

Background to the Theory of Change

While all human beings regardless of their gender are entitled to spaces where they are emotionally and physically safe with no threat of gaslighting, abuse, violence or the threat of trauma and excessive stress, this has not been true for women and girls. Women and girls are often undermined, dismissed and underrepresented in many spaces which put forward masculine voices. Due to patriarchal conditioning, women are more likely to be silent in spaces that have a mix of genders. The lack of safe and empowering spaces for women and girls led to the creation of exclusive traditional spaces in order to have a ground for conversation that is safe.

Despite the existence of such spaces, they are often disempowering for younger women because of the imbalance of power and age. It has been the testimony of many women who once attended a convening in this space that they went through harsh punishments and were exposed to toxic content without the chance to also be able to speak up and share their feelings as well as experiences. It is also noted that the topics of discussion in these spaces are often centered on men and marriage. There is a lack of adaptable, age appropriate content as well as lack of empowering opportunities for women and girls.

There is an urgent need for a feminist space where every participant feels safe to share and to learn.

Modern “Nhangas”

The modern “Nhangas” a cultural innovation – is a space that should lead to patriarchal transformation, embodying principles of true intergenerational co-leadership and co-ownership. The process in the modern “Nhangas” should share collective knowledge, shift harmful norms, bring about attitudinal change, foster curiosity, acknowledge learning and unlearning, promote deep listening and generative dialogue through the following offerings:

- A place where co-learning happens and is intergenerational in nature.
- A time for capacity strengthening, knowledge and experience sharing.
- A place where conveners must make use of creative tools and methodologies that are relevant to participants in a contemporary environment.
- A transformational space respecting the wishes, choices, rights, and dignity of women and girls.
- A woman and/or girl-led offering that is empowering and inclusive in nature.
- Prioritizes the safety and confidentiality of women and girls accessing the center.
- Open to all women and girls in all their diversity ensuring safety and privacy

Localization and expansion of the model

It's important to note that this proposal of a modern "Nhanganga" can be considered as a shell that can be adapted into different physical or virtual realities. The space could be in a house, village, community, church, government space or conference. It could focus on women and girls but could also be adapted for men and boys. It is adaptable to different ages and the curriculum is flexible in relation to the context. Once the type of focus is identified, it can be replicated with regards to the space and content. It can be local, but it can also be scaled up in terms of expanding the number of participants attending the modern "Nhanganga". It can be implemented on a local, regional or global level. It is crucial to ensure that the model is sustainable by ensuring by in, co creation and co leadership of the space from its inception.

It shares the following standards:



Adaptability

Age-appropriate curriculums
Mode of communication



Replicability

Physical and virtual space
Trained space conveners/
mentors/leaders



Scalability

Buy-in and goodwill of the local authorities/
community leaders/
Overall accountability and support to the conveners.



Sustainability

Anchored in communities and churches

Because of the 4 standards above, the space can be used in multiple ways. It could be a space for but not limited to;

- Feminist and Intergenerational space (Leadership and shifting of harmful norms and practices)
- Healing (Gender based Violence)
- Networking and information sharing (Mentorship)
- Influencing policy and legislation changes (Advocacy)
- Shifting of power on different levels (Advocacy)
- Skills building and strengthening (Economic empowerment)

MODERN "NHANGA" THEORY OF CHANGE

Challenge: Women and girls have limited and/or no access to safe spaces that provide accurate information allowing them to make informed decisions about their lives and enjoy their human rights.
Catalyzing strategy: A culturally, adaptable, feminist safe spaces where accurate, age appropriate content is provided leading to the empowerment of women and girls enabling them to enjoy the fullness of their rights.



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