campaigns we realised that women tell us about other issues than the GBV and before the training workshops we had in the ‘Raising Her Voice’ project, we used to make referrals but now we incorporate this into our work’.

- Some participants have stated that they better understand some of the power dynamics in society that threaten women’s voices, and this has empowered them with ways to challenge these power structures: *“Raising Her Voice had made us aware of our power and how to interrupt the various power sites that seek to oppress us. Personally I have been involved in various activities that seek to address issues of poverty and violence and RHV has helped in raising many women’s voices as well as mine. It has taught me to negotiate and engage with other people and desist from the violent means that I used to use.”*

POWA has informally partnered with relevant national advocacy organisations on national and regional advocacy, which is informed by RHV’s community based partner organisations. Lobbying of POWA and its partner national advocacy organisations for a Special Rapporteur on HIV and AIDS at the African Commission on Human Rights, resulted in a resolution being passed for the establishment of a working group on People Living with HIV and AIDS, and a South African woman nominated to the group. This is an entry point for the work on the intersections of HIV/AIDS, gender based violence and poverty to be tackled at the Commission. However, POWA had planned hold meetings and hold trainings with government officials on domestication of the Maputo Protocol but faced challenges setting up meetings with the government departments or keeping them to the agenda. The state among other players, has a key role in what rights women are able to access or not to access. More aggressive strategies are required to get the attention and engagement of the state with Raising Her Voice.

Impact:

The project, including the collective analysis and assessment and partnership building, and the training, has strengthened the potential for women’s voices to be heard at personal, social and political levels. Many civil society organisations who are aware of the intersections, but do not have the capacity and expertise to work across different sectors, have partnered with organisations with different expertise to refer clients, engage in collective action to hold the state accountable, and broaden the scope of their work. Let us Grow stated that: *‘people used to know us to work with HIV but now they see us involved in GBV issues and poverty, and women who were facing abuse with nowhere to go come to us now.’* Aganang reports to have sought counselling trainings and approached other institutions such as law clinics to give them more training on survivors’ rights and court support so as to enable them to assist their clients in a more holistic manner. POWA has used the conceptual framework generated by RHV to interrogate and introspect on its own work, feed into its strategic planning process and inform its broader work and services. POWA members of staff also highlighted the project’s impact on their personal lives, how they view themselves as activists and their work across the broad spectrum of projects they are involved in. This means stronger, better informed and connected advocates for women’s rights.

Personal to collective: The impressive aspect of RHV in South Africa is how work across different spheres has created a chain of value and impact. The laws and policies provide the framework, the organisations provide strategy and information, but individual women activists have been able to use these tools and raise their voices to demand change. A women’s rights coordinator for TAC remarked that *“I have been empowered with each and every information I get from the Raising Her Voice project, I take it to the community [and] even my partner knows that after attending the Raising Her Voice activities I come back and give her the information I get so this has made a difference to me, my family, community and I am looking forward to continue doing that.”* A TAC activist who attended RHV training gives a remarkable example:

"I learnt so many things about empowerment, the power within and how I could address some of the things that were affecting me and my family. I had a case where my daughter was raped and after I had received training and information about the AUWP I used it to challenge some things in my daughter's case ...to translate it to the provisions of the South African constitution and further translated it down to the challenge I was facing. After my daughter was raped, I reported the case and also made sure I gave the information to other women who supported me throughout...

I also managed to give training to other women who were facing personal challenges and through the information from the RHV it helped change their lives... I managed to get other women to challenge this and say that people should be allowed to report rape and abuse directly to the police and finally this was considered after all the letters we wrote even. Initially this was difficult as some authorities would say 'you are a woman and you cannot tell us what to do'. I would tell them that while I am a woman and my intention was not to undermine their authority and I was willing to do what they said I should do, I also wanted them to listen to us. In instances where they refused [to include us] we would interrupt meetings and tell them we will keep organising and interrupting those meetings until they heard us and later the village realised that these abuses really needed to be stopped."

Lessons learned:

- The development of the conceptual framework was done in consultation with women from community based organisations, informed by women's lived experiences. Greater ownership of a project is fostered when all involved in the project participate in its conceptualisation and planning.
- Women's lived realities are complex and cannot be limited to one or two issues. There was some agreement that women's movements had been slow to make these connections. Focusing on the three intersections should be used as a starting point to addressing the different issues in a woman's life in an integrated way.
- Although it was a good strategy to select training participants based on their work within communities and potential for promoting women's rights, a key challenge has been the participants' lack of authority to make decisions or influence their organisations. POWA want to look at mechanisms to ensure that benefits to the individual representatives are translated to a wider number of women.

Coherence with RHV proposed theory of change:

Individual women activists have been trained and used that knowledge to claim their own rights and those of other women, in the personal and political spheres. Women's organisations have gained capacity in understanding the interlinked nature of women's rights abuses and denials, their knowledge of relevant legal frameworks and their capacity for advocacy and campaigning. Policy advocacy at regional level was effective, and also well linked to the work of partners at grassroots. The only missing pieces of the jigsaw have been engagement with national government (who have no clear lines of accountability for implementation of the protocol) and the media.