

Planning guidance: Working with men and boys

Why?

- Violence against women and girls is rooted in widely-accepted gender norms about men's authority and use of violence to exert control over women. As half the world's population, effective interventions must engage men to address the underlying discriminatory social norms that legitimize male power, privilege, control and use of violence
- As the primary perpetrators of VAWG including intersecting forms of violence (i.e. intimate partner violence, economic violence, etc), working with men and boys to prevent their use of violence is critical. Such approaches are grounded in the understanding of linkages between social constructions of masculinity and men's use of violence, and the need to transform harmful masculinities and promote gender-equitable attitudes
- It is important to recognize that most men are not perpetrators of violence. Experience has shown that when men are getting involved in programming to end VAWG, they have positive roles to play and can contribute to publicly challenging the beliefs, values and social norms that condone gender inequality and VAWG and to encouraging alternative ideas of manhood, that emulate non-violence, among peers and in society.
- Alongside rigid gender norms, a predominant risk factor of men's perpetration of violence across all countries is men's witnessing and experiencing violence during childhood. Working with fathers and couples to end intergenerational cycles of violence is key¹. Starting young is also important. Adolescent boys should be reached with positive and gender equitable norms, as this is a critical age where norms, values and behaviors take shape and crystalized.
- Working with men and boys to end VAWG is inextricably linked to not only Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5's mandate to achieve gender equality but is also a cross-cutting strategy critical to achieving success across *all* goals. Promoting models of non-violence, and empathetic masculinity will impact all Goals including SDG 16. Gender-sensitive and transformative approaches must be integrated across all strategies to achieve SDGs without perpetuating existing inequities or vulnerabilities for women and girls, and to advance equality.
- However, it is important to note that some precautions are necessary when designing interventions specifically targeting men and boys. Indeed, not all men's groups working on gender issues have equality or women's rights as core or mandatory principles and some may even have conflicting approaches and methodologies. From the outset, it is crucial to establish and ensure that key principles are internalized and shared by all partners and key stakeholders.
- Furthermore, it is also recommended to involve women's groups and organizations in design and implementation as a means of promoting transparency and accountability, as well as to hold a critical analysis of how best to use a limited amount of resources. It is indeed crucial that work with men and boys does not contribute to diverting funds from women's empowerment.

¹ See Partners for Prevention "Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific", 2013, [link](#)





Guiding Principles when programming with Men and Boys

- Frame programmes within a human rights-based and gender-responsive approach
- Base programmes around a conceptual framework on men, masculinities and gender relations
- Make an explicit effort to discuss gender and masculinity and to transform gender norms
- Ensure transparency and accountability by partnering with women's groups
- Do no harm
- Understand the diversity of boys' and men's experiences and tailor initiatives appropriately
- Use a life-cycle and age-specific approach when designing interventions
- Engage men as part of the solution, particularly at community level, where experience shows that impact can be very high and sustainable
- Question existing roles, but do not prescribe behaviors
- Employ positive messages
- Employ multiple strategies
- Promote change at the society-wide and community levels beyond just the individual level
- Hold men accountable for their actions
- Monitor and evaluate programme effectiveness

For additional principles, see the MenEngage Alliance [Code of Conduct](#) (e.g. Create peaceful professional environments, promote gender equality and social justice outside the workplace...etc.)

How?

Examples of activities

Type of interventions	What kind of actions make a difference?	How can progress and impact be measured?
Individual /Family/Relationship		
Gender-transformative programming	Working to transform harmful masculinities and prevent violence against women and girls by engaging men and boys in critical reflection on rigid gender norms which perpetuate inequitable power relations between women and men and support the modelling of positive behaviours and masculinity Gender-transformative programming with fathers (as well as with their partners) to end intergenerational cycles of violence; and parenting programmes to change gender socialization patterns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-/post- surveys and qualitative methods to evaluate change in attitudes and social norms shifts, as well as, if possible, changes in behaviours • Use mixed methods to evaluate community change – e.g. shift in acceptability of bystander interventions, of community perceptions; institutional changes





