



Programming to Prevent Violence Against Women:
PRACTICE BRIEF

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Strengthening Prevention Work with Men and Boys in Community Settings

OVERVIEW

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 makes a global commitment to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls (VAWG) in the public and private sphere. There is a widespread recognition that this target cannot be met unless prevention work with men and boys is expanded. However, many questions remain about how best to work with men and boys in practice.

This Practice Brief draws on the latest evidence and programme documentation from the Men for Gender Equality field,¹ as well as from ongoing work with men and boys by women’s organisations and feminist movements.

The evidence on which this brief is based relates primarily to violence against women and girls within households and in community settings; a separate Brief considers work with men and boys on violence within institutional settings.²

Violence against women and girls is rooted in harmful gender norms which also help to fuel men’s violence against other men and boys. This brief recognises the complexities of gender-based violence, but focuses on programming concerned with its main targets, women and girls.

KEY QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

- Why engage men and boys?
- Which men to target, when and why?
- How can programmes challenge male power and privilege?
- How can programmes move from attitudinal to behavioural and social norm change?
- How can practitioners best link personal change to social change?

WHY ENGAGE MEN AND BOYS?

Men’s use of violence against women and girls, whether emotional, economic, physical or sexual, is a manifestation of men’s power over women and a means by which this power is claimed and upheld. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is more common where male authority over female behaviour is the norm and where women are disadvantaged in terms of access to land, property, and other productive assets.³

Preventing violence requires working with those who are responsible for it. Not all men are violent, but in many societies, boys are raised and men are expected to accept patriarchal practices and policies as natural and normal, and to see violence as a legitimate way to exert control over those with less power.

A large-scale study in the Asia-Pacific region not only revealed high rates of self-reported violence by men but also that 72–97 percent of perpetrators did not experience any legal consequences.⁴

Ending this impunity means working with men and boys, alongside women and girls, to challenge the patriarchal norms that make gender-based violence acceptable. Preventing VAWG requires significant changes in social norms and gender relations, which will require the support of men and boys if they are to be achieved.

Prevention also requires legal and policy change, which means working with law and policymakers who, in most societies, are primarily men.

“ In a patriarchal society, in order to change the status quo, men and boys, as the wielders of power both in the home and the community, must be included in any effort to change social norms... Their understanding of what it means to be a man and of the roles embedded within that

understanding- brother, husband, father, partner-needs to shift toward a desire to be caring, respectful, supportive, non-violent, to share decision-making and domestic duties and not to instill intimidation or use control tactics ”

(Greene et al 2015)²³



RESEARCH FINDINGS: PATRIARCHAL MASCULINITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS⁵

Understanding the conditions that fuel men's use of violence against women and girls is crucial to efforts to preventing more violence. A large-scale qualitative and quantitative study of more than 10,000 men and 3,000 women in nine sites across six countries in the Asia-Pacific region in 2010-2013 found that both partner violence and non-partner rape were rooted in harmful gender norms, power inequalities and dominant ideals

of manhood that support men's use of violence and control over women. Intimate partner violence (IPV) was more strongly associated with gender inequality in the home and experiences of child abuse while non-partner rape was more strongly correlated with notions of manhood that promote heterosexual dominance and participation in violence outside the home, as well as experiences of violence as a child.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES?

WHICH MEN TO TARGET?

The category of "men and boys" is extremely heterogeneous. Uncritical use of the terminology of "male involvement" risks reducing the complexity and diversity of men's lives to a misleading sameness, whether of interests or identities. It is essential to disaggregate the broad category of "men and boys" in order to understand how to develop effective male-focused prevention programming. Differing groups of men and boys may be targeted because of their:

