Policy Advocacy as a Tool for Prevention: Lessons learned from the International Violence Against Women Act

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Introduction --- Who We Are

Family Violence Prevention Fund

- US-based NGO focused on preventing violence against women and children
- Started in 1980 in San Francisco, now with offices in Boston and Washington, DC
- Managed GBV-health interventions/partnerships in Russia, China, India and Mexico
- House the U.S. National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence
Policy Advocacy: What is It?

Policy Advocacy is: work to influence, policies, regulations, laws, funding sources, actions of key government officials/policymakers

Key Elements:
- Direct lobbying to elected or appointed government officials
- Grassroots organizing and mobilization
- Communications efforts usually through mass media to influence public and officials
Elements of Policy Advocacy Cont.

In the U.S. context, policy advocacy often also includes:

- Direct legal action, “Impact Litigation”
- Political Action/Elections – advocating for the election or defeat of a particular candidate; often includes voter registration, door to door campaigning, campaign contributions
- **Research**: not typically identified as advocacy but critically important in creating understanding of “the issue” and as tool to justify request
Policy Takes Many Forms...need to identify the critical levers

- Takes multiple forms
  - legislation,
  - rules/guidelines,
  - funding,
  - bully pulpit/leadership

- Exists at multiple levels
  - Regional
  - National
  - Local
  - International, multi-lateral
Policy Advocacy – Why do it?!

- Public policy affects you whether you engage in it or not
- It’s essential for any large-scale impact and for any country or regional-level scale-up
- It’s the cornerstone of sustainability
- It’s essential for garnering significant investment in prevention, interventions that will never be profitable (drugs, devices)
Challenges in Doing Policy Advocacy

- It takes time
- It takes relationship building
- It may take resources (not as much as you think though)
- Fear that you don’t know enough
- Belief that it’s prohibited by funding sources
- It feels big and hard to do
Yes, it’s hard, but…

- Laws and policies alone will rarely create real and long-term change, but it’s nearly impossible to create change without them.
The International Violence Against Women Act: History of the Effort

- Began about 7 years ago as several different groups working on women’s policy decided to merge efforts around GBV
- FVPF hosted first policy strategy meeting in DC in 2003, trying to bring together disparate fields to come up with common ask around GBV; merged US GBV folks with international women’s groups working on policy
- Decided to focus initially on funding UNIFEM and the UNIFEM Trust Fund to End VAW
UNIFEM Successes

- Three groups from different fields took lead in working together (FVPF, Amnesty International USA, Women Thrive Worldwide)
- Were initially successful in gaining funding for UNIFEM and a first-time appropriation for UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate VAW
- Continue to advocate for UNIFEM/Trust Fund funding from USG
- Goal: $10 million from USG
Need for Bold Action --- The I-VAWA

- Pleased with our success but knew that was not enough. Knew we wanted to utilize reach and resources of the USG to address GBV in bigger and bolder way
- As we were developing policy agenda, building coalition, also working on reauthorization of domestic Violence Against Women Act. VAWA passed House and Senate unanimously and signed by President Bush in January of 2006, authorizes more than $1 billion annually to fight domestic and sexual violence in U.S.
Clear Limitations with Current USG Efforts

- Trafficking, largely sex trafficking through TIP office and some law enforcement training
- Global Health, mainly small programs and helping countries measure VAWG; some repro health; beginning to do more around HIV/AIDS
- Humanitarian Assistance/Refugees
- WID office, mainly school-related GBV
- UN/UNIFEM contribution
- WJEI, slow to get off the ground
  - No coordination or dedicated long-term funding, no focus on prevention
The I-VAWA: A key moment for action

- Had legislative success with domestic VAWA and then UNIFEM appropriations
- Had identified champions within US Congress concerned about and willing to fight for the issue
- Had the strong data showing the enormous prevalence of GBV (WHO, PAHO, USAID)
- ...and the enormous impact it was having on global health and other development goals (HIV/AIDS)
- Had the potential coalition strong enough to push for its passage
- Had problem that could be fixed with legislation
Process for Garnering Input

- Translated initial outline into other languages
- Dispersed through networks and sought feedback – had to meet women’s needs
- Integrated feedback from Southern Hem. Women’s groups and policy/NGO experts
- Overall more than 140 organizations and individuals provided feedback
The I-VAWA would require the USG to develop a strategy to address Violence Against Women and Girls and increase diplomatic efforts, funding, programming and coordination. The government would be required to take action where “extreme outbreaks of VAWG” are identified and creates new offices within State Department and USAID to address.
Interventions would initially target 5-20 countries with a holistic response including:

1. Health;  
2. Legal Reform;  
3. Education and Economic Opportunity;  
4. Social Norm Change;  
5. Humanitarian Interventions; and  

Authorizes more than $200 million annually.
What Happened in the Last Congress...

- Re-introduced February 4, 2010 in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives.
- S. 2982 in the Senate, sponsored by Chairman John Kerry and 33 other Senators.
- H.R. 4594 in the House, more than 130 cosponsors. Reps. Delahunt and Poe chief sponsors.
- Marked-up in SFRC during “lame duck”.
- Portions included in Appropriations bill.
Where it stands now...

So there was this election...

- Changed make-up of Congress, leadership within Foreign Affairs Committee and view of foreign aid.
- Bill will likely be re-introduced, but within new context
- Administration is the key…
Obama Administration 
Implementing I-VAWA elements

Already implemented several components of the bill including:

- Creating Ambassador Verveer’s position and new senior-level gender person at USAID
- Development of comprehensive strategy, largely focused around UN Resolution 1325
- Integration of gender across USAID/State Dept.
- New GBV initiatives through PEPFAR, guidances
- CGI commitment “Together for Girls” incl. USG
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