

Understanding change in the WE CAN Campaign:

To tackle VAW is therefore to challenge gender inequalities from a rights perspective. It is also to engage both personal and collective responsibility for upholding women's human rights and freedoms. Since such inequalities are fundamental and enduring in societies around the world, denial and resistance to change are to be expected. Real change can come only from within, from sustained action at an individual level, born of personal reflection and understanding and replicated on an ever larger scale through demonstration and mutual support. The premise is that people change when they recognise the problem for themselves, see alternatives, and – through understanding, freedom of choice and peer validation – feel empowered to act. When they reach out to others and act together on a sufficient scale to bring about widespread reform, a social movement is born. The ambition of We Can is to foster that process, at a local, national, regional and ultimately global level.

Campaign approach

The central principle of social mobilisation to promote equal rights for all informs an inclusive approach founded on mutual respect. We Can invites change rather than demanding it, and sets rejection of violence as its only condition of involvement. Viewing informed free will as the best guarantee of ownership and most sustainable impetus for action, the campaign offers information, ideas and support but leaves the choices of involvement and action to the individuals and groups concerned.

Individual awareness and personal change form the basis for wider engagement. Men and women who opt to be change agents – known as 'change makers' – are encouraged first to recognise, understand and address the acceptance of violence in their own lives, attitudes and behaviour before seeking to persuade others to do the same. As such it is a transformational initiative, inviting people to choose and enact the change they wish to see and to model it to others. By making explicit the violence inherent in actions that ordinary people see and experience in their own homes and communities (which might include low-level physical abuse, shouting and aggressive behaviour, sexual harassment, forced marital sex, etc.), the campaign brings the goal of eliminating gender-based violence within the sphere which individuals can hope to influence. 'We can end violence against women' thus becomes a positive call to action – a personalised expression of realistic intent rather than a hazy ambition.

At the collective level, the campaign stresses that domestic violence is not a private affair but a matter of social concern. It invokes widely shared values that hold violence to be unacceptable and, in naming as violence actions that are commonly tolerated or accepted, invites reflection on the underlying inconsistency and the collective's capacity to resolve it. The approach is to point up and challenge the action and the attitudes which underpin it, rather than the individuals involved. In that way a constituency is built for informed collective responses to an acknowledged, shared problem, at the same time as motivation and conviction are generated by the experience and example of individual women and men adopting alternative courses of action. The campaign invites change makers to encourage others to change and to come together for mutual support, and concerned organisations of all kinds to join their efforts within a campaign alliance. As the circle grows, so mutual reinforcement and the widening spectrum of action are expected to maintain the momentum for change.

Methodology

The We Can campaign seeks to inspire others first to reflect on and then to embody the attitudes and behaviours they wish to see, communicate them to others and work together to promote them ever more widely. It accordingly draws on the analysis

summarised above to model the reflective, inclusive and proactive process of change sought in the way it is promoted.

This is expressed in the stages of change cycle explained below.

Campaign's Process of Change

It is widely accepted that any change, whether it is individual or social, happens over time. Each individual may approach the issue differently but the process of how someone changes follows a similar pattern.

For the 'We Can' campaign, we have used the 'The Stage of Change Theory'¹ to understand how people change. Our campaign strategy, particularly communication and actions are based on recognising the change process to support it adequately.



The figure above describes the different phases that represent different stages in the process of change in an individual and a corresponding one for the community. The 'We Can' campaign starts from the raising awareness phase and the first stage of pre-contemplation and community assessment was done before the campaign.

Phase 1: Raising Awareness (Engaging, Convincing, Inspiring)

The aim of this initial phase will be to increase awareness and promote reflection on violence against women. It is crucial to engage the community to recognise violent practices as violence, reflect on the issue and be sensitive to the root causes of discrimination and violence against women. The first two years of the campaign will be devoted to this phase when the campaign will also seek to extend its reach to include more people.

Key messages will focus on:

- VAW as an international issue but the situation in South Asia as being critical
- Forms of VAW
- Causes of VAW
- VAW as a public not private issue

¹ The Stages of Change Theory was developed by psychologists to explain how an individual changes in 1982 and further refined in 1992. Raising Voices further adapted the theory to understand how communities change their value systems and practices (diagram taken from their resource guide 'Mobilising Communities to Prevent Domestic Violence' by Lori Michau and Dipak Naker.

- Right of women to live without violence

Phase 2: Building Networks (Supporting and Mobilising Change Makers)

The aim of this phase will be to bring different groups and relevant sectors in the community together to build momentum to the process of change. It involves preparing community members to take a public stand and action on violence against women. The years two to four of the campaign will focus on this.