Women’s economic empowerment companion programmes	Initiatives to facilitate men’s support for women’s economic empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use pre-/post- surveys and qualitative methods to evaluate and understand changes in men’s attitudes
Community and Society		
Community interventions	Multi-pronged community interventions and mobilization to change social and gender norms that condone VAWG by engaging men, women, girls, and boys. Mobilizing men and boys on such issues can however be challenging and requires studying the context and consulting a wide range of actors, including women’s groups and organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed methods to monitor, evaluate, and understand shifts in normative environments • Monitor social media, media, and campaign engagement and reach at the community level.
Advocacy campaigns and mass media	Messaging – especially when coordinated through multiple channels and community mobilization – around challenging harmful social norms, and rigid definitions of masculinity can support changes at the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels. Media and social media can play a transformational role and can be useful allies in questioning social norms and promoting alternative ways of presenting gender roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Among target community, measure the reach, knowledge of, and attitudes toward a campaign or intervention, as well as the belief that it will reduce the risk • Measure the shift in social and community norms around harmful masculinities, VAWG, and gender stereotyping.
Engaging key stakeholders and networks	Engaging religious leaders, community leaders, the private sector, and celebrities in modelling positive masculinities and speaking out against VAWG. Creating networks to share best practices with CSOs that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor number of constituents or partners committed to promoting positive masculinities, via public commitments/actions • Document actions that result from engaging stakeholders, and encourage them to





	work to advance women’s rights, children’s rights, and LGBTQIA rights	evaluate outcomes at individual, community, and institutional levels.
School-based interventions	Training teachers and students through all-school interventions promoting gender equality and positive masculinities. Implementation of comprehensive sexuality education that promotes gender equality, respectful relationships and consent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use pre-/post- surveys and qualitative methods to evaluate and understand shifts in teachers’ and students’ attitudes, school and community social norms, and institutional changes around the acceptance of positive masculinities (including sexual and reproductive health (SRH))

What works?

What does the evidence say? Lessons-learned? Key recommendations?

There have been very few rigorous evaluations, while there are still gaps and limitations in the evidence base about working with boys and men including what works in addressing risk and vulnerability factors, a review of the existing evidence of programmes around the world is showing positive changes. See below some of the lessons learned, including strategies for working with men and boys to eliminate violence against women and girls.

- Accountability:** First and foremost, engaging men and boys in gender equality requires meaningful partnership with women’s rights organizations and women and girls to ensure that the concerns of women and girls, their rights, and empowerment, are prioritized. Key approaches for accountability include;
 - Working with local partners and stakeholders from the beginning of a project;
 - The promotion of feminist and female-centric policies which take into consideration and consultation the needs and priorities of women and women’s rights groups;
 - Government and donor funding of grassroots women’s rights organizations;
 - Civil society partnerships with women’s rights organizations on funding proposals and on joint advocacy and research to work collaboratively to advance shared aims of gender justice, and to ensure that any programmes aimed to engage men in preventing and responding to VAWG are implemented in tandem with new or existing initiatives targeting women and girls.
- Programmes that are **gender-transformative** have been shown to have the most impact in shifting men’s and boys’ attitudes and behaviors: initiatives must engage men in consciousness-raising critical reflection about manhood and gender, specifically discussing harmful gender norms and what it means to “be a man.”
 - Evaluations of Promundo’s innovative [Program H methodology](#) for working with boys and young men found that group education that promotes critical awareness about gender





