Salamander Trust
ON THE RIGHT(S) TRACK

CFAR
Communicating For Action and Results

Did you know???

Did you know that…

…the first National Women's Day was held in 1909

…on average, the female population of the world is 49.7% (this has gone down slightly since the 1960s, when it was just over 50%)

…this average varies slightly by region of the world

…only 26 per cent of all national parliamentarians are women, up from 11 per cent in 1995

…children are 30% of the world's population but comprise 50% of the extreme poor

…since children rarely live alone, this means that they & their caregivers (more often women than men) are disproportionately represented among the extreme poor

…the number of female-headed households in the world is under-counted

…globally about 30% of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime

…violence can negatively affect women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health, and may increase vulnerability to acquiring HIV in some settings

…violence against women can be a *consequence of HIV* as well as a contributing factor

… And that VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE!

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Greetings!

It's great to be writing to you again after a while.

In this newsletter we want to fill you in on a few things we have been up to over the past couple of years.

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1. Collective creations:

All the images in this section are from the CUSP webinar on feminist scale, March 2022

In a ground-breaking article in 2012, based on research in 70 countries over 40 years, Mala Htun and Laurel Weldon stated:

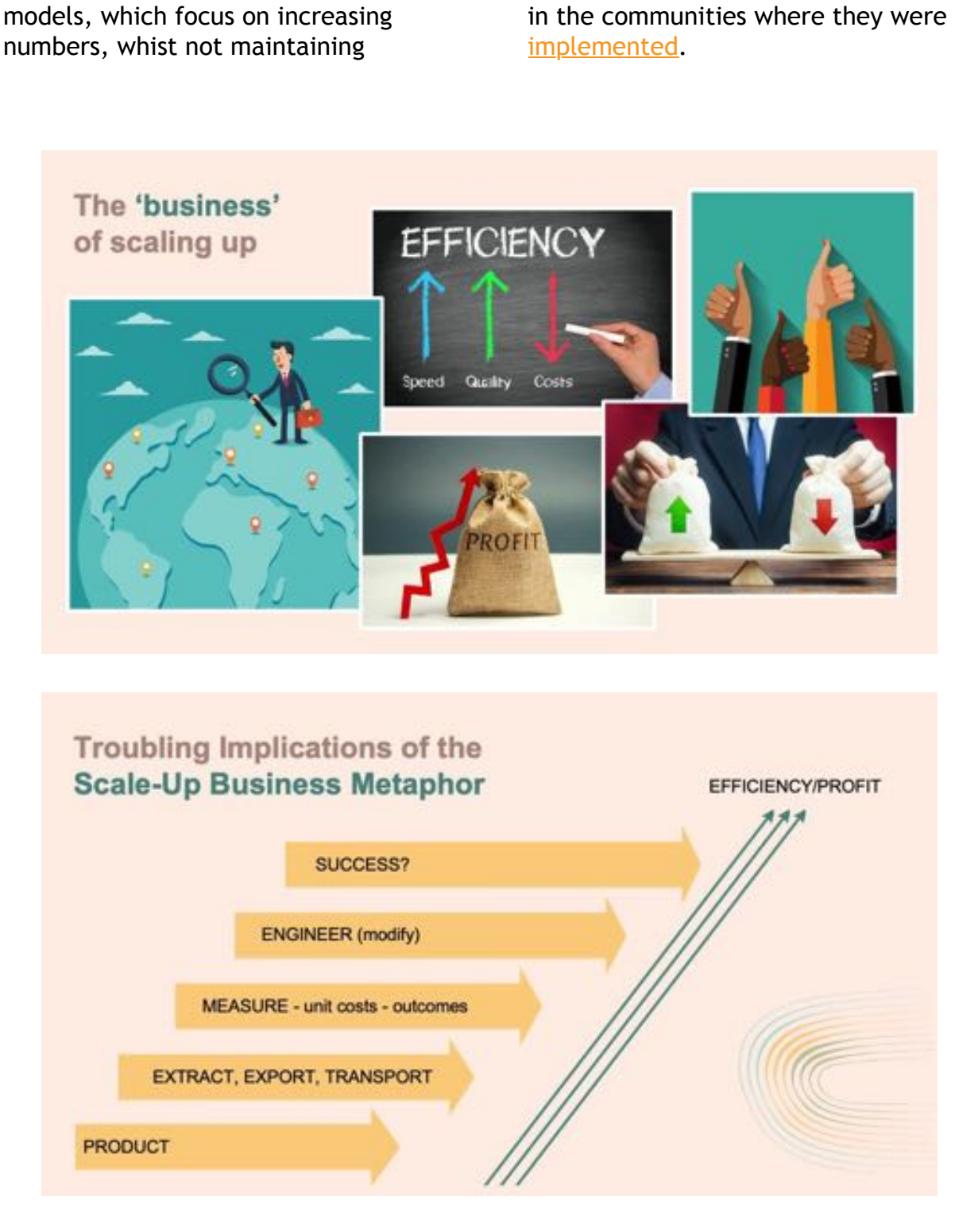
> *"the autonomous mobilization of feminists in domestic and transnational contexts—not leftist parties, women in government, or national wealth—is the critical factor accounting for policy change. Further, our analysis reveals that the impact of global norms on domestic policy making is conditional on the presence of feminist movements in domestic contexts, pointing to the importance of ongoing activism and a vibrant civil society." (Our emphases)*

This article has had a huge effect on our work in relation to *Stepping Stones* over the years, since it has confirmed to us the importance of recognising that *people, not projects* are at the centre of ethical, effective and *sustainable* gender-transformative social norms change programmes, like our own.

a. About CUSP…

Back in 2016, we linked up with other organisations who had also created evidence-based gender-transformative social norms change programmes, including SASA! (Raising Voices and CEDOVIP), Tostan, IMAGE, GREAT, and OXFAM GB's "We Can" Campaign. We called ourselves the CUSP Collective. A cusp is an edge of something - a point of transition between two different states. Being on the cusp of a wave is being just at the point before it breaks. Being on a cusp can present us either with danger or with opportunity. This felt therefore like an appropriate name in terms of how best to make use of our respective programmes with wider numbers of people.

All our programmes are designed - and have a proven track record - to reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG). However, we were all concerned about the ways in which our respective programmes were being taken up by donors and their grantees - INGOs, International Development Corporations and others - in order to take them to scale in ways which we felt were following top-down business-models, which focus on increasing numbers, whilst not maintaining fidelity to the principles and structure of our original materials.Whilst we all recognise - and actively encourage - appropriate adaptation of our materials to fit with each specific context, we were concerned that this lack of fidelity was producing versions which at best would considerably reduce their potential effectiveness and, at worst could result in considerable harm to girls and women in the communities where they were implemented.


The 'business' of scaling up
EFFICIENCY
Speed
Quality
Costs
PROFIT
Troubling Implications of the Scale-Up Business Metaphor
EFFICIENCY/PROFIT
SUCCESS?
ENGINEER (modify)
MEASURE - unit costs - outcomes
EXTRACT, EXPORT, TRANSPORT
PRODUCT

Images from CUSP webinar on feminist scale, March 2022

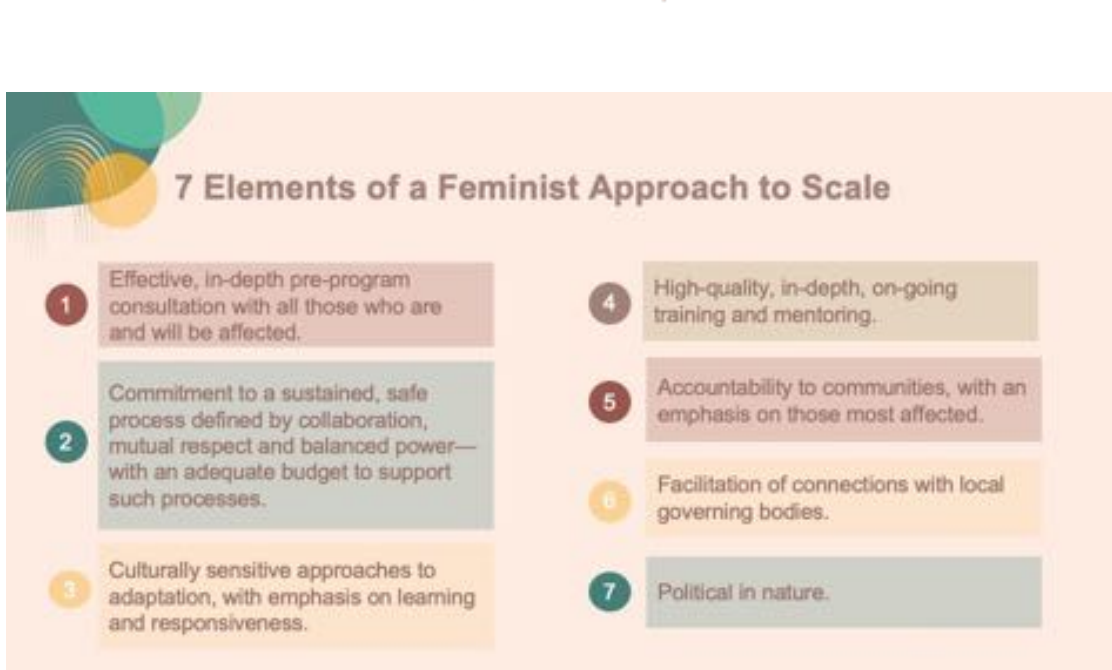
GDP
Product
Domestic
Gross
CIRCULAR ECONOMY
MAKE
USE
RECYCLE
REMAKE

…. and Feminist Scale…

However, it is always easy to critique others' ways of doing things. It is often much harder to come up with an alternative *positive* way of doing things, especially when the status quo is so entrenched in global thinking. So together we worked long and hard over eighteen months and then we produced a thought-piece entitled: *"Enhancing Social Norms Programs: An Invitation to Rethink "Scaling Up" from a Feminist Perspective".* This thought piece offered a shift away from this conventional thinking around "scaling up".