- **Authority:** Men continue to dominate leadership positions in political and economic life, with authority over decisions on law, policy and budgets. Law enforcement and judicial systems are run by men. Preventing violence against women and girls requires a supportive legal and policy environment, and this requires advocacy work with men in positions of authority.
- **Influence:** Men may also be targets of violence prevention work because of their informal influence over other men in communities and peer networks.
- **Openness to change:** Particular individuals or groups of men may be more open to questioning or changing patriarchal attitudes and behaviors. For example, data from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)⁶ finds that younger men have consistently shown more openness to equitable attitudes and practices than their older counterparts.⁷
- **Marginalisation:** Data from the UN Multi-country Cross-sectional Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific found that men's use of intimate partner violence in the least developed countries was associated with low education, poverty, and involvement in gangs and fights with weapons.⁸

There is also strong evidence that boys and young men who are delinquent and join gangs are more likely to be sexually violent, and that male youth delinquency and gang membership are associated with life in low income areas.⁹

“ The key challenge here is to engage men positively, recognize their diversity of sexual orientations, gender orientations, races, ethnicities, abilities, classes, etc., and promote the idea that men can be agents of change, while holding them accountable for sexist and/or violent behaviors. ”

(ICRW 2018)¹³

- **Risk of perpetration:** Targeting men and boys on the basis of their risk of perpetrating violence is not straightforward as there are multiple risk factors for violence perpetration which interact in complex ways. For example, the UN Multi-country Cross-sectional Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific identified clusters of risk factors: socio-economic marginalisation (e.g. limited access to education, health, services and jobs); trauma (e.g. childhood violence, unstable home life and later alcohol/drug abuse); and adherence to patriarchal gender norms. Analyses of the data from the IMAGE studies indicate that holding gender-inequitable attitudes, experiencing or witnessing violence or neglect in childhood, abusing alcohol, paying for sex, and having more sexual partners are factors that are associated with sexual violence perpetration.¹⁰ This evidence points to the value of multi-component interventions that can take account of men's multiple risk factors, and how these change over time.

APPEALING TO MEN AND CHALLENGING MALE POWER

A key challenge is to strike the right balance between making prevention work appealing and accessible to men at the same time as ensuring it addresses the harms caused by male power and privilege, from which men benefit.

Depending on the needs of each context, it is important to find a way to BOTH challenge patriarchy, power, and violence and men's responsibility to support women's efforts to overcome them AND to demonstrate the benefits to men of being involved in ending violence against women and girls. A carefully sequenced intervention will avoid putting men off and making them defensive; yet proactively keep the focus on the enormous damage that violence and sexism does to the lives of women and girls.



TIPS: FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

- **VISION:** Outline a future for gender relations from which men will benefit, but for which men have to change.
- **SHARED INTERESTS:** Appeal to the shared interests of men and women (based on class, race, ethnicity, religion etc) and frame gender equality as part of their shared struggle for social justice.
- **SEQUENCING:** Take a step-by-step approach based on the context, which connects with men in a way that appeals to them AND addresses male power and privilege.



FROM ATTITUDINAL TO **BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

Whilst many male engagement strategies have showed promise in shifting men's attitudes, the impact on behaviours- male perpetration of violence against women and girls – has been limited.¹¹ To date, most male engagement programming has focused on the individual level, with some work at the community level, but

without addressing the broader structures of patriarchy within which individuals and relationships operate.¹² The challenge is to ensure that work with men and boys is “gender transformative”.

This means that such work must look beyond change at the level of individuals and their behaviours and also seek to engage at policy and institutional levels to change the patriarchal norms and social conditions that fuel violence against women and girls.

