

Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Transformation



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



SDC GUIDANCE SHEET

Prepared by
the Gender Equality Network

April 2019

This thematic guidance sheet is one of a series written to support SDC staff in ensuring that gender issues are taken into account transversally and also programmatically in different thematic domains. This particular guidance sheet focuses on the relevance of introducing a gender transformative working approach in addressing gender inequalities particularly by engaging men and boys (EMB) throughout different sectors. It outlines key issues regarding gender transformative work and how these can be integrated in cooperation strategies and project interventions.

Key Issues

A. Engage men and boys in programs for gender equality:

Theory and practice both show that men and boys must be included and engaged in development programs for gender equality. Men have been identified as gatekeepers for women's empowerment, but at the same time, a differentiated analysis of changes in male roles and positions in society has shown their own manifold vulnerabilities. Therefore, men and boys are equally key target group and actors for gender equality work.¹

B. Apply gender transformative approaches when working with men and boys:

Evidence demonstrates that gender transformative approaches have a relevant impact on programmes that seek to address gender inequalities. Gender transformative approaches put gender relations at the centre of their attention and address the root causes of gender inequality by questioning negative social norms and values that define gender relations and are harmful to both, men and women.

C. Intra- and inter-personal processes of change:

Engagement of men and boys should address their own vulnerabilities with regard to gender inequality and dominant norms of masculinity, make them aware of their oppressive and disempowering effects on women, but also partially themselves, and empower men and boys to develop their own positions against dominant forms of masculinity.

D. Structural levels of gender transformation:

Programmes have to promote frame conditions that support such gender-related societal changes. This also means enacting laws and policies that help to institutionalize more gender equitable relations and that underline men's and boys' responsibilities on all levels.



1 CALKIN, Sidney 2013: From Absent Obstacles to Allies: Creating space for men in theories of women's empowerment, draft paper, University of York, p. 13 (Unpublished conference paper, presented at the European Conference on Politics and Gender in Barcelona, March 2013. Quotation with the permission of the author.)

1. Introduction

- **Family Planning and Sexual and Reproductive Health:** 74% of contraceptives used world-wide are applied by women. Despite some progress in persuading men to use condoms or to support women to make their own contraceptive choices, women continue to bear most of the responsibility for family planning (CSW 2007, Cambridge 2016)
- **Maternal Mortality:** About 303'000 women die during pregnancy or in childbirth each year. The majority of these deaths are entirely preventable. Even though it is men who often control access to health services, very little is being done to work with them to reduce maternal and infant mortality (WHO 2015)
- **Fatherhood and the Care for Children:** Worldwide, 76% of unpaid care work is done by women (ILO 2019). Women spend three to four-times the amount of time raising children than men do – even in countries where women are working outside the home in numbers close, or equal to that of men.
- **GBV:** Between 30 to 50 per cent of women worldwide have suffered physical violence at least once at the hands of a male partner (WHO 2017)
- **HIV and AIDS:** Women are less likely to be able to negotiate condom use and more likely to experience coerced or forced sex. Men are also vulnerable to HIV infection owing to gender attitudes that discourage them from using condoms or being tested for HIV, while at the same time encouraging concurrent relationships with multiple partners (UNFPA 2013)
- **Male upbringing and men's health:** Boys are often raised to be self-reliant, not to worry about their health and not to seek help when they face stress. However, being able to talk about one's problems and to seek support is a protective factor against substance use, unsafe sexual practices and engaging in violence.

Why work with men and boys?

There are many examples of the effects of male dominance and oppression on the health and well-being, participation, rights and decision-making of women. But limited effort is made to address men and boys to reflect on the consequences of their behavior and to promote their active role for improving equality, power balance and decision-making in their personal relationships and in society.

Men and boys are themselves subordinate to and caught in harmful masculine norms and patriarchal power dynamics that set clear rules of how they have to behave to be a "real man". They determine male attitudes and behavior, their relationships with other men, with women and towards other genders; such norms also "gender" men's hearts² and instruct them to refrain from showing emotional vulnerability.