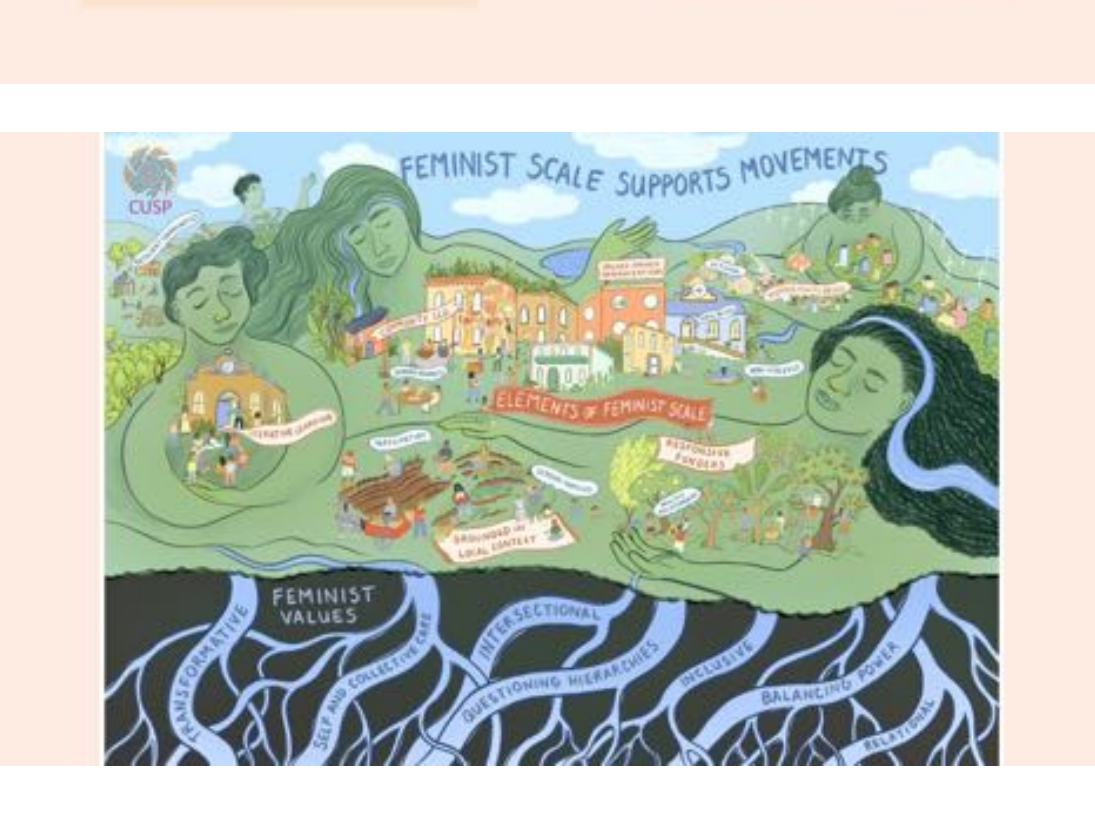
It proposes instead an ecological model, based on the natural world. It is based instead on the power of movements to effect change (as described above by Htun and Weldon), through organic growth of ideas, spreading from within a movement outwards. We call this alternative model of scaling "feminist scale".

In this model, growth comes from within a plant, drawing from what is around it but inherently creating new life from within it. And there is also a recognition of growth as a part of the natural cycle of life around us, which also includes maturity, die-back and regeneration, rather than an assumption or imperative that growth should always be linear and expanding.



7 Elements of a Feminist Approach to Scale

1. Effective, in-depth pre-program consultation with all those who are and will be affected.
2. Commitment to a sustained, safe process defined by collaboration, mutual respect and balanced power—with an adequate budget to support such processes.
3. Culturally sensitive approaches to adaptation, with emphasis on learning and responsiveness.
4. High-quality, in-depth, on-going training and mentoring.
5. Accountability to communities, with an emphasis on those most affected.
6. Facilitation of connections with local governing bodies.
7. Political in nature.



All the images in this section are from the CUSP webinar on feminist scale, March 2022

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b. The STREAM Network- walking the talk…

The images in this section are from the STREAM Network Strategic Plan, 2022, except where otherwise indicated

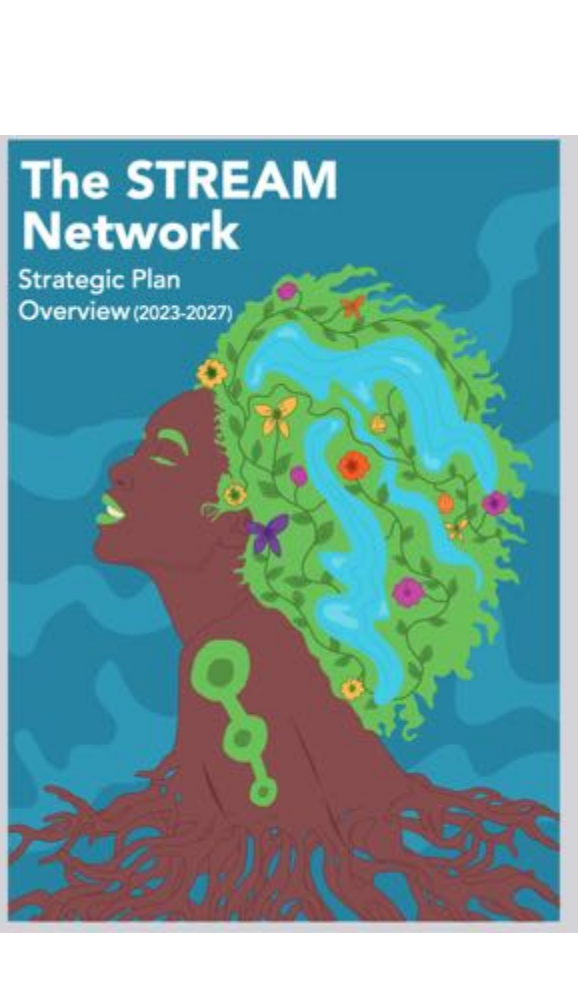
Our work on feminist scale with CUSP was hugely inspiring for us all and the work here continues.

At the same time, we also wanted to explore what this means for our use of *Stepping Stones* specifically. How could we walk the talk and translate what we learnt with our CUSP deliberations into how best to make use of *Stepping Stones?*

This is how the STREAM Network was born.

In early 2022, CFAR-Coordinator Ellen Bajenja, Salamander Director Alice Welbourn and Lucy Wanjiku Njenga, Director of Positive Young Women Voices in Kenya reconnected, to discuss how they could translate the CUSP work into action in relation to *Stepping Stones* and networks of women living with HIV. We dreamt together of how a *feminist* approach to scaling *Stepping Stones* could support us all to enable girls and women living with HIV to achieve their sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR).

With support from UNAIDS, Positive Young Women Voices hosted a global meeting in Nairobi in late September / early October 2022, where the STREAM Network was born. The STREAM Network so far consists of women living with HIV from Cameroon, India, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Latin America; and male and female *Stepping Stones* trainers from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The 40+ participants came together to share their visions for how the STREAM Network could support women - and men - living with and/or affected by HIV to be trained as *Stepping Stones* facilitators. This would then enable them to make use of the respective *Stepping Stones* programmes in and with their own peers and communities. In this way, movements of women living with HIV could be supported to create their own change in and with their own communities in ways which best reflect the groundbreaking findings of Htun and Weldon back in 2012.



Front cover of STREAM Network Strategic Plan 2022.

The STREAM Network Strategic Plan sets out clearly the Network members' vision for a world which advances the SRHR of women living with HIV. It draws clearly on the principles used by *Stepping Stones* of being assets-based, forward-thinking, and solution-focused in its principles and plans.

The plan made use of the UNAIDS-commissioned "Action Linking Initiatives on Violence Against Women and HIV Everywhere (ALIV[H]E)" Framework. This is an applied research implementation framework. It draws on the evidence for 'what works' to prevent HIV and violence against women and adolescent girls (VAW) in all their diversity, in the context of HIV.

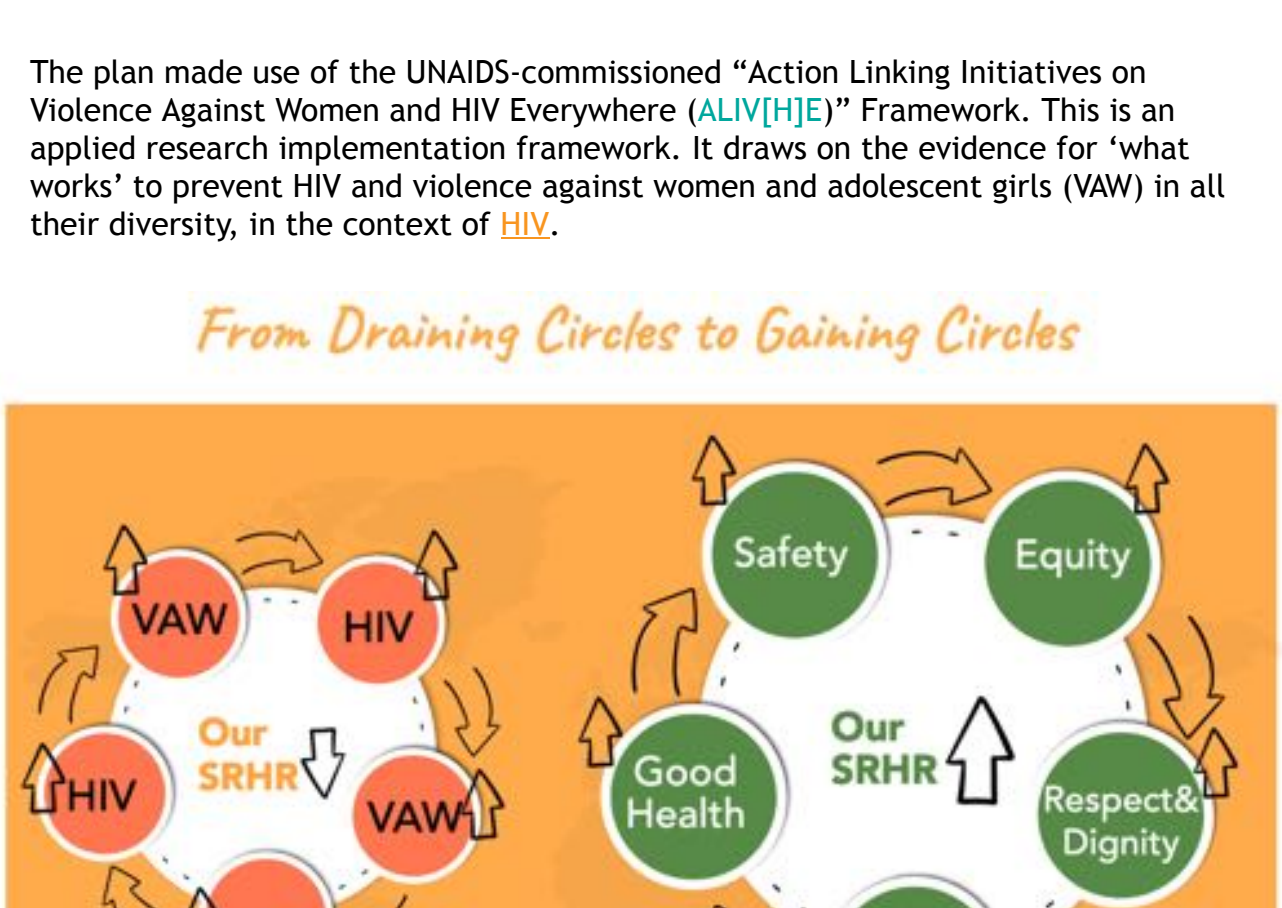


Image from STREAM Network Strategic Plan 2022.