HOW TO **STRENGTHEN** PREVENTION WORK WITH MEN AND BOYS

1. ALIGN AROUND **CORE PRINCIPLES**

- **Promote human rights:** Work with men and boys on gender equality and the prevention of male violence must not detract from efforts to empower women. It should be framed within a women's rights agenda and promote the human rights of people of all gender identities.
- **Remain accountable to and ally with women's rights organisations:** This includes promoting women's leadership in activities to engage men, protecting women-only spaces and monitoring programs to prevent them becoming male-dominated. It is important to build men and boys' capacity to hold each other accountable to the goals of gender equality, as well as to hold to account male leaders and decision-makers for their policies and behaviours.
- **Be responsive to survivors:** Prevention activities often lead to an increase in survivors disclosing their experiences of violence. It is important to ensure that prevention programmes are linked to services for survivors, which can respond to their health, welfare and legal needs.
- **Promote positive visions of change by and for men:** This includes making men aware that they are part of the solution to ending violence, that they have specific skills that are needed in the work and are capable of acting in the best interests of their families and communities.
- **Respond to men and boys' own vulnerabilities:** The many ways in which patriarchal relations of power can damage the lives of men and boys have been well documented, including their own experiences of male violence.¹³ A 2013 global study on homicide found that men accounted for about 96 percent of all homicide perpetrators worldwide and 79 percent of the victims.¹⁴ Men are also more likely to commit suicide than women (the ratio varies from 3:1 to 10:1), though women are more likely to attempt it. Research suggest that this is due to greater social stigma against male depression and men's lack of social networks of support.
- **Be inclusive of and responsive to diversities among men:** Factors such as class and caste, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, literacy, and age shape expressions of manhood and produce differing experiences of power and marginalisation for different groups of men. Approaches to engaging men in gender equality work must be sensitive to these diversities among men.

EXAMPLE: HOLDING MEN ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR TRANSFORMATION¹⁵

Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP) is a one-year prevention programme developed for humanitarian settings, created by the International Rescue Committee. It provides staff with an evidence-based curriculum and field-tested approach for engaging men in transformative individual behavior change, guided by the voices of women. An EMAP team, one supervisor and two facilitators (one woman, one man) run an 8-week curriculum for women and a 16-week curriculum for men from the same community (some of whom may be in

a couples relationship, though this is not a requirement). The men's groups consist of 10-20 men, recruited because of their expressed concern about male violence in their community and their interest in helping to improve the lives of women. The content of the men's curriculum is guided by input from the women's discussion sessions, and typically addresses issues of gender roles and norms, the roots and impacts of male violence and men's responsibilities in preventing further violence.

2. REACH OUT AND **CONNECT**

It is helpful to distinguish between processes to initially recruit and involve men and boys in prevention work and what is required for deepening and sustaining this involvement.

Initial recruitment

- **Use accessible entry points:** Finding ways to talk with potentially skeptical men and boys about violence prevention can be hard. Identifying entry points to access particular groups of men and boys is crucial. For example, opening up sexual health services to men through male-friendly clinics or outreach HIV/STI testing services has been one way to connect with men and begin a discussion about masculinity and its potential harms. A conversation 'starter' - such as a topic like fatherhood or concerns about the life prospects for girls and/or boys in the community – can also open up a dialogue about gender relations, violence and men's roles in prevention.
- **Make a personal connection:** It is also important to help men and boys to make a personal, emotional connection to the reality and impact of violence on the lives of women and girls, as well as on their own lives. This may include hearing survivors tell their stories. Another useful engagement strategy is making connections between men's own experiences of marginalisation (whether linked to poverty or racial/ethnic discrimination or other form of social exclusion) and the impacts of patriarchal violence on the lives of women and girls.



- **Enlist ambassadors and role models:** An effective way to connect with men is to use their social networks and community affiliations. This takes two principal forms: (1) reaching men through their existing individual relationships; and (2) mobilising community-specific ambassadors or role models. For example, using peer mentors, celebrities, community leaders and other ambassadors to share personal testimonies and advocate for gender equality can begin to shift patriarchal norms by modeling alternative ways to act as a man. However, ‘role model’ approaches need to be used carefully as this may set up an unattainable ideal for other men and ‘role model’ men can slip up in their behaviours and this may invalidate the whole approach.