On the other hand, as i.e. the global IMAGES study (2011)³ has shown, many men and especially young men do already adopt new attitudes and sometimes resist societal gender-expectations. Men who address and counteract harmful norms of masculinity have shown to be healthier, live in happier relationships and develop stronger ties with their children, with positive effects on the health, decision-making power and access to resources for women. However, there is still a gap between changed convictions and everyday practice of many men due to persisting social pressure and structural barriers.

Theory and evidence demonstrate that it is not sufficient to develop gender-neutral action (treating men and women the same) or to promote gender-sensitive thinking (raising awareness on gender relations and

inequalities) to achieve gender equality. Instead, it is important to re-define gender roles and values towards a conscious redistribution of power between the sexes.

A gender transformative approach to development goes beyond working on "symptoms" of gender inequality but instead addresses the underlying norms, attitudes, behaviours and social systems. Gender transformative work seeks to promote equality through critical reflection and questioning of individual practices, institutional dynamics and norms that create and reinforce gender inequalities and vulnerabilities for men and women.⁴

2 Heilman, B. with G. Barker (2018): Masculine Norms and Violence: Making the Connections. Washington DC: Promundo-US

3 International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), Promundo 2011.

4 UNFPA 2013: Engaging Men and Boys: A Brief Summary of UNFPA Experience and Lessons Learned.

**Benefits of gender transformative change for women, men and society
(ICRW/Cartier Foundation, 2018)⁵**



⁵ In: International Centre for Research on Women (2018): Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It only works if everyone plays, p. 3

2. International policies and guidance for engaging men & boys

The topic of engaging men and boys has been discussed extensively in the last 25 years. Different international frameworks and declarations include and emphasize the role of men and boys for achieving gender equality.

Global policies	Men's role in gender equality
International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo), Programme of Action (September 1994)	Notes that gender inequality undermines health and identifies men as a group that needs to be actively involved in overcoming gender inequality and improving women's and men's health
The Beijing Platform for Action (September 1995)	Calls for a full commitment to international norms and standards of equality between men and women, to protect and promote the human rights of women and girl-children as an integral part of universal human rights. It encourages men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, and particularly reiterates the importance of engaging men and boys to take an active part in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women. The Beijing framework envisions male engagement as a necessary means to challenge the structures, beliefs, practices, and institutions that sustain men's aggregate privileges, as well as to address inequalities between women and men.
The 48th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March 2004)	Dedicates one of two thematic sessions to the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality
The 45th session of the Commission on Population and Development on "Adolescents & Youth" (April 2012)	Strongly promotes gender equality in the Resolution on "Adolescents & Youth" and calls upon governments "to take measures to encourage boys and young men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality." (paras.16,17)
The 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March 2015)	Formulates a Political Declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women including a paragraph on engaging men and boys that recognizes the importance of the full engagement of men and boys for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
Sustainable Development Goals (2015)	The SDGs framework recognizes engaging men and boys as a key strategy to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls – it is included in Paragraph 20, the "gender paragraph" of the Declaration, which accompanies the goals & targets framework.

While international policies have clearly put forward a concept of gender equality that concerns both, women and men, many programs still keep their focus on women's empowerment. There have also been critical reactions that a shift in focus might reduce the attention paid to and resources allocated for women's issues and that a new focus on men and boys should in no way reduce the investment in efforts for women's empowerment.