Part of this ALIV[H]E Framework is the Gender Change Matrix (adapted from Gender at Work). This matrix enables us to think about where change needs to take place in order for VAWG to reduce and for SRHR to be achieved. We recognised how many policies and programmes affecting the lives of women living with and/or affected by HIV are focused on top-down bio-medical approaches - which often ignore or overlook the high prevalence of violence against women and girls. Instead, we recognised how use of the Gender Change Matrix enables us to include and address the psycho-social dimensions to gender-transformative social norms change, that programmes such as *Stepping Stones* provide.

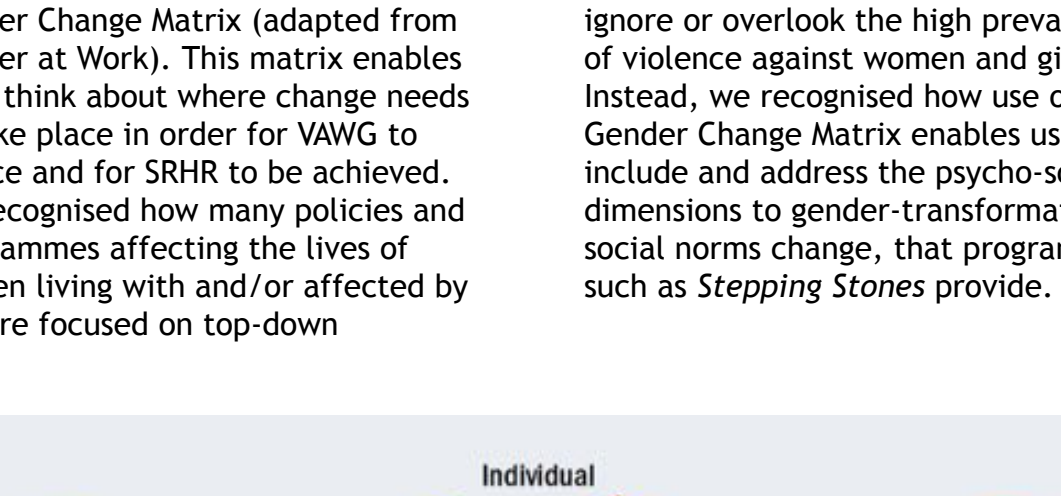

Individual
Q1
Q2
Internalized attitudes, values, practices
Access to and control over public & private resources
Individual
Family
Partner/s
Informal
Formal
Socio-cultural norms, beliefs, practices
Laws, policies, resource allocations
Community
Society
Q3
Q4
Society

Image from the ALIV[H]E Framework 2017

This is not the first time that women living with HIV have made use of the Stepping Stones programme. COWLHA in Malawi adapted Stepping Stones for use with and by its women members and their partners in 144 locations across 12 districts of Malawi. The evaluation demonstrated how it had improved the mental health of the women concerned, as violence against them was reduced and they were better able to access and adhere to their medication. (Sadly, however, when the grant came to an end, no further funding was available, so the programme was not sustained.)

We are excited by the launch of the STREAM Network and are grateful to UNAIDS for its support with its launch. The STREAM Network is also expanding. A peer organisation led by a woman living with HIV is seeking to translate *Stepping Stones & Stepping Stones Plus* into Russian and adapt it for use there. ICW Latina is seeking to translate *Stepping Stones with Children* into Spanish and adapt it for use there. Other networks of women living with HIV are also keen to join the STREAM Network as it gathers momentum.

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2. Prioritising people:

Stepping Stones has always emphasised the importance of working *across genders and generations* in recognition of the fundamental power inequalities that exist across these divides.

"Although gender inequality is experienced by and between individuals, it is also a result of power relations that structure how societies are organised, laws are set, economies function, and ideologies are shaped."

So the *Stepping Stones* programmes have always focused on supporting community members to work both separately *and together*, in order to improve our communication and relationship skills and to build collective future visions for our communities.

This *life-cycle* approach to our work is key - today's children are tomorrow's adolescents and next week's adults. As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child and our work seeks to encompass and embed this in all we do.

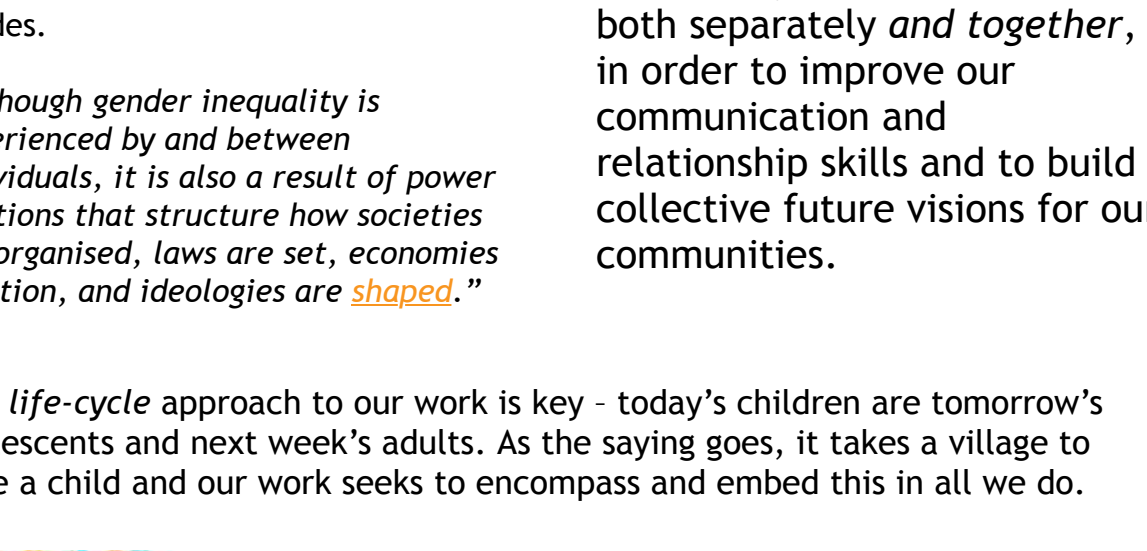
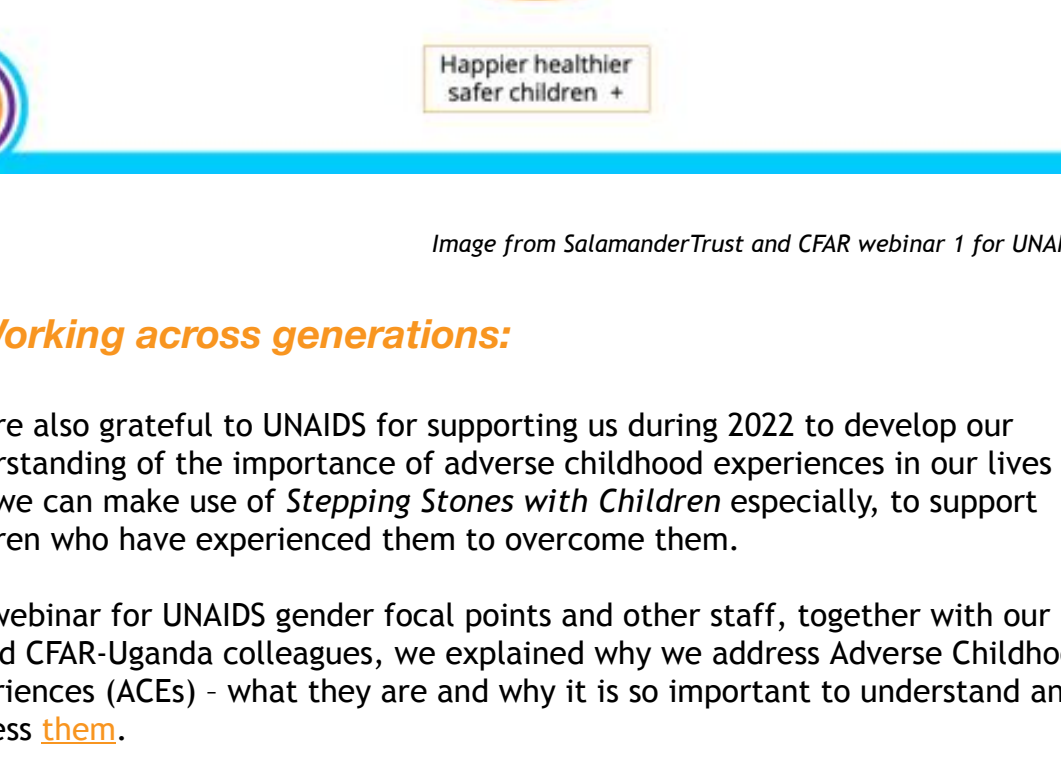

Thinking upstream – Stepping Stones life-cycle approach:
Happier healthier safer adolescents...
Happier healthier safer women and men
Happier healthier safer children +

Image from SalamanderTrust and CFAR webinar 1 for UNAIDS 2022

a. Working across generations:

We are also grateful to UNAIDS for supporting us during 2022 to develop our understanding of the importance of adverse childhood experiences in our lives - and how we can make use of *Stepping Stones with Children* especially, to support children who have experienced them to overcome them.

In a webinar for UNAIDS gender focal points and other staff, together with our highly skilled CFAR-Uganda colleagues, we explained why we address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - what they are and why it is so important to understand and address them.



What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)?

Exposure to ACEs ⬆ = ⬆ Death in Adults

7 traditionally recognised ACEs include:
psychological / physical /sexual abuse from an adult household member; and/or adult substance use / mental illness /mother treated violently / criminal behaviour in household

Additional ACEs:
"discrimination… natural disasters, financial hardship, residential instability and forced migration, exposure to victimization or witnessing violence outside the home, and death/illness of parents…. happen frequently to children …..associated with psychological and biological disruptions"

Felitti et al 1998, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0749-3797(98)00017-8
Karatekin et al., 2022, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2022.106425
Chugani H et al 2001, 14(6):1290-1301, https://doi.org/10.1006/nimg.2001.0917

Image from SalamanderTrust and CFAR webinar 1 for UNAIDS 2022

We explained how ACEs can have life-long detrimental effects on children's abilities to survive and thrive as adolescents, and across the lifespan.