TIPS:

Initial recruitment

- Use accessible entry points
- Make a personal connection
- Enlist ambassadors and role models

Sustaining involvement

- Create opportunities for action
- Root prevention work in communities
- Nurture supportive peer groups

EXAMPLE: THE POWER OF PERSONAL TESTIMONIES IN BURUNDI¹⁶

The Abatangamuco (“those who shine light where there was darkness”) were a group of rural men in Burundi who decided to change the way they live in their families, ending abusive and violent behaviors and instead collaborating with their wives in all aspects of family life. They were a home-grown movement made up of, and managed by, a membership base of men from rural, mostly poor and often illiterate backgrounds. CARE Burundi provided the group with technical and financial support. Abatangamuco used personal testimonies, theatre and other peer-to-peer activities and appealed to culturally celebrated values of responsible, trustworthy and materially successful

masculinity to convince other men to make the same changes, join the group and contribute their testimonies.

A 2011 external qualitative evaluation concluded that the testimonies of change were the most potent means to motivate other men to support women’s empowerment. The Abatangamuco group also provided a supportive peer network for men wishing to be in more equitable relationships with their wives and other female family members. However, CARE reported that later there were problems with the behaviours of some ‘role model’ men and this started to undo the positive work done in the communities.

Sustaining involvement

- **Create opportunities for action:** A good way to sustain men’s involvement is to create opportunities for them to take concrete action to help prevent violence, for example as “active bystanders”. Reviews of bystander programming show that the most effective approaches foster young men’s self-confidence related to taking violence-preventative action and promote optimistic beliefs about the potential positive outcomes of such action.

However, it is critical that men’s action be gender transformative and that men do not interpret this as a call to play the role of “protector” of women and girls. Such appeals to men as protectors

tend to reinforce rather than challenge patriarchal norms, as do communication strategies that use prevailing notions of male dominance and strength in order to appeal to men, such as casting male anti-violence allies as “warriors” or as “real men”.

If using these patriarchal stereotypes is seen as a good way to get men involved initially, it is important that over time they are questioned and that men’s action against violence is framed in terms of allying with women rather than doing this for women. The best way to ensure that opportunities for men’s action are gender transformative is to plan and support such action in conjunction with women’s rights organisations.

EXAMPLE: MALE ENGAGEMENT OR PATRIARCHAL REINFORCEMENT IN LIBERIA?¹⁷

The Male Involvement Project in Liberia, supported by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), had created men’s action groups against gender-based violence in nine communities where women’s action groups had already been established. An evaluation by IRC identified a number of problems:

- **Discussions became too male-focused:** Some men’s groups lost sight of the purpose of the group and began to focus only on problems facing men.
- **Patriarchal power showed up in groups:** When men became involved in mixed gender groups, some took charge and assumed leadership positions.

- **Groups moved too quickly to mixed-gender meetings:** Hastily bringing mixed-gender groups together or facilitating cross-gender discussions on certain topics limited women’s participation.

- **Facilitators needed more training and support:** Challenging harmful attitudes from male participants is difficult. Facilitators require intensive training and ongoing support to identify and address the common resistance responses that may come up during interventions with men.

- **Root prevention work in community structures and processes:** Efforts to mobilise men and boys to get involved in violence prevention are more sustainable when they are rooted in, rather than separate from, ongoing community action on gender inequalities and VAWG.
- **Nurture supportive peer groups:** Male peer groups play a significant role in perpetuating patriarchal norms and practices

among men and boys. Male peer group dynamics can also be significant in violence perpetration, not merely as an exercise of power over women but as a demonstration of this power for other men. Conversely, developing alternative peer groups which can both model and support non-patriarchal attitudes and behavior by men and boys is an important strategy for sustaining their involvement in violence prevention work.



EXAMPLE: MOBILIZING MEN'S COLLECTIVE ACTION IN SOUTH AFRICA¹⁸

Some projects working with men and boys emphasise the importance of mobilizing, training and supporting men to take specific actions in their community to challenge patriarchal norms and practices and promote women's empowerment and rights. In South Africa, Sonke Gender Justice's One Man Can intervention uses door-to-door campaigns, street theater, community soccer games, and video screenings to promote gender equality at community level. By enlisting men in

community action teams, Sonke creates opportunities for men to take concrete action and fosters a supportive peer group to sustain these men's own commitment to gender equality. The One Man Can Campaign has demonstrated significant positive impact. One evaluation found that 50% of participants reported taking action to address acts of gender-based violence in their community, 25% accessed HIV voluntary counseling and testing services, and 61% reported increasing their use of condoms.

