



Read-out from CSSP's Learning Seminar: 'Protection makes education possible: How the safety of women and girls makes a difference to girls' education'

Introduction

On July 25/26th 2017, over 100 representatives from government, civil society, women and girls affected by the issues, community activists, higher academic institutions and development partners came together in Addis to debate learning from CSSP's experience of working on education and protection across the country. This note provides an overview of the debates, tentative conclusions and proposed actions by different stakeholders coming from the seminar.

Inputs to the seminar*

- CSSP Radical Inclusion Framework of 'outsiders' and 'insiders';
- Presentation on policy and legal frameworks regarding gender equality and violence against women and girls;
- Medical overview of impact of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW/Gs) and the 4Ps - Prevention, Principled care, Punishments and Participation and leadership;
- Issue based analysis of Harmee Education for Development Association (HEfDA) interventions on women & girls in Munessa Woreda, Arsi Zone;
- "What does it take to be a community activist?" The SASA! community mobilization approach introduced from Uganda to Ethiopian CSOs - Raising Voices;
- Experience sharing on mobilizing communities to prevent intimate partner violence: SASA! in Kampala;
- Experiences of CSOs specific interventions from Tigray Development Association (TDA), Association for National Planned Program for Vulnerable Children and in Need-Ethiopia (ANPPCAN-E), Empathy for Life Integrated Development Association (ELIDA) and HEfDA and testimonies from individuals from Regionals States.

"CSOs have proved that they can make differences in empowering women and girls and promoting gender equality. The Charities and Societies Agency should consider these contributions of CSOs and review its law to open up possibilities for CSOs engagement in women's rights and gender based violence without any inhibition."

Government (Gonder) University Rep from Amhara Regional State

Key findings

- Women have gained increased recognition of their rights in the last two decades; and their self-consciousness and assertiveness has considerably increased. Their access to productive assets and economic performance has improved. Incidences of VAW/G has slightly reduced (but still the prevalence is very high). Girls' school enrolment and academic performance have increased. But they have still less access to and control over major productive resources including land, livestock, finance, extension services, and they are less educated.
- VAW/G has severe health consequences - including fractures, permanent disability, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancy, abortion complications, depression and anxiety, and sleep disorder. In extreme cases, it costs women and girls their lives.
- Reduction and elimination of VAW/G requires strategic intervention: a) though education and awareness; b) principled care (clinical and psychological treatment for survivors; c) punishing perpetrators through legal means; and d) participation of women and girls in leadership and decision making processes on all matters that affect them.
- There has been significant progress in girls' education. Girls' enrolment at elementary is almost equal to boys; and in some cases exceeds. The higher up the levels, the more girls than boys quit their education. And this widens the gender difference in access to education opportunities. Unsafe migration and other social, economic, cultural and psychological factors contribute to this.
- A community mobilization SASA! (meaning "NOW" in Kiswahili), from Uganda and used in many countries, was introduced to Ethiopia through three Women's Associations. The approach has received huge acceptance in the four communities in Oromia, Tigray and Addis Ababa. It mobilized women and men activists who help reconfigure social norms in ways that slowly achieve practical equality between men and women in all aspects of life.
- Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) pursues strategies for women underlining the importance of building the capacity of women associations; their increased and equal participation in the development and good governance; and coordinating these associations and relevant actors in the development process.

Key debates and conclusions

These revolved around policy and legal frameworks. Some argued that the constitution, national policy on gender and other international human rights instruments Ethiopia has ratified have laid strong foundation for making interventions that contribute to ensure women's rights and their equality with men. Proponents of this argument stress that it is the limited capacity of lower government structures and CSOs to translate these international and national legal and policy instruments to operational level that is the primary obstacle. There was also a strong conviction that economic empowerment is the primary route to achieving women's equality across the board and this is receiving significant attention from government.

Others argue that the policy and legal frameworks are not adequate: there is no expectation for secure places for reporting sexual abuse, even at higher education institutions; perpetrators of violence against women including rape are easily released on bail and the criminal code is weak on this issue; affirmative action for girls' education is limited to national matriculations. (Some universities have continued to provide tutorial services and other supports for girls in need without policy guidance.) This group also argues that economic empowerment alone will not transform unequal power relations between women and men. Also the legal framework for civil society work on this issue needs to be more permissive (as noted by a government representative).