We described how *Stepping Stones with Children* can counteract this pathway, this by working separately and together with children living with HIV and their siblings, *as well as* with their caregivers.

We emphasised the importance of working with children aged 5-8 as well as 9-14 year-olds and their caregivers.

The earlier that children affected by HIV, sickness, death, violence, mental health issues, and more, together with their caregivers, can be supported to overcome their ACEs, the more likely they are to build resilience and positive post-traumatic growth.

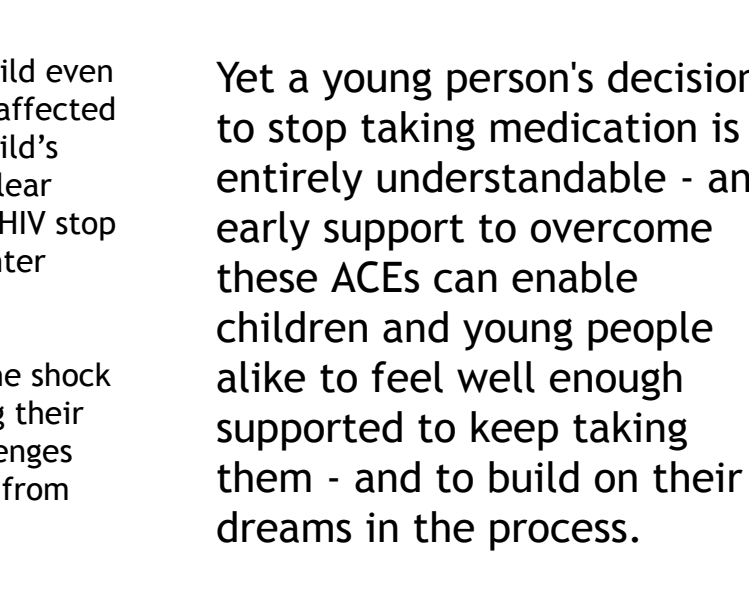
The evidence is clear that a child even in the womb can be adversely affected by circumstances facing the child's mother. The evidence is also clear that many children living with HIV stop taking treatment when they enter their teens.

This is often associated with the shock of learning *why* they are taking their medication, and also the challenges they often face in transferring from children's to adults' services.

Yet a young person's decision to stop taking medication is entirely understandable - and early support to overcome these ACEs can enable children and young people alike to feel well enough supported to keep taking them - and to build on their dreams in the process.

> *"There is global consensus that self-harm is a prevalent concern in adolescence and a priority for public health efforts. Establishing early risk factors and profiles that can be traced and tracked across development provides a crucial step toward the early identification of these young people, to elucidating underlying causal mechanisms and, ultimately, prevention and treatment."*

So the sooner the adverse experiences too often faced by children and young people living with HIV can be identified and rectified, the better the chances of a child being able to develop a supportive peer group and positive relationships with the adults in their life.



Still from Stepping Stones with Children film, Dominique Chadwick, Pasado, Salamander Trust

Support both from their peers and their caregivers will enable young people to overcome the traumas they have experienced as they grow.

Unfortunately, much of the funding focused on children with HIV has, to date, only been in relation to their mothers' pregnancies or shortly after their birth (see more on this below); or has only started to focus on them specifically from the age of 10, around when girls can start to get pregnant themselves.

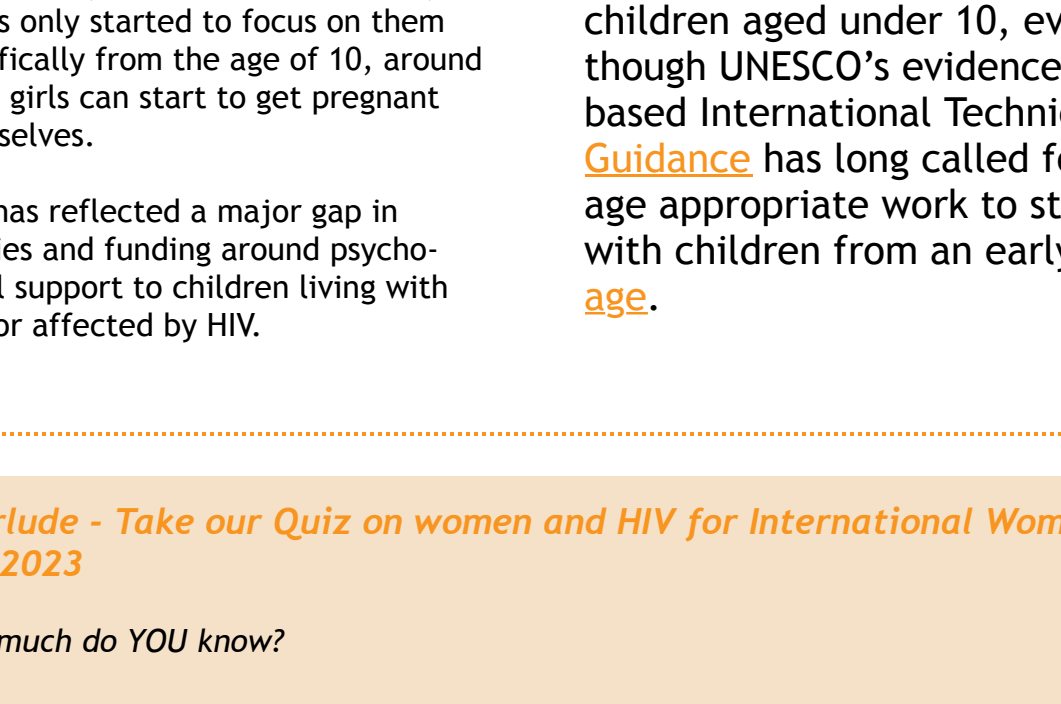
This has reflected a major gap in policies and funding around psycho-social support to children living with and/or affected by HIV.

This is in part owing to an ongoing deep reluctance to address comprehensive sexuality education with children aged under 10, even though UNESCO's evidence-based International Technical Guidance has long called for age appropriate work to start with children from an early age.

Interlude - Take our Quiz on women and HIV for International Women's Day 2023

How much do YOU know?

We all know that girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa are especially vulnerable to acquiring HIV and the statistics are very stark.Take our HIV and women quiz for International Women's Day 2023 and see what *you* score….



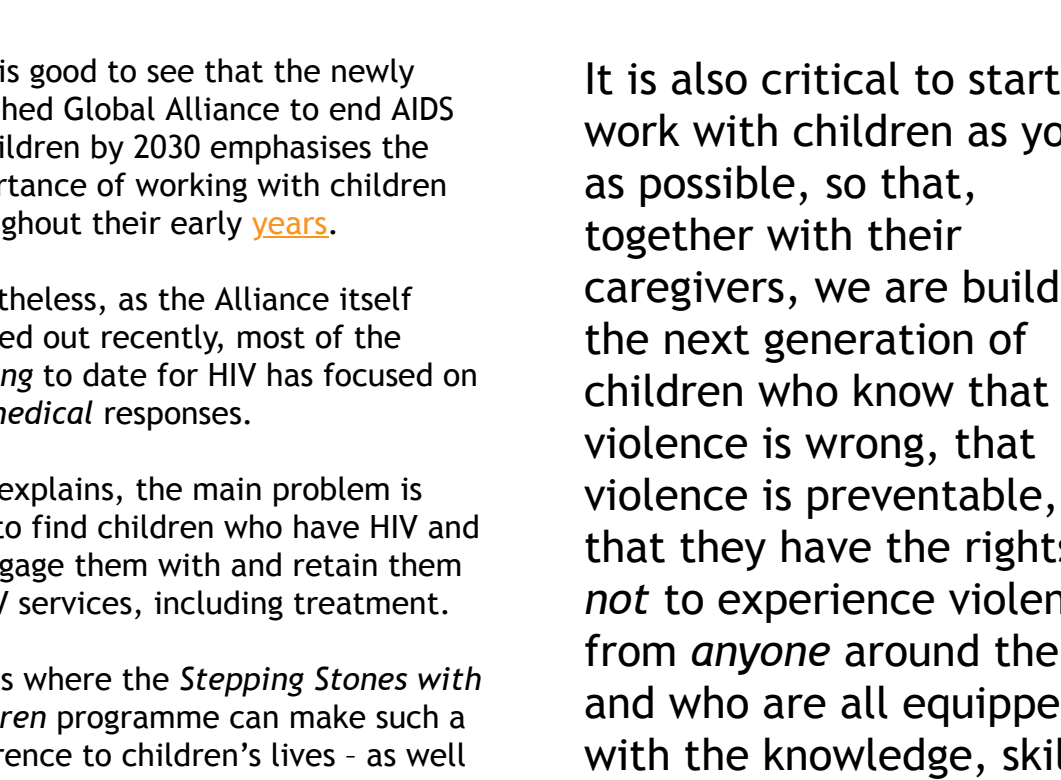
So it is good to see that the newly launched Global Alliance to end AIDS in Children by 2030 emphasises the importance of working with children throughout their early years.

Nonetheless, as the Alliance itself pointed out recently, most of the *funding* to date for HIV has focused on *bio-medical* responses.

As it explains, the main problem is how to find children who have HIV and to engage them with and retain them in HIV services, including treatment.

This is where the *Stepping Stones with Children* programme can make such a difference to children's lives - as well as to the lives of their *caregivers*, who are often desperate to do for the best for them, but often lack the resources, knowledge or support to do so.

It is also critical to start work with children as young as possible, so that, together with their caregivers, we are building the next generation of children who know that violence is wrong, that violence is preventable, that they have the rights *not* to experience violence from *anyone* around them - and who are all equipped with the knowledge, skills *and power* to achieve gendered social norms change.


Parents, respect the rights of children and tell them the truth.

Still from "Stepping Stones with Children" film made by older child participants, entitled "Give her a chance", about the importance of girls being supported to go to school

b. Working with women
PMTCT or eSRHR - why does it matter?

Meanwhile, what about women? As the film we linked to above describes, the well-being of a woman affects the long-term quality of life of her child. Yet sadly the response of the world to HIV has largely focused on what are called "prevention-of-mother-to-child transmission" (pMTCT) programmes.

Most funding directed at women from the Global Fund and from PEPFAR has focused on this specific time in women's lives. The rest of women's lives have received little funding: and the "pMTCT" focus has been largely bio-medical, specifically in order to get pregnant women living with HIV onto treatment so that they don't pass HIV on to their babies, or their sexual partners.

In several countries, such approaches have also included coerced sterilisation policies, which are a form of institutionalised obstetric violence and a gross violation of the women's SRHR.