3. SUPPORT PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION



TIPS: PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

- Use intensive and interactive group education curricula, with multiple sessions sustained over time
- Involve multiple stakeholders to ensure community support and links with needed services
- Focus on consciousness-raising
- Focus on skills-building
- Use both single-gender and mixed-gender spaces
- Collaborate closely with women's rights organizations to synchronise male-focused programs with work on women and girls' empowerment

It is important to enable men and boys to reflect personally on the harms of patriarchal norms and practices as well as equip them with the skills to challenge these. Group-based education approaches are widely used, with evaluations showing the importance of intensive, interactive curricula with multiple sessions over time. Role-plays and techniques to strengthen skills in interpersonal communication, conflict resolution and personal accountability also work well.

- **Socialisation of boys:** Boyhood is a critical time of gender socialisation and identity formation, when boys learn about gender differences and hierarchies. Evidence from many countries shows that most men who perpetrate sexual violence do so for the first time in their teenage years. Thus, working with boys to help them understand and question the harmful gender norms is critical. Successful programmes have provided children and adolescents with in-school (teachers, administrators) and out-of-school (mentors, peer groups, positive deviants) support and safe spaces to question patriarchal practices and norms, and discuss ways to promote more equitable gender relations and end VAWG.

EXAMPLE: PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION IN PRACTICE IN LATIN AMERICA AND BEYOND¹⁹

Program H seeks to engage young men and their communities in critical reflection about norms related to manhood. It includes group educational activities, community campaigns, and an evaluation model (the GEM scale). The topics for group discussion include: gender roles and norms; the links between masculinity, sexuality and violence; concepts of power in relationships; and the benefits of gender equality not only for women and girls but also men and boys. Program H was

developed and validated in Latin America and the Caribbean (Bolivia, Colombia, Jamaica and Peru). The results of eight, mostly quasi-experimental studies on Program H around the world have found evidence of positive changes among programme participants: from more gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors generally, to improved couple communication, reduced gender-based violence, increased condom use, and improved attitudes around caregiving.

- **Parenting and family life:** Research suggests that high levels of father involvement are associated with multiple positive outcomes for their children.^{20 21} Men's engagement in childcare also has positive results in terms of gender relationships and more equal decision-making in the home, as well as reductions in violence and improved maternal wellbeing. Interventions typically

include a parenting curriculum focused on improving relationships between parents and their children, teaching parenting skills and, in some cases, skills in reducing conflict and abuse. This may involve skills-building sessions, using role play and videotape modeling of positive parenting behaviours, as well as structured or guided play between mothers, fathers and their children.



EXAMPLE: WORKING WITH MEN AS HUSBANDS AND FATHERS IN ETHIOPIA²²

Addis Birhan (Amharic for 'New Light') worked with married men in Ethiopia on harmful gender norms, relationships, family life, and gender-based violence. The programme trained male mentors with at least six years of education to mobilise groups of 25-30 married men within the community to meet weekly. The programme encouraged non-judgmental dialogue, expression of one's feelings and self-exploration, and used a largely visual curriculum since most of the targeted men had low levels of education. Changes reported by both participants and their

families included increased couple communication and shared decision-making, and changes in how men viewed the division of labour within the home. Some men started taking on some typically female responsibilities, such as fetching water or childcare. Over 130,000 married boys and men (ages 10 to 85) have participated in Addis Birhan, with the majority 25-39 years old. Many men of marriage age are changing their views on gender relations, positively impacting the factors that can lead to child marriage.

- **Women's economic empowerment:** Economic empowerment interventions are seen as a way to reduce women's economic dependency on men, a risk factor for their exposure to male violence. Such interventions, reaching an estimated 100 million

women worldwide, also constitute an entry point for engaging men. They can provide access to the male partners of female programme participants and provide an opportunity to work on men's reactions to women's economic empowerment.