The ultimate consensus was that while policy inadequacies need to be progressively addressed, the priority remains to develop operational capacity of pertinent organisations and structures to make effective and exhaustive use of existing policy and legal frameworks. And that even with many policy documents in place, if awareness and action doesn't happen and is not monitored at the community level, these policies will not be operationalized. Participants talked about this and its importance for the design of CSSP2.



Key lessons for the future

- **Radical inclusion a win-win:** As emphasized by the government participants, Ethiopia's goal of joining lower middle income countries by 2025 will be hampered if the education and protection of women and girls is not rapidly addressed.
- **Limited capacity to fight VAW/G:** VAW/G is still one of the country's priority concerns (GTP I performance review identified this as a gap; also 2016 DHS-Demographic and Health survey). But capacity to end VAW/G is limited. Women's Associations and other civil society organisations have shown their contribution to women's collective and individual empowerment. Developing capacity of these associations is important for ending VAW/G and for strengthening policy support. The recently established Governance and Democracy Centre (a branch of the Prime Minister's Office under Ministry of Federal and Pastoral Development Affairs) is key – even if its primary focus is capacity of Mass-Based Associations (MBAs) and Professional Associations.
- **Awareness alone is not enough to eliminate VAW/G:** Awareness-raising has been a common approach for decades, with limited impact on VAW/G rates. People rarely change behaviours through awareness creation alone. It must be combined with a *range* of mutually reinforcing interventions: such as incentives (rewards such as community celebration for changed behaviour); capacity development of women and men (such as how to negotiate); restrictions (penalties such as Idir by-laws); and changes in environment (such as street lighting to protect women). These more comprehensive approaches are essential to achieve change.
- **Economic empowerment alone is also not enough.** Women's economic empowerment alone may not eliminate VAW/G. In some cases it may increase violence as deep masculine norms are threatened; and in others, existing violence can limit women taking up economic opportunities (such as land certification). Economic support should always be accompanied by other interventions (such as those named above). Raising Voices presentation on the SASA! Kampala evaluation showed a big difference in level VAW/G prevalence between target and control locations.
- **Affirmative action for girls' education should expand beyond secondary.** Girls' academic performance combined with increasing dropout rates as they advance to upper levels demand special attention of government and CSOs. Affirmative action for girls' education should extend beyond 12th grade to universities and colleges. More systematic support is required to improve their performance.

Key lessons for the future (cont'd)

- **Safe, secure and accessible reporting system for violence survivors.** Less than 10% of violence committed against women and girls is reported. This is unacceptable. Safe, secure and accessible reporting system should be put in place for survivors. Women's Associations, law enforcement agencies and education institutions may take the lead. Best practices of other countries can be considered for learning.
- **DNA test for justice.** The seminar revealed the urgent need for a review the criminal justice system to properly defend the rights of women and girls. Releasing perpetrators that commit serious violence such as rape on bail is considered unfair and more should be done. Introduction of DNA test for rape and other sexual abuse can better facilitate accurate identification of perpetrators.
- **A ground-breaking programme (SASA!) for reducing VAW/G:** The last three years' experience in Ethiopia has demonstrated that SASA! approach is cost effective and can easily be adapted to the different social and cultural contexts of the people. The approach has brought significant changes in the life of women and men in several counties including Uganda. Implementation of this community mobilization tool across the country should be considered by the government as a mechanism to fight VAW/G. The provision of more legal and operational space for CSOs (beyond WAs) could enable greater reach and impact for harder to reach women and girls.
- **GoE needs sustainable mechanisms to reduce irregular migration.** Irregular migration of girls (some as young as 12) to Arab countries for economic reasons poses a huge challenge to the government and communities particularly in Wollo and Gonder Zones of Amhara Regional State. Girls' education is no longer an alternative since return on education is naturally long-term and cannot help address the immediate cash requirement that migration offers. Government should consider sustainable mechanisms that address both the economic and education needs of girls in these hotspot areas and beyond.