In addition, criminalisation of HIV transmission, including through giving birth and breastfeeding, has heightened women's deep stress and anxieties throughout their pregnancies – at a time when they are most in need of care, respect and support from all around them, both in their own intrinsic right – and so that they are best placed to give birth to happy, healthy and safe children. Women living with HIV have advocated against such punitive policies at length over the years.

About U=U

The science is clear that U=U – ie that, if someone has an undetectable viral load, then the virus is untransmissible. We know that if women living with HIV are provided with the right care, respect and support throughout the pregnancy journey – ie if their SRHR are ensured – that this can enable them to have an undetectable viral load.

This means that they can have unprotected sex to get pregnant, can have a healthy and happy pregnancy, can have a normal vaginal delivery – and can also breastfeed their baby, safe in the knowledge that the baby will be born HIV-free.

This is one example of U=U in action. Yet despite this seismic advance in the science around HIV, recommended by WHO since at least 2017, we still have a long way to go in having this fundamental scientific fact translated into global policy and programming – including PEPFAR and Global Fund funding - in relation to women living with HIV.

Angelina Namiba, (who is also a Stepping Stones with Children facilitator), wearing one of her U=U t shirts. Photo credit: Angus Stewart*

*If you would like to see how to make your own U=U t shirt, you can see how here.

This is why, in our ***Stepping Stones*** programmes, we set great store by care, respect and support for all people living with HIV.

In addition, the importance of giving women – and girls - whether they are living with HIV or not - ***especial*** support throughout the pregnancy journey is fundamental to the programme's ethical principles.

The ***Stepping Stones*** programmes also advocate for care, respect and support for ***everyone***, regardless of gender, age or HIV status – or any other circumstances – across the life-span.

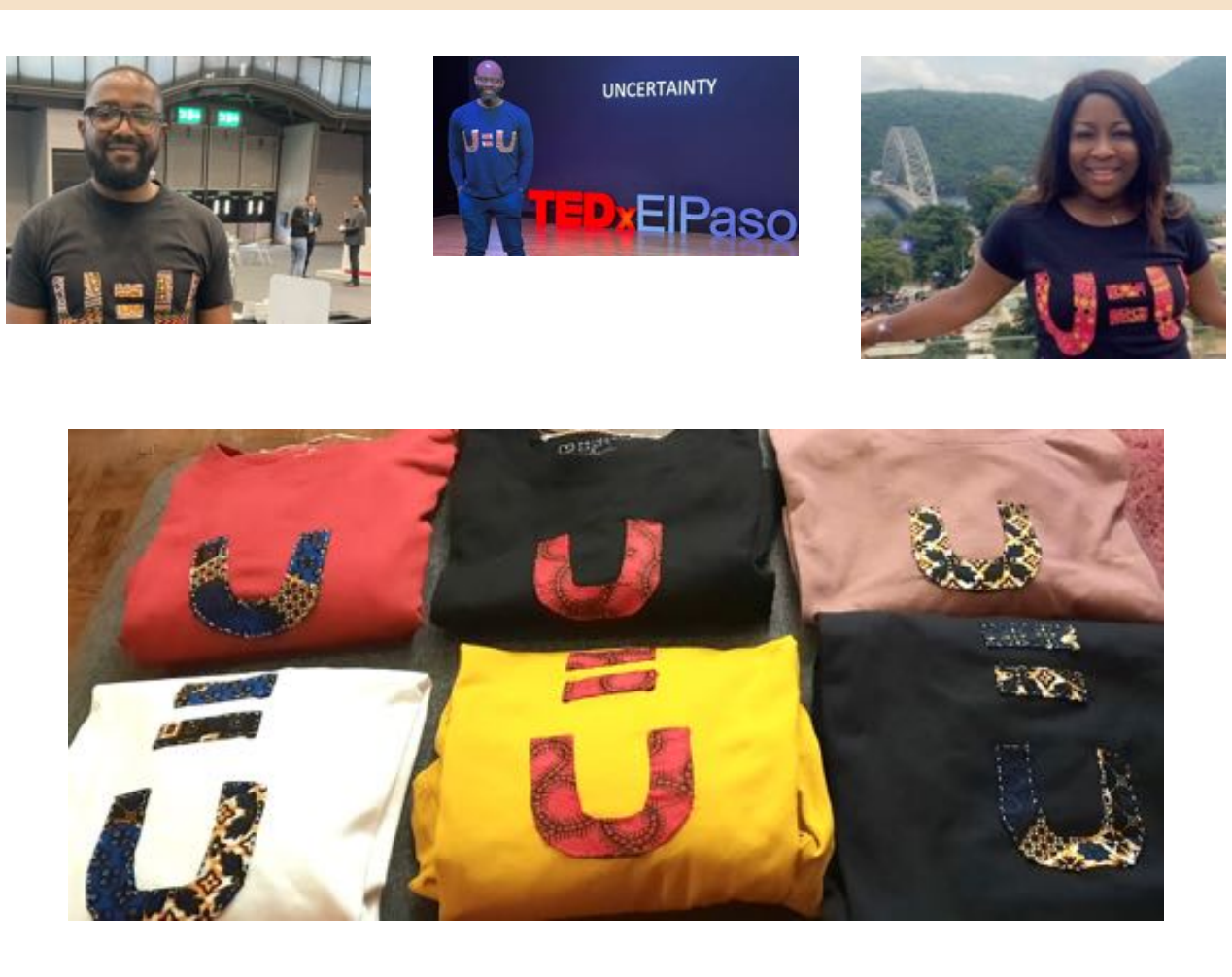


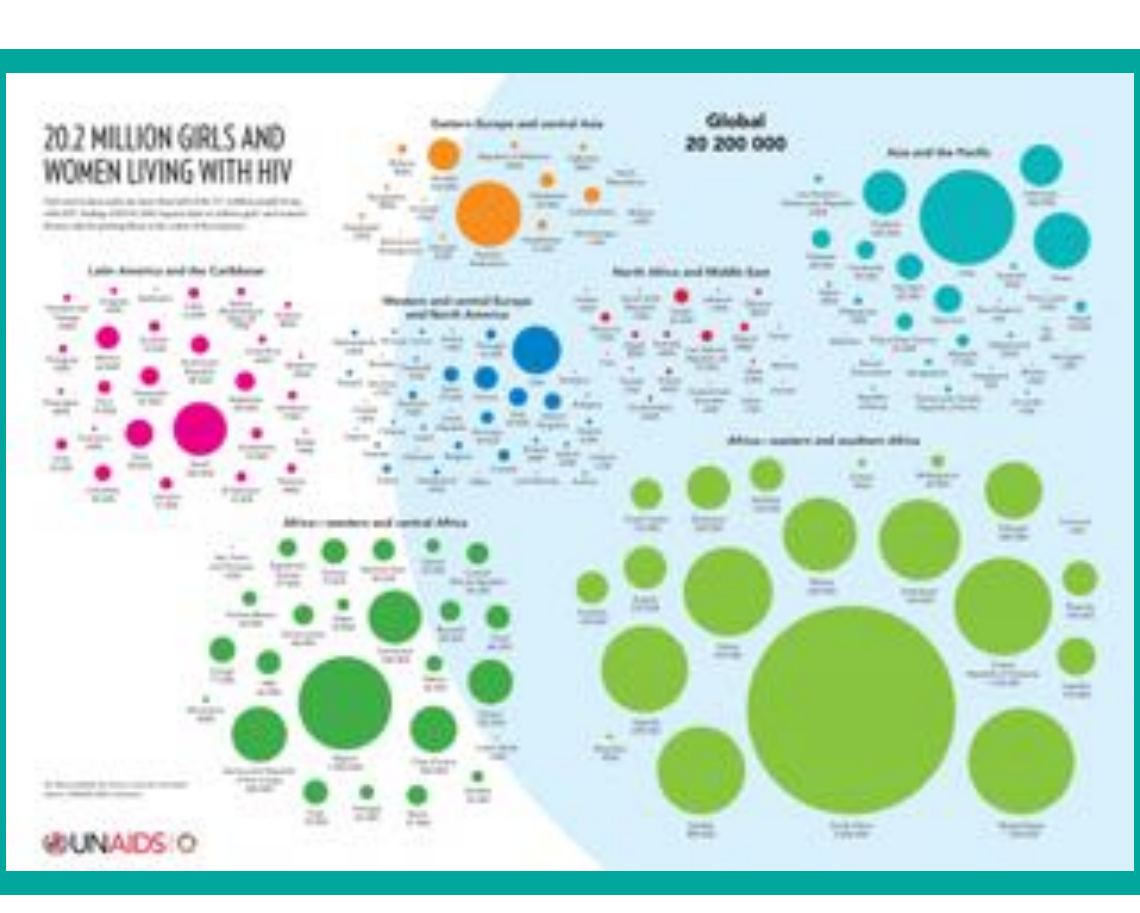
Photo credits: (left to right) Dr Chikondi Mwendera of Liverpool University and the QMUL SHARE Collaborative, (Credit: Sarah Paparini, SHARE); Dr Vanessa Apea of Barts Health NHS Trust (Credit: her own photo); Dr Ogechika Alozie of El Paso, Texas (Credit: his own photo) all wearing their U=U t shirts; a selection of U=U t shirts made by Angelina (Credit: her own photo).

As for younger women and girls…

The aspirations of younger women and girls - and the issues they face in achieving them - are also a key part of the *Stepping Stones* process. We have all heard the grim statistics for girls and young women around violence and HIV - in sub-Saharan Africa especially.

Yet much of the work with girls and young women often still misses out on addressing the complexity of their lives and relies too much on over-simple solutions.

Ellen Bajenja of CFAR-Uganda has explained in detail elsewhere why it is so important to work *not* just with girls alone but to ensure that the whole community is supported to work together to understand and address the challenges they face in achieving their SRHR and enabling their futures to flourish.



UNAIDS Infographic March 2022

As Lucy Wanjiku Njenga described it at the STREAM Network Launch in October 2022,

"When our work started, I didn't have all the answers that I needed. All I knew was, I was from Dandora [where Positive Young Women Voices (PYWV) now works]. This was a community I grew up in, I had deep challenges that I had no one to work on with. That was the genesis of this. It's an informal settlement where a girl is already expected to fail. By the time you're five years old. And I did 'fail'.

*"I was a teen mom. In my first relationship, my son died, I got to know my HIV status. A lot was happening. And I was alone in this. And I did not want another girl to go through that alone. And that's why PYWV was founded. And that's the work we do: every day we wake up, we want to see a difference in our community. And also I am very eager and excited. And I know that Stepping Stones can support someone else. If Stepping Stones was there for my parents, we would probably have had easier ways of engaging me and my siblings and other parents in the community than they did. Right? As Stepping Stones practitioners, I know you have different relationships with your children, because of Stepping Stones, right? And as we do mentorship with the young girls that we have in our networks, in the schools, we try to engage also the boys, but we find we don't have one thing that can help standardise everything. And that you can follow up on, five years, 10 years down the line…."**

*Lucy describes her experiences growing up in a new memoir, entitled *Hope Finds a Way*, with a foreword by UNAIDS Executive Director, Winnie Byanyima.

c. …and working with men and boys

Why is engaging with them so essential?