EXAMPLE: INVOLVING MEN IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT²³

The EAŞE programme in Burundi, developed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), aimed to reduce intimate partner violence and improve women's overall decision-making in conflict-affected communities. IRC integrated a discussion group series, Talking about Talking (TaT), into a traditional Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) intervention where both women and men engaged in six facilitated conversations about financial decision-making. The TaT curriculum used non-threatening entry points and participatory methods to

challenge gender norms about men's control over financial decision-making and promote shared decision-making in order to improve overall household well-being. A rigorous evaluation over a 16-month period found a statistically significant decrease in intimate partner violence among women at high or moderate risk in the intervention group. The VSLA/TaT group also experienced an increase in shared decision-making and use of negotiation skills and a decrease in overall acceptance of violence.

- **Post-conflict recovery:** Increasing attention is being given to the prevention of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings. This includes persistently high rates of intimate partner violence, as well as conflict-related sexual violence. Studies show that approximately one in five women who are refugees or otherwise displaced by conflict experience sexual

violence. Programmes have targeted men and boys in conflict-affected communities with group-based education, integrating into their curricula on patriarchal norms and practices a focus on strengthening the resilience of individuals and couples to cope with the psychological trauma they may be facing.

EXAMPLE: SUPPORTING COUPLES TO DEAL WITH TRAUMA IN BURUNDI AND DRC²⁴

The Living Peace Groups project in Burundi and DRC assists men and women to heal after their experiences of trauma by restoring social and partner relationships and strengthening positive coping strategies that exclude all forms of violence. Living Peace Groups use both psychosocial support and group education to help couples in post-conflict settings address the personal effects of trauma, while also bringing the community together in a process of social restoration. The group therapy process has been used with survivors of sexual violence, husbands of conflict-related rape survivors, and with witnesses

of genocide and other forms of violence.

Project evaluations confirm that, nearly universally, men and women participants reported significant, positive changes, including: improved, more peaceful partner relations; reductions in men's alcohol abuse and drinking; improvements in men's control of frustration and aggression; greater income-sharing by men with their wives; happier children; and improved health outcomes. Many groups decided to continue the weekly meetings on their own after the pilot phase.

4. TAKE ACTION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The socio-ecological model highlights the complex interplay of factors at individual, relationship, family, community and societal levels that fuel violence against women and girls. This draws attention to the structural determinants of violence, including discriminatory laws and policies and patriarchal social norms at the community level. Thus, the model highlights the importance of prevention strategies that focus on wider social change as well as personal transformation. Key approaches include:

- **Community mobilisation involving male activists:** These approaches can be effective in shifting patriarchal social norms at the community level and helping to prevent male violence. They typically use: group education methods; skills-building for male participants to design and implement community campaigns targeting harmful social norms; and support for campaign implementation e.g. awareness-raising events, social marketing campaigns, community dialogues. The most effective community mobilisation approaches find ways to mobilise men as activists alongside women in campaigns against violence and for equality.



EXAMPLE: MEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP AND COMMUNITY MOBILISATION, COTE D'IVOIRE²⁹

A study of adding a 16-week men's discussion group curriculum to a community-based GBV prevention programme in Côte d'Ivoire found that this combined intervention significantly influenced men's reported behaviors related to hostility and

conflict management and gender equitable behaviors, when compared with communities which had only received the community-based GBV prevention.²⁵

EXAMPLE: MEN'S ACTIVISM ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION IN INDIA²⁶

The Ab To Jaago! (Wake Up Now!) Campaign was coordinated by Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW) to educate communities about the 2005 Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (DVA) in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The campaign collected information about implementation difficulties, and also organised mock tribunals to highlight the available evidence of violence against women and girls and

pressure the government to spend more on implementing the DVA. A follow-up study found that the "activist" men of the campaign reported more progressive, gender-equitable attitudes than the merely "exposed" and control community men, suggesting a lasting impact of anti-violence activism on men's views of gender norms and gender equality.