The emphasis will be on the fact that:

- No one can provoke or 'make' another person violent
- Violence is never an acceptable response to anger, frustration or conflict
- There is no excuse for violence
- Each and every community member contributes to the shaping of community norms and beliefs
- Each and every community member has a responsibility to work toward creating a safe living environment for the entire community
- Non-violent relationships benefit everyone
- Everyone has a right to safety and a responsibility to respect the right of others as well
- There are practical alternatives to behaviours that perpetuate violence against women

Key messages will focus on:

- Each individual has a right to a safe family
- Each individual has a right to choose to live without violence
- Violence-free homes is everyone's right
- Everyone (family, elders, father, children, religious leaders etc) has a right to live without violence
- Support, don't silence women experiencing violence
- Choose to be a different kind of man
- Ensure places (home, clinic, school, etc) are violence-free
- Say no to violence against women
- Violence against women has enormous social, political and economic costs
- What can you do to prevent violence against women

Phase 3: Integrating Action (Supporting, Recognising, Celebrating)

The idea will be to bring together groups to work in unison to improve synergy and impact and the campaign will concentrate on this aspect from year three to five.

The emphasis will be on the fact that:

- Changing community attitudes and behaviours is possible, especially with community support
- Taking action against VAW requires courage and resolve
- Many alternatives exist to attitudes and behaviour that violate women's rights
- There are a variety of non-violent means to resolve conflict
- Creating violence-free homes is challenging but it can be achieved and is immensely rewarding
- Everyone has a role in creating violence-free homes and upholding women's rights
- Gender relations can be made healthy and non-violent

- Equal relations are violence-free.
- The community can work together to change attitudes and behaviour that hurt women and their rights

Key messages will focus on:

- The importance of being different
- Having the courage to change
- The courage involved in choosing non-violence
- What are you doing to prevent violence against women?
- Small actions can make a big difference
- You have a right to say NO (to violence)

Phase 4: Consolidating Efforts (Strategising, Securing, Sustaining)

This is the time to strengthen community and organisational capacity to prevent violence against women. It is important to develop and institutionalise mechanisms to advocate women's needs and rights within the community. The last two years of the campaign will consolidate these activities.

The emphasis will be on the fact that:

- Change will happen if mechanisms to enforce change are put in place.
- Regular inputs are required to sustain the process of change.
- Non-violence benefits everyone in society.
- Everyone must recognise violence against women to be an issue essentially of justice and women's human rights.
- Women stand to gain in every sphere of life if violence against them ends.
- Recognise and celebrate pro-women practices.

Key messages will focus on:

- Everyone is responsible for preventing violence against women
- Small actions make a big difference
- We take violence against women seriously (police, clinics, hospitals, lawyers, religious leaders)
- We act to prevent violence
- This is a violence free community.
- Together we can end violence against women

Reflection starts with information: making visible and explicit instances and forms of violence around us that are frequently concealed or disregarded. The campaign provides documentation and learning tools for an informed choice; it seeks to convince rather than control. The ideas are communicated to grassroots organisations, and those who choose to join the alliance in turn invite their own members and target groups to become change makers. Change makers receive simple materials to help guide discussion with peers on issues of rights, gender and violence as they affect their own lives and communities. They are also encouraged to develop their own means of communicating campaign messages that will be relevant to their particular audience, thereby making the ideas their own and grounding them in a shared reality. Some groups opt to use theatre and song where these are more accessible forms of expression, particularly for young people.

The campaign material promotes a positive message about the fundamental dignity of all, and as such avoids violent and degrading images, instead stressing the capacity of ordinary women and men to take non-violent action. Change makers also share their own experience of personal change with others, demonstrating practical alternatives to violence and reaffirming that change is possible. Anyone can be a change maker: they need only commit to rejecting violence in their own lives and attempting to influence at least 10 others. As free agents, the scope of their action will vary widely, from the husband who takes on a share of the household chores to the women's leader who mobilises hundreds against a discriminatory court ruling. Some will have a greater sphere of influence by their position or personal authority, and a number will have the capacity to win buy-in for the campaign within their organisation or company. But it is the cumulative experience and example of change by growing numbers of private citizens that can generate a real shift in social attitudes and norms.

The chain reaction of interpersonal demonstration and support is replicated at the level of the campaign coordination. Interested organisations of all kinds collaborate through a loose and growing alliance structure to develop and share ideas and materials and coordinate for increased impact. An overall campaign identity communicated through common branding and messaging raises profile and reinforces awareness, at the same time as alliance members develop their own action plans and communication tools for their respective audiences.

Measuring Change:

This process of change is being assessed through a comprehensive assessment process presently being undertaken in India and Bangladesh. By 2008, this process will be initiated in Nepal and Sri Lanka also.