Thanks again to UNAIDS, and together once more with our highly experienced CFAR-Uganda colleagues, we developed a webinar which explains the critical importance of working *with* and *engaging* men and boys in all the *Stepping Stones* programmes.

Whilst men and boys are the main perpetrators of VAWG, none of us is born violent. Boys who see violence around them when young are also experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and also often experience violence against them.

This often means that they grow up thinking that being violent is the 'right' way to behave as a man. (Similarly, girls, if they witness and/or experience violence around and against them when young, grow up to expect violent partnerships.)

The point about the *Stepping Stones* programmes, for men and women, girls and boys alike, is that violence is preventable and with the right mutual care, respect and support we can all find ways of overcoming the violence in our lives.

The webinar that we held for UNAIDS staff on this subject explored these issues in depth.

As Ruane-McAteer et al point out,

"it is widely acknowledged by global organizations that the question is no longer whether to include boys and men in sexual and reproductive health and rights, but how to do so in ways that promote gender equality and Health for All and are scientifically rigorous."

The webinar described how many younger and older men experience mental health issues and trauma, and how these conditions are associated with increased vulnerability to HIV, delayed access to, and outcomes of, HIV prevention, testing and linkage to care.

Men and boys can often fear being tested for HIV. This can often result in denial of their potential for acquiring it. One topic that we discussed in the webinar was the importance of supporting men and boys to be tested for HIV and, if they test positive, to start on treatment, so that they can stay fit and well.

We have seen how in Malawi, with the COWLHA programme described above, men who had prevented their wives from attending HIV clinic, even though they felt sick themselves, had not felt able to be tested.

Yet with the support of the *Stepping Stones* programme, some of the male village leaders recognised their behaviour to be violent, and also felt ready to overcome their own fears about their health and be tested themselves.

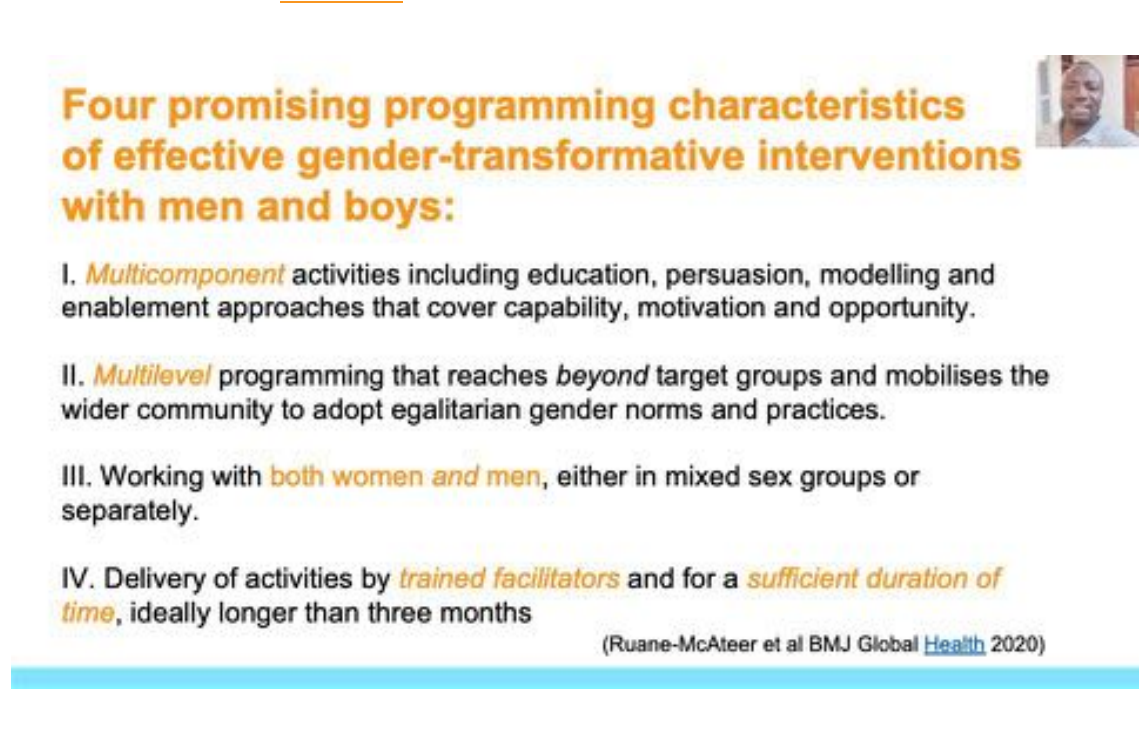
They also encouraged other male village leaders to follow suit and be tested, and to encourage other men in their villages to do the same.

We saw a similar experience in relation to the use of *Stepping Stones with Children,* conducted by our partner PASADA in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Even though men were not primary participants in the programme here, the programme supported them to overcome their fears, get tested and then start on treatment, thereby improving their own quality of life, that of their wives / partners – as well as the lives of the children in their care.

You can read more about both these experiences here.

The webinar on men and boys also described how our *Stepping Stones* programmes incorporate the four promising programming characteristics identified by Ruane-McAteer et al in their research.



Four promising programming characteristics of effective gender-transformative interventions with men and boys:

I. *Multicomponent* activities including education, persuasion, modelling and enablement approaches that cover capability, motivation and opportunity.

II. *Multilevel* programming that reaches *beyond* target groups and mobilises the wider community to adopt egalitarian gender norms and practices.

III. Working with both women and men, either in mixed sex groups or separately.

IV. Delivery of activities by trained facilitators and for a sufficient duration of time, ideally longer than three months

(Ruane-McAteer et al BMJ Global Health 2020)

Image from SalamanderTrust and CFAR webinar 2 for UNAIDS 2022

We have also seen how men's and women's sex lives have improved through *Stepping Stones* programmes! Happily, we have now also seen a systematic review, conducted by the Pleasure Project and WHO, confirm what we have always believed:

This finding echoes once more the *Stepping Stones* principles of focusing on positive, forward-thinking assets-based approaches to gendered social norms change as the most productive strategy for this work.

When men discover that, by reducing violence against women, combined with greater shared household decision-making, task-sharing and income-sharing, and informed consent around sex, that their sex lives can also improve, this is indeed a win-win for us all.

> *"Prioritising pleasure, rather than the fear of danger or disease, increases the likelihood of safer sex. Sexual health programs that include sexual desire and sexual pleasure improve knowledge and attitudes around sex and increase condom use, as compared to those that do not. Pleasure-inclusive sexual health increases sexual self-esteem, sexual self-confidence and safe choices."*

3. Adaptations in action

All our programmes need adaptation in order to enable organisations to make best use of them in relation to each specific context.

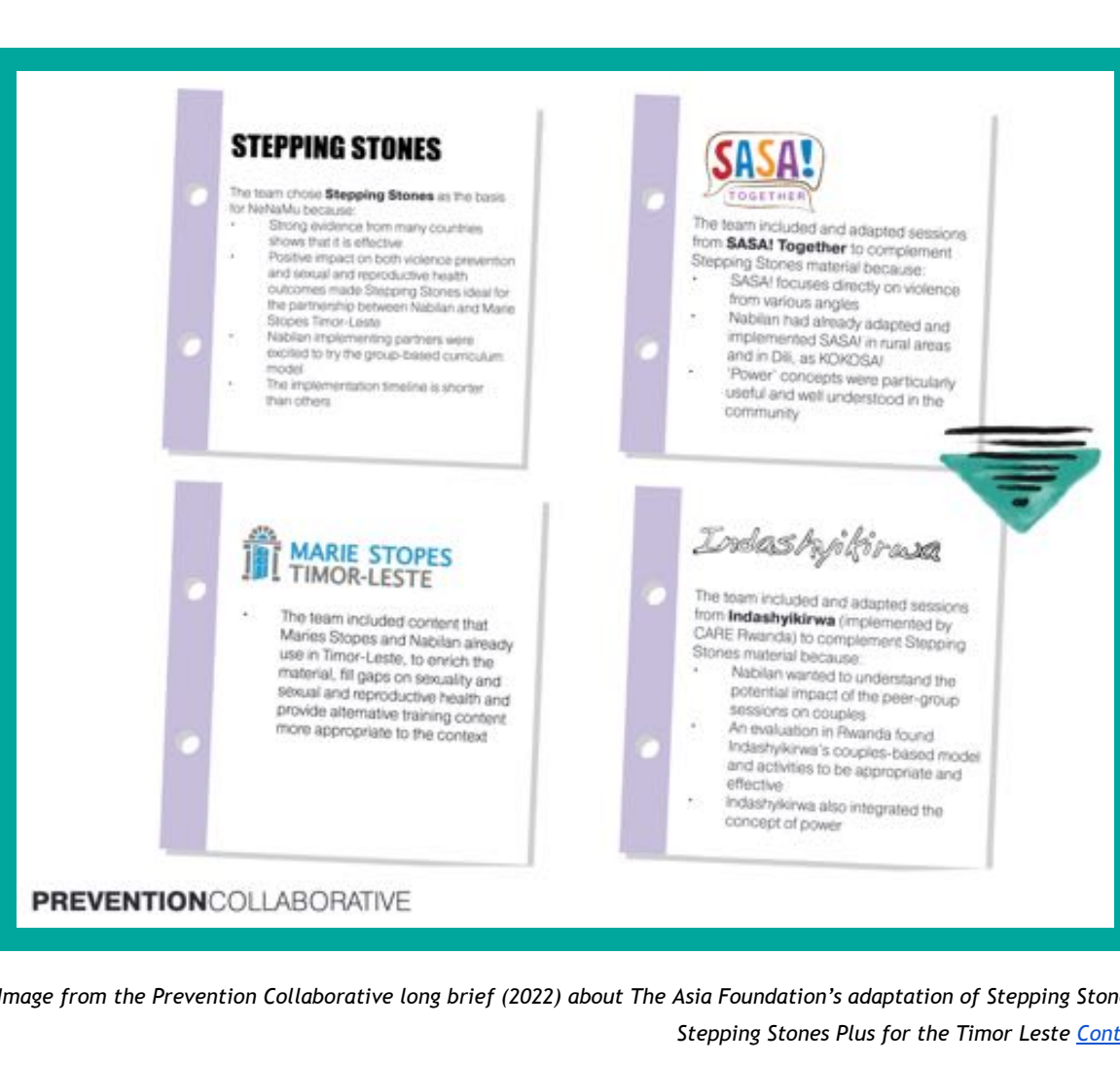
Our adaptation guidelines and FAQs are available here.