- **Public policy monitoring:** Men can also play a role, as allies to women's organisations, in monitoring the implementation of existing laws and campaigning for proper implementation.
- **Advocacy with community leaders:** Political and religious leaders can play a critical role in challenging harmful social norms that fuel violence against women and girls. Working with such leaders, who are usually male, is an important part of action for change at community level.
- **Dealing with patriarchal backlash:** It is important to acknowledge that the patriarchal realities in many communities pose a severe challenge to social action efforts by men and boys. This includes the threat of backlash from other men and boys. Preparing for these challenges and threats is an important aspect of sustaining male activism for the prevention of violence against women and girls. One way to prepare is to enlist the support of local community leaders as well as local media.

“ Here we learn through games and activities. There are a group of boys in same age group and we all have a platform to discuss about various topics. We also learn about adolescent changes. No one had taught me or made me realize about human rights and how women are deprived of the same. ECF helped me realize this and it has helped me change my attitudes and behaviour towards women. I feel, due to ECF's work, boys like me will not get into bad habits and violent behaviour but will always stand for prevention of gender based violence. ”

Harshad Waghmare, 14 year old participant in Equal Community Foundation's Action for Equality programme in Pune, India

EXAMPLE: FROM PERSONAL REFLECTION TO COMMUNITY ACTION IN INDIA²⁷

Action for Equality (AfE) is an action research programme created by the Equal Community Foundation to develop a scalable model for engaging men and boys to prevent violence and discrimination against women and girls in India. The programme primarily focuses on boys aged 13-17 years from low-income communities and is currently being implemented in 20 low-income communities in Pune. The programme is divided in three phases- Foundation, Action and Leadership.

- **Foundation phase:** Trained mentors run weekly sessions with up to 20 adolescent boys, using a mix of interactive and didactic sessions to provide basic knowledge on gender and to encourage individual attitude and behaviour change. The 15-week curriculum covers 7 thematic areas: Human Rights, Gender, Boyhood to Manhood, Sexuality, Relationships, Violence, Taking action.
- **Action phase:** Graduating participants learn communication skills, teamwork and critical thinking over 15 weekly sessions, divided into three cycles on: human rights; inequitable gender norms; and the bystander approach to challenge these norms.

- **Leadership phase:** Another 15 weekly sessions, divided into three parts, each concentrating on building a skill: 1) Influencing, 2) Mobilising and 3) Campaigning. Each part has five training events followed by a public event which is conducted in each of the communities.

Many lessons have been learned from this effort to train young men as activists for gender equality:

- **Prepare for backlash:** Programme participants live in communities where violence against women and girls is not a priority issue and patriarchy is very strong. The risk of backlash is high. Using the Leadership phase to better equip and support them to take action has thus become a crucial addition to the programme.
- **Do not work alone:** It is essential to collaborate closely with women's groups in designing and implementing any community-level action.
- **Enlist support:** Young men need the support of their parents, teachers and other community elders in order to be effective in their activism to challenge harmful community norms.



KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Align around principles of human rights, accountability and positive vision of men's roles in prevention,
- Reach out and connect- make prevention personal and speak to the diverse realities and concerns of men and boys.
- Sustain involvement- create opportunities for collective action and support.
- Support personal transformation- promote reflection on the harms of gender roles and norms and strengthen skills in interpersonal communication, conflict resolution and personal accountability.
- Use key entry points for personal transformation work in programmes on boys' socialization, parenting and family life, women's economic empowerment and post-conflict recovery.
- Take action to change the community norms, policies and laws that promote violence against women and girls through community mobilisation and policy monitoring and advocacy.

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THE PREVENTION COLLABORATIVE

The Prevention Collaborative works to strengthen the ability of key actors to deliver cutting edge violence prevention interventions informed by research-based evidence, practice-based learning and feminist principles. For more information go to www.prevention-collaborative.org

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