

We Can End Violence against Women (Oxfam) – A Public Awareness Campaign Focusing on Modeling Solutions and Strengthening Communities

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This paper outlines the proposition, approach, and methodology for the south Asia regional campaign to end violence against women (the WE CAN campaign) that will be implemented in six countries -Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Campaign Rationale

- One in every two women in women south Asia faces violence in her daily life
- Social customs and attitudes that support violence against women(VAW) are entrenched and institutionalized at all level-home, family, community, society and the state
- Underlying the acceptance of VAN is the deep-seated social belief that women are fundamentally of less value than men . This pervasive culture of patriarchy and VAW in the region affect women's lives, right and their opportunities in almost all spheres of life
- Despite successful actions by women's organisations over the past three decades, the scale and severity of discrimination and VAW is on the rise
- More than 50 million women are "missing" from the population in South Asia as a result. There are only 94 women for every 100 men and the situation is predicted to worsen
- To end VAW, it is important to challenge and change existing social attitudes that accept it as "normal" mobilize all sections of the family, community and society to eliminate it; build popular pressure on the state to implement gender-equal laws and policies; and bring together diverse local, national, regional and international effort working to combat VAW
- The WE CAN campaign will contribute to this process. Its primary aim will be to convince ordinary men and women across the region that by working together they can end all VAW'

Campaign Goal

Reduce social acceptance of VAW across six countries of South Asia

Campaign Objectives

Over the next six year in these six countries, the campaign will achieve:

- A fundamental shift in social attitudes and beliefs that support VAW
- A collective and visible stand by different sections of the community against VAW
- A popular movement to end all VAW
- A range of local, national and regional alliances to address VAW

Campaign Direction (2004-2005)

- Campaigns will be launched be launched with specific areas of focus in six countries
- Alliances will be strengthened for all national campaigns to increase outreach
- Common regional actions will be launched to mobilize change makers (people who will actively encourage more positive attitudes and behaviours towards women, within the communities in which they live and work) and raise common regional concerns

Campaign Approach

- The campaign will provide a common platform to various individuals and organisations making effort to empower women facing violence at the local and national levels. It will improve synergy and impact through coordinated and targeted campaigning
- It will also coordinate all these efforts to develop them into a regional campaign
- The national campaigns will respond to the unique social, cultural, political and economic environments and thus have different focus area
- In Bangladesh, Sri Lanka India and Afghanistan, the campaign and Nepal the emphasis will be on honour killing and trafficking of girls and women respectively
- Change makers, individuals who will help after existing gender-biased attitudes and behaviour within the communities they live in, will be an integral part of the campaign
- They will spread the message that VAW is unacceptable and equal relationships violence free

Campaign Audience

The campaign will influence:

- Ordinary men and women to take a stand against VAW, stop and prevent violent behaviour and influence their peers to do the same
- Young people to break the silence that surrounds VAW, take a stand against it, adopt gender-equal values in their own lives (thus, avoid becoming involved in violent relationships themselves) and influence their peers to do the same
- Decision-makers in State institutions to urge them to develop and implement policies and programmes to support survivors of violence and bring perpetrators of violence to book

Campaign Allies

The campaign will work with

- Diverse civil society group and other networks who can combat VAW in communities through their projects as they already have a personalised interface with people and are in a position to influence
- Individuals and communities across the region who can make choices that challenge VAW and evolve practices that promote gender-equal and evolve practices that promote gender-equal and violence free relationships
- Universities and educational institutions whose student can become effective change makers and help alter existing gender - biased attitudes and practices
- News and entertainment media who can generate a dialogue on issues of gender inequality and VAW as well as offer alternatives to correct gender inequalities
- Celebrities who can endorse and gain mass support for the campaign
- Change makers will spread the message that VAW is unacceptable and equal relationships are violence free

Campaign Identity

- While national campaigns will have their own communication strategies, a unique identity for the region after consultations with allies from each country
- A graphic logo and a strap-lion have been agreed to for the region. Alliances will be urged to make use of them in their events and communication material
- Materials are also being developed for the communication of the campaign message in the region

- Wider dissemination of the campaign and public involvement will also happen through online promotion of the use of campaign logo and banner on other websites; sending of campaign e-cards and downloadable screensavers and bookmakers with the message of the campaign

Campaign Activities

1. National campaign activities

- Country launches in six countries will provide a public to the campaign with the message that ending VAW is both necessary and possible
- Widespread actions through change maker and network will influence individual and community
- Widespread actions through change makes **networks** will influence individual and community attitudes through repeated and sustained messaging
- A series of highly visible, coordinated community mobilisation actions will engage specific target groups in the community to reflect on the issue of VAW and take action to prevent and combat
- Communication of campaign message through mass media and a variety other innovative means of communication will challenge existing notions and present positive alternative, ideas and practices
- Celebrity endorsements of messages to end VAW will promote alternative values and behaviour

2. Regional campaign activities

- In March 2005, a common region-wide action plan will be launched to sign up five million change agents to work toward the objectives of the campaign over a six-year period
- Annual regional event from November 2005 will firm up regional identity; one country will host the event each year and it will culminate in a pan-regional event in 2011
- Programmes to mobilize five million change agents will continue over six year across the region and influence 50 million people to take a stand against VAW
- Highly visible mass media communication methods will aid in mobilizing change makers, spread the message and launch solidarity mass actions against VAW
- Regional seminars and workshops on VAW will highlight the common crisis of the region
- Cross-country exchange programmes (exchange visits and educational tours) will facilitate learning from each others' experiences and strengthen the regional identity of the campaign
- Links will be established with national and regional organisations working on gender equality and policy reforms on VAW to influence positive legislative change

Campaign Development

Alliance building

Alliance building is critical to sustain the campaign. The core alliance of organisations, with which Oxfam has a long-standing relationship, will gradually expand to include many more like-minded NGOs, State departments, bilateral agencies, corporate organisations, student bodies, trade unions and even individuals.

The alliances formed and initially supported by Oxfam in each country will acquire their own identity as they grow and the campaign gains momentum. These alliances will be both long-term and short-term (to achieve specific objectives). A regional alliance will be developed by bringing together representatives of the national alliances in the first half of 2005.

The Key functions of the alliances:

- Guide the design of the campaign
- Effectively reach the message to target audiences by ensuring high visibility and wide reach of the campaign
- Influence the public and decision-makers to alter current social attitudes and laws
- Strengthen and broaden existing networks working against VAW
- Ensure the campaign benefits from the programmes and research experience others

Some rules to guide alliances:

- All allies must share a commitment to the campaign objectives and work towards them
- Alliances members should be clear what value each ally brings to the campaign
- In order to achieve the campaign objectives, the campaign objectives, the core alliance may have to cooperate with allies by supporting positions, activities, or tactics that it would not fully support alone just as allies may in turn agree to support positions, activities or tactics they would not necessarily support alone
- Some of the questions all core allies should consider while bringing in new alliance members include: what work is the agency doing on VAW; what is its position on the campaign issue; how is its constituency affected by VAW; what might it gain by joining the campaign; what will it expect of other allies; and what resources and value might it bring to the table