Below are three examples of ways in which each of our programmes respectively is being adapted carefully, with support from our CFAR colleagues in Uganda, so that there is still fidelity to the structure and principles of the original programmes.

a. The Asia Foundation & the Nabilan Programme, Timor Leste

For the past three years, our colleagues at CFAR-Uganda have been providing technical assistance to The Asia Foundation-funded Nabilan Programme in Timor Leste, as it adapts *Stepping Stones & Stepping Stones Plus* for use in the context of Timor Leste. This multi-organisation process has involved The Asia Foundation working with the Nabilan Programme to adapt our programme, together with additional material from SASA! (Raising Voices), Marie Stopes International and Indashikirwa (see below), to produce their own adapted material, which is called Nenamu.

The Prevention Collaborative has been supporting the overall theory of change, monitoring and evaluation and adaptation documentation process.



STEPPING STONES

The team chose **Stepping Stones** as the basis for NeNaMu because:

- Strong evidence from many countries shows that it is effective
- Positive impact on both violence prevention and sexual and reproductive health outcomes made Stepping Stones ideal for the partnership between Nabilan and Marie Stopes Timor-Leste
- Nabilan implementing partners were excited to try the group-based curriculum model
- The implementation timeline is shorter than others

SASA! TOGETHER

The team included and adapted sessions from **SASA! Together** to complement Stepping Stones material because:

- SASA! focuses directly on violence from various angles
- Nabilan had already adapted and implemented SASA! in rural areas and in Dili, as KOKOSA!
- 'Power' concepts were particularly useful and well understood in the community

MARIE STOPES TIMOR-LESTE

- The team included content that Maries Stopes and Nabilan already use in Timor-Leste, to enrich the material, fill gaps on sexuality and sexual and reproductive health and provide alternative training content more appropriate to the context

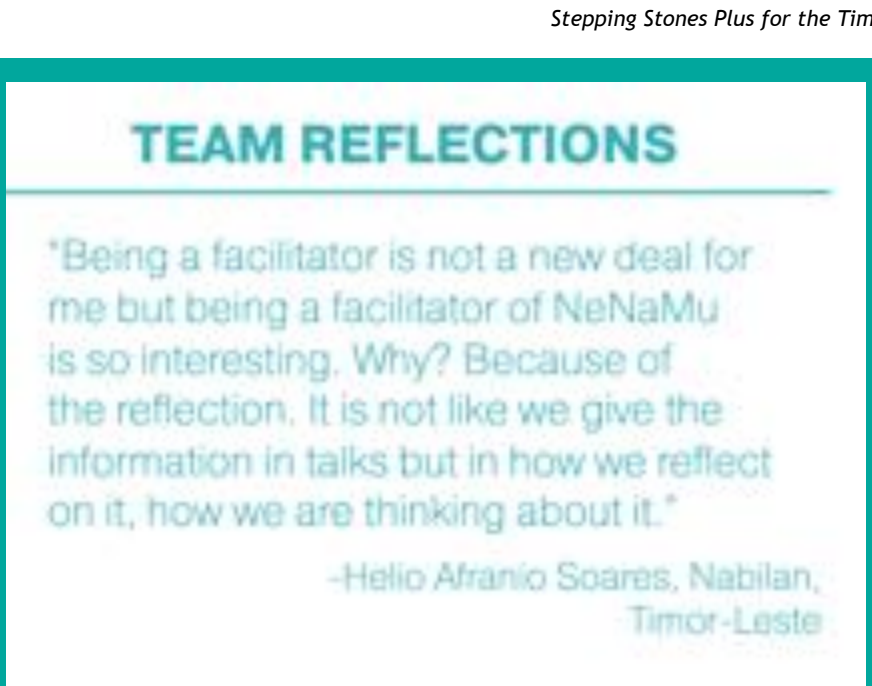
Indashyikirwa

The team included and adapted sessions from **Indashyikirwa** (implemented by CARE Rwanda) to complement Stepping Stones material because:

- Nabilan wanted to understand the potential impact of the peer-group sessions on couples
- An evaluation in Rwanda found Indashyikirwa's couples-based model and activities to be appropriate and effective
- Indashyikirwa also integrated the concept of power

PREVENTIONCOLLABORATIVE

Image from the Prevention Collaborative long brief (2022) about The Asia Foundation's adaptation of Stepping Stones & Stepping Stones Plus for the Timor Leste Context.

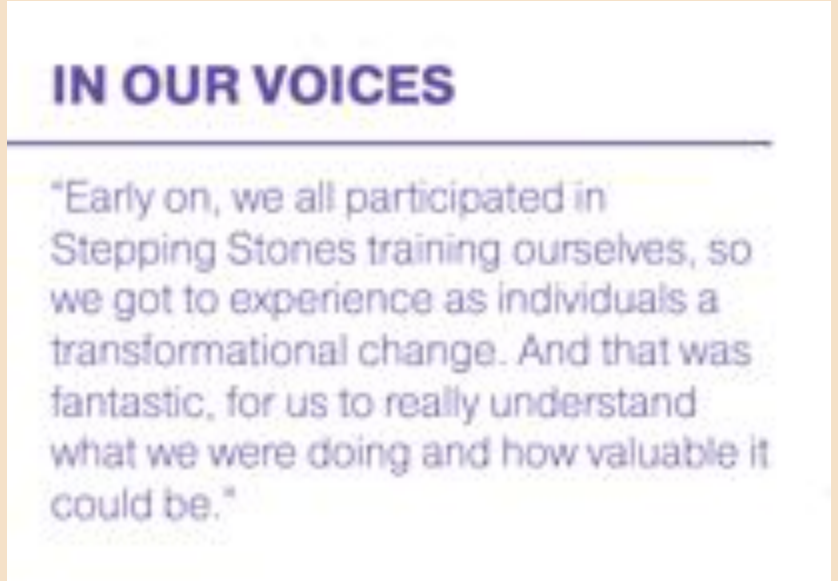


TEAM REFLECTIONS

"Being a facilitator is not a new deal for me but being a facilitator of NeNaMu is so interesting. Why? Because of the reflection. It is not like we give the information in talks but in how we reflect on it, how we are thinking about it."

-Helio Afranio Soares, Nabilan, Timor-Leste

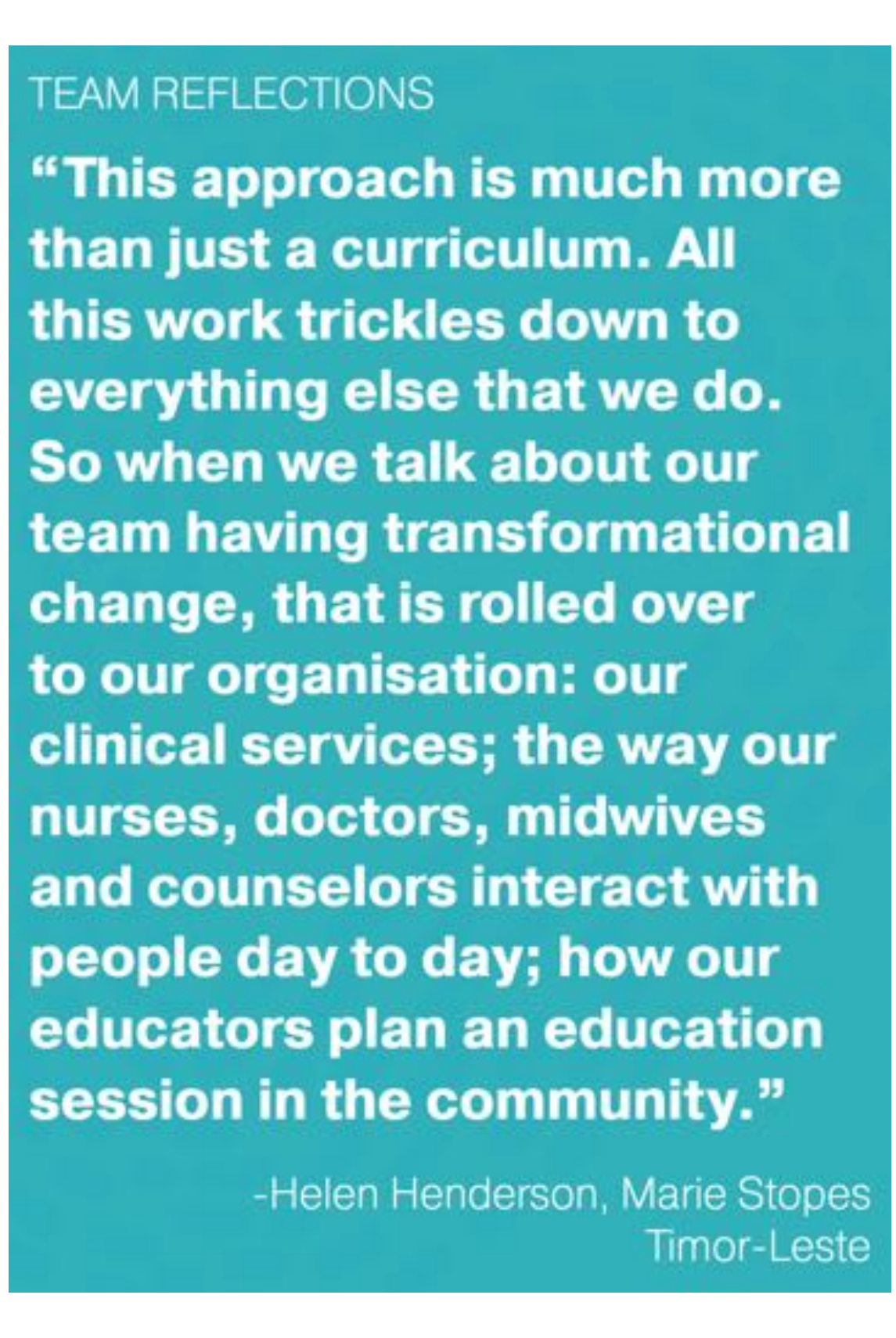
Image from the Prevention Collaborative long brief (2022) about The Asia Foundation's adaptation of Stepping Stones & Stepping Stones Plus for the Timor Leste Context.



IN OUR VOICES

"Early on, we all participated in Stepping Stones training ourselves, so we got to experience as individuals a transformational change. And that was fantastic, for us to really understand what we were doing and how valuable it could be."

Image from the Prevention Collaborative long brief (2022) about The Asia Foundation's adaptation of Stepping Stones & Stepping Stones Plus for the Timor Leste Context.