Key actions and results proposed – by actor

Each actor group was asked to identify what change it could achieve within the next 12 months, and what needed to be done to achieve this. These are summarised here, with a full breakdown of activities on the next page.

Government actors...

... from Regional States for Amhara, Oromia and Tigray and City Administration of Addis Ababa want to see increased ownership and leadership of the government to change the individual attitudes and social norms that impede genuine equality for women and girls, and more space to collaborate with CSOs in these efforts as well as stronger accountability mechanisms.

Universities...

... from Regional States for Amhara and Oromia want to see centres established that facilitate safe reporting of abuses perpetrated against girls and young women, and promote equality between girl and boy students.

Community Activists, women and girls from Harder to Reach communities...

... want to see organized volunteer activities with better capacity to mobilize stakeholders to empower women and girls by taking practical steps that engage men and women.

CSOs other than Women Associations (WAs)...

... and other CSOs want to see coordinated stakeholders for collective and effective response to violence against women and girls through: expanded awareness raising and capacity development interventions for women and men, and other interventions that increase incentives for positive behaviours, and restrictions to limit negative behaviours towards women and girls.

Women's Associations...

... want to see increased awareness of members on women rights and their protection from all forms of violence, and to see an expansion of the SASA! approach across WAs.

Development Partners...

...from CSSP want to help ensure sustainability of on-going projects on women's economic empowerment, and a continuation of the SASA! pilot to completion.

The table on the final page provides more detailed description of actions that each actor proposes to take. These actions will be monitored after the end of CSSP.

| What each actor would like to see within 12 months | What each actor plans to do to achieve this |
|---|--|
| <p>Government actors from Regional States for Amhara, Oromia and Tigray and City Administration of Addis Ababa want to see increased ownership and leadership of the government to change wrong attitudes towards women and girls.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch extensive awareness creations (beyond SASA! pilot communities) to change attitudes of communities to recognize women’s human rights, address school girls’ dropouts and fight against VAW/G. As remarked, just awareness alone won’t mean much – it needs to be linked with community organizing on the ground, so the government could support or at least encourage community-level programming on VAW prevention; • Establish accountability mechanisms to help track that women/girls related interventions are implemented as planned; • Support organisations engaged in women and girls’ affairs including acquisition of office spaces. |
| <p>Universities from Regional States for Amhara and Oromia want to see centres established that facilitate safe reporting of abuses perpetrated against girls and promote equality between girl and boy students.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish/ strengthen centres dedicated to girl students aimed at getting counsels, tackling challenges and problems facing them, and helping them improve their academic performance; • Engage in awareness raising on women’s rights as part of rendering community services. |
| <p>Community Activists and representatives from Hard to Reach communities with which CSSP has worked want to see organized volunteer activities with better capacity to mobilize stakeholders to empower women and girls.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community activists continue facilitating effective implementation of SASA! approach to mobilize communities to prevent VAW/Gs; • Share experience to replicate SASA! interventions to adjacent communities. |
| <p>Civil Society Organisations excluding WAs and other CSOs want to see coordinated stakeholders for collective and effective response to violence against women and girls through expanded awareness raising interventions.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in activities that build capacity of women organisations and groups to respond to problems facing women/ girls and cooperate with other actors interested in women support; • Help establish one stop service centre judicial system in local courts for women victims to process their legal cases and get justice; • Engage Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) to consider and introduce measures (social pressure) to be taken when members are involved in VAW/Gs. |
| <p>Women’s Associations want to see increased awareness of members on women rights and their protection from all forms of violence.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate conditions for women and men members of the community to gain education on women’s rights and VAW/Gs. • Help coordinate actions of stakeholders for better and effective results – for example, keeping up SASA! activities |
| <p>Development Partners and CSSP want to help ensure sustainability of on-going projects on women’s economic empowerment.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help ensure connection between CSSP I and the upcoming CSSP II. • Continue supporting on-going women programmes; • Support continuity of SASA! implementation (phase 4). |