- norms, combined with community-level youth-led campaigns, positively impacts attitudinal and behavioural outcomes related to VAWG.
- Interventions must be long enough: evidence shows that multiple sessions over a longer duration have higher impact, ideally at least 10-16 one- to two-hour sessions spaced out on a weekly basis.
 - To measure its impact, Program H developed the GEM Scale, a validated instrument that measures attitudes thought to reflect internalized norms related to male/female gender roles. The GEM scale is used in various settings, including the IMAGES surveys (see below).²
- Community interventions: Approaches should be comprehensive, including multiple components in addition to group education (e.g. community campaigns, mobilization, and norms change; linkages to service provision)
 - Community mobilization, especially when designed and led by the community itself, empowers communities and organizations to become agents of change and influence public policies essential for achieving social and gender justice.
 - Successful campaigns move beyond providing simple information. They seek to address underlying norms and perceptions related to behaviours; linking to interpersonal activities which allow for individual reflection and skills building while also promoting access to services or appropriate behaviour changes.
 - They should also address misperceptions or rigid ideas community members have about typical behaviors for men and women and promote more positive norms around what it means “to be a man” and/or “a woman”.
 - School-based interventions: Research shows comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programmes that address gender and power are more likely to reduce rates of STIs and unintended pregnancy and increase gender-equitable attitudes than “gender-blind” curricula. CSE with specific gender-transformative content on harmful masculine norms can be a critical entry point for preventing VAWG.
 - Structural/institutional changes and scaling up are critical in addition to individual and group-level interventions: e.g. parental (and paternity) leave, accessible childcare, functioning and accountable justice system.
 - VAWG prevention should be linked to other interventions: policy reform, conditional cash transfers, microcredit, remedial education, infrastructure, income generation, etc.
 - One strategy to achieve sustained change at institutional levels is using [International Men and Gender Equality Survey](#) (IMAGES) data and evidenced-based approaches as the basis for policy change. IMAGES has been used as a platform for national-level advocacy and strategy formation on engaging men in gender equality. The implementation of IMAGES surveys around the world have also been supported by UN agencies.

² <https://promundoglobal.org/programs/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images/>





Perpetrators' programmes: The overall premise of programmes for perpetrators is to develop interventions that can reduce the incidence of repeat cases of violence against women (or, 'recidivism') by the men involved in such interventions. Programmes for men who have been perpetrators of intimate partner violence vary in content, scope, duration and extent. Evaluations have been limited, and their results mixed. There are a high drop-out rates in these programmes, particularly among men most likely to re-offend. Some experts consider these programmes problematic because the additional resources allocated for them (such programmes can be costly) may come at the expense of services for survivors. **Given the limited knowledge-base to date and the fact that these programmes demonstrate only marginal success, specific precautions should be made when engaging in such programmes (which should be discussed with the Secretariat), and considerations about the safety of partners and children need to be at the forefront of interventions.** Evidence based experiences and programs should always be the basis for developing these interventions.

Tools and resources

- [Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and Health: A Global Toolkit for Action](#), Promundo, MenEngage Alliance, UNFPA (2010)
- Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls-Module on Men and Boys: <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/modules/view/9-men-boys.html>
- [Working with Men and Boys to End Violence Against Women and GirlsVAWG: Approaches, Challenges, Lessons](#), USAID (2015)
- [Masculine Norms and Violence: Making the Connections](#), Promundo (2018)
- [Strengthening CSO and Government Partnerships to Scale Up Approaches to Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality and SRHR](#), MenEngage, Promundo, UNFPA (2016)
- [Brief on Engaging Men, Changing Norms](#), MenEngage Alliance, UNFPA (2015)
- [Engaging Boys and Young Men in Prevention of Sexual Violence: A systematic and global review of evaluated interventions](#) SVRI/Promundo (2011)
- [Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender-Based Inequity in Health](#), WHO, Promundo (2007)
- [Program H|M|D: A Toolkit for Action](#), Promundo (2013)
- [Mobilising Men in Practice: Challenging SGBV in Institutional Settings](#), UNFPA, (2012)
- [Human Rights Council Resolution 35/10](#), "Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls." (Adopted 2017).
- [Engaging Men and Boys: A Brief Summary of UNFPA Experience and Lessons Learned](#), UNFPA (2013)
- The [Gender-Equitable Men \(GEM\) Scale](#), a culturally relevant, validated evaluation model for measuring changes in attitudes and social norms around masculinity.
- [MenEngage Alliance](#) – a global network of country networks, NGOs, UN Agencies
- [EMERGE: Evidence-Based Library for Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality](#).





**Spotlight
Initiative**

Some Programme examples (not an exhaustive list!):

- Program H (Promundo)
- One Man Can (Sonke Gender Justice)
- Stepping Stones
- White Ribbon Campaign
- Coaching Boys into Men (Futures Without Violence)
- Engaging men and youth to Prevent VAW (Futures Without Violence)
- SASA! Raising Voices (part of broader community mobilization)