TEAM REFLECTIONS

"This approach is much more than just a curriculum. All this work trickles down to everything else that we do. So when we talk about our team having transformational change, that is rolled over to our organisation: our clinical services; the way our nurses, doctors, midwives and counselors interact with people day to day; how our educators plan an education session in the community."

-Helen Henderson, Marie Stopes Timor-Leste

Image from the Prevention Collaborative long brief (2022) about The Asia Foundation's adaptation of Stepping Stones & Stepping Stones Plus for the Timor Leste Context.

b. The Mind & Life Institute and Makerere University, Uganda

The Mind & Life Institute, through one of its Peace Grants, is funding Makerere University to make use of our *Stepping Stones for Peace & Prosperity* programme.

Our CFAR colleagues are providing technical assistance to this research programme, by adapting it for use in Gulu District, Uganda and training local facilitators to implement the programme in three separate cohort communities.

The title of the programme is *From Violence and Victims to Voices and Visions: Exploring the Power of Mindfulness to Effect Lasting Positive Change in Post-Conflict Settings in Northern Uganda*.

Whilst severely hampered by COVID-related lockdown restrictions, the programme has successfully completed the work in Cohort 1 and has just started work in Cohort 2. This will be followed by Cohort 3.

Whilst the primary 'entry point' of the programme in this pastoral area has been a focus on VAWG, issues such as HIV and SRHR in general inevitably feature regularly in discussions.

More detailed information about the programme's results will be released once the formal research has been published.

c. Grand Challenges Canada and UNYPA

Grand Challenges Canada, is funding the Uganda Network of Young People living with HIV/AIDS (UNYPA), to research the effectiveness of a shortened version of our *Stepping Stones with Children* programme to improve the mental health of children living with and/or affected by HIV.

Once more, our CFAR colleagues are providing technical assistance by training UNYPA members as facilitators of the programme.

The first workshop will shortly be implemented by the facilitators, with ongoing support from CFAR trainers.

This is another way in which we seek to see the STREAM Network in action.

d. Stepping Stones with Children adaptations

In addition, our colleagues at CFAR are in discussion with the Uganda Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to adapt *Stepping Stones with Children* for potential use across Uganda.

Meanwhile our colleagues at PASADA in Tanzania have recently finalised an adaptation of *Stepping Stones with Children* with TACAIDS. This is for potential use across Tanzania.

e. ACLAD

Florence Kilonzo, of the *Stepping Stones* Kenya Network, writes:

"ACLAD is an organisation working in Kakamega County in Kenya.The organisation is working with the young people of 15-24 years on Sexual Reproductive Health Issues. We the Stepping Stones Trainers had the opportunity to do Stepping Stones training for them. We had 4 peers groups: 15-18 years males and females, who were supported by Mustafa and Maureen; and 19-24 years males and females, who were supported by Florence and Martin.

"After the training, the trained facilitators conducted the programme with the community.

"The facilitators have reported drastic changes from the community.

In one village, the female youth of 19-24 years had this to say:

"We used to brew and sell alcohol but since Stepping Stones we are selling Porridge.

Trainee facilitators practice the tug of peace (Credit: Florence Kilonzo)

Participants experience the knotty problem (Credit: Esther Njoki)

"The young men aged 19-24 years commented:

"We used to sell and smoke bhang and we were violent to our spouses and girlfriends but after Stepping Stones we have opened small businesses and we are using the 'I'- statement with our spouses."

Florence concludes: *"These preliminary findings indicate that the impact of Stepping Stones has been felt in the community and that violence against women has reduced."*

4. The power of playfulness

People often ask how the *Stepping Stones* programmes work. We involve a lot of role play, to "rehearse for reality". We also use a lot of drawing, sculpting, singing and dance. All these activities involve our bodies. Physical use of our bodies is one of several important ways for many of us to learn. Our bodies can memorise our actions in different settings. This is called "kinaesthetic learning."

On the surface the games that we include throughout the *Stepping Stones* programmes can appear juvenile and are often dismissed or cut out as irrelevant. Yet it is often the games which seem most trivial which can create the deepest memories and learning points for participants.

Below, Ellen Bajenja shares one example of the many such exercises we use.

The Spider's Web Exercise (photo credit: Ellen Bajenja)

Weaving threads together - connecting a network:

"In this exercise, each participant needs to hold on firmly to their piece of the cord so that it maintains its shape.

Here, community facilitators are seen during their training. They practise using the spider's web exercise, which is used to explain to and remind participants that they are each individually an important part of their group.

"The spider's web presents a good metaphor, borrowed once more from the natural world around us, for community sharing and connectivity.

Since communities thrive in collective action, it is important that their decisions take into consideration the interests and needs of their different categories (men, women, boys, girls, children and persons marginalized by various social and economic factors).

"The spider's web is one of the interactive and participatory exercises used by peer groups in communities to help them understand and appreciate the connections they have with each other.

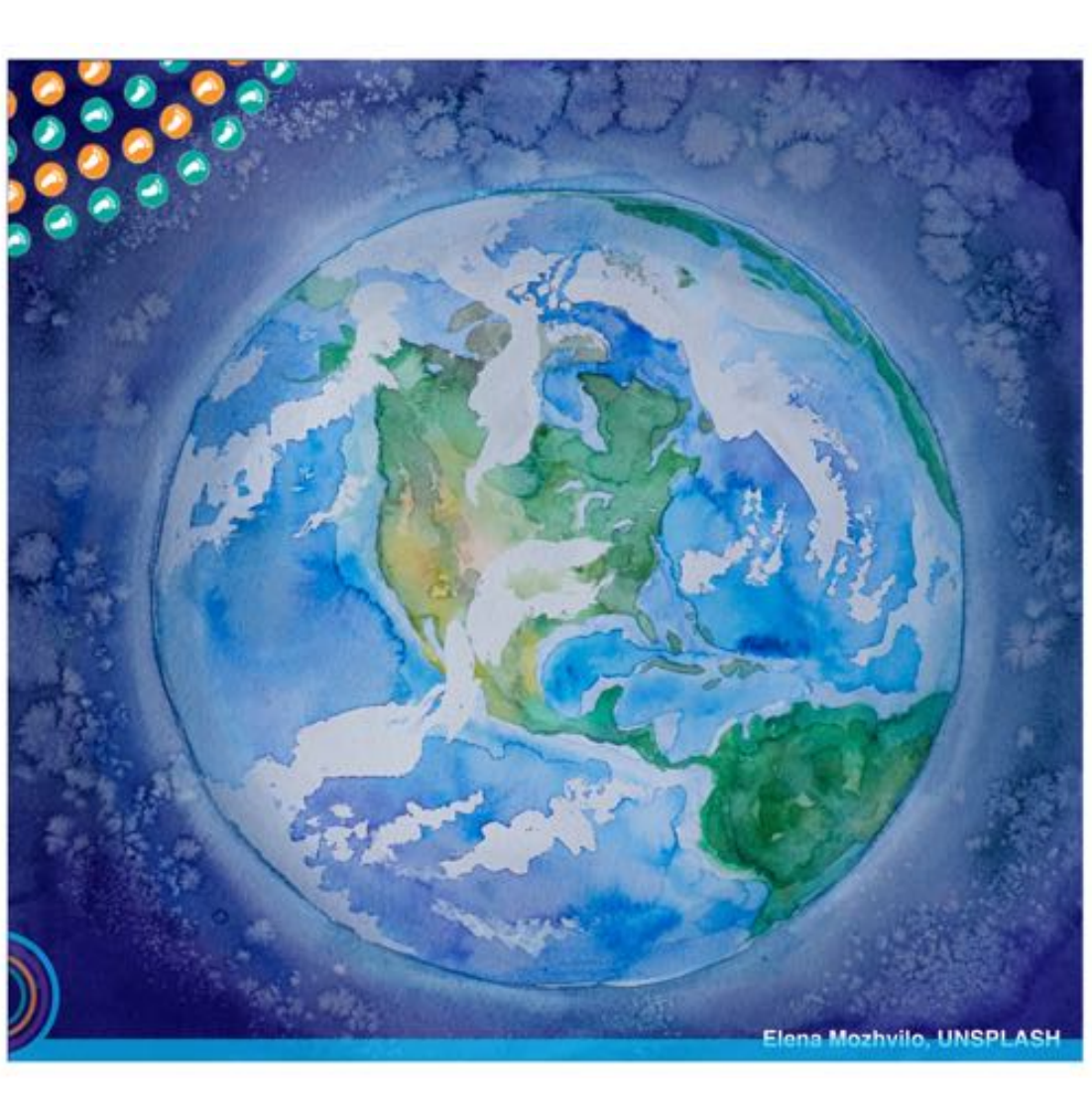
In sessions, participants are able to recognise the existing connections for each other within their peers and the community as a whole.

"Whilst the peer group holds the spider's web taut, through brainstorming, the peer group facilitator quickly employs the spider's web as a simple technique to initiate conversation around sensitive issues like avenues for building peace, women and men sharing roles in households, and the damaging effects of sexual- and gender-based violence on the community as a whole.

"The same exercise can be used for cross-peer and intergenerational dialogue on the same issues, helping participants in different gendered and generational peer groups to appreciate the differing priorities of other groups within the community."

5. Don't forget… to take our women and HIV quiz for #IWD2023!

Our quiz on women and HIV for International Women's Day 2023 has many statistics in it. But there is still room for hope. Violence is preventable. Access it here.



6. Have you seen…

There is a richly inspiring collection of films, podcasts and newsletters created by *Stepping Stones* practitioners, that you can access through the buttons below.

Our films | Past Newsletters | Our podcasts

You can also access our podcasts via the google podcasts link here.

7. Background basics

If *you* are interested in learning more about our *Stepping Stones* programmes, welcome! We are glad to work with you and offer you advice and support along the way.

We suggest you start first by reading our Adaptation Guidelines and FAQs.

8. Contact us!

Please let us know what you liked about this newsletter and what you would like to hear more about. Please share with us your own news about your use of *Stepping Stones* or your own related work. We would love to hear from you!

You can contact us via the *Stepping Stones* website here.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are very grateful to UNAIDS for funding this newsletter, the webinars described here and other *Stepping Stones* related activities this year. All views described here are our own and do not necessarily reflect those of UNAIDS.

Huge thanks also to all those involved in the inspiring work described in this newsletter.

These include:
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PASADA, Tanzania
Kimara Peer Educators, Tanzania
Angelina Namiba
Martha Tholanah
Fungai Murau
Dominique Chadwick
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CFAR-Uganda includes:
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Image from the STREAM Network Strategic Plan © Positive Young Women Voices et al 2022

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