A global civil society movement led by the MenEngage Alliance (founded in 2004) has emerged; it strongly advocates for gender equality from the perspective of men. Two Global Symposia on Engaging Men and

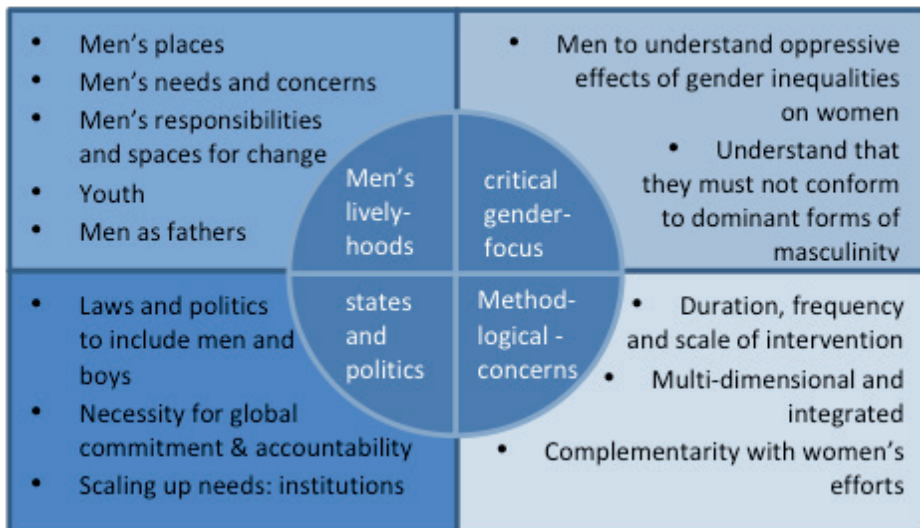
Boys for Gender Equality have since been held in 2009 and 2014 in Rio de Janeiro and New Delhi and campaigns such as the White Ribbon Campaign (since 1991) or the MenCare Campaign (since 2011) have produced important visibility for engaging men and boys at global level. One of the main claims of the MenEngage movement is accountability to the women's movement and the importance of a joint agenda fostering action of women and men in a gender-synchronized way.

For SDC, engaging men and boys for achieving gender equality is a guiding principle, anchored in the 2017 FDFA Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Rights.

In its projects and initiatives that promote work involving men and boys, SDC is conscious about not shifting resources from a women's to a men's focus, but wants to promote and stand for allocating more resources for gender equality.

3. Conceptual framework for engaging with men and boys

The following conceptual areas are suggested for the successful work with men and boys for gender transformation:



IAMANEH Switzerland, 2014

3.1 Understanding and addressing men's livelihoods

Men's gender-specific needs and livelihoods needs to be understood in the same way as understanding women's needs and livelihoods. Therefore, a gender analysis requires asking about gender roles, the division of work, access to resources and decision-making power, and analysing what the different roles and available resources imply for both women and men.

- Recognize men's specific needs, vulnerabilities and possibilities for change:** Understanding men's livelihoods means recognizing men's specific needs and vulnerabilities, but also their personal resources and knowledge that need to be integrated into problem solving. Assessing own responsibilities (within a general human rights frame), searching for joint objectives between men and women with regard to gender equality and formulating positive outcomes for the community can be additional relevant steps.
- Address men where they are easily reachable:** institutional settings such as schools or military, but also already existing community groups or sports associations are good places to address men also with sensitive topics. Such collective settings, if addressed in an appropriate way, can be supportive for male readiness to participate in gender transformative work.
- Men should be supported and granted secure spaces** if they decide to take action opposing traditional social norms. This means that activities in collective settings must ensure the safety for and protection of men who speak out.
- Empower men as role model:** It is important to identify and empower men who can play a pioneering role.
- Working with youth is crucial:** Adolescence is a time when young men are most receptive to more equitable forms of masculinity and interested in more informed perspectives regarding their roles and responsibilities in reproductive health and intimate relationships. Therefore, it is important to identify existing gender equitable behaviours among men and boys and to build upon these.
- Draw on men's responsibility as fathers:** To draw on men's sense of responsibility and positive engagement as fathers is a relevant entry point and a very promising working field in order to promote gender equality.



3.2 Working with a critical gender-focus

When working with men and boys, it is important to encourage a **critical reflection of the oppressive effects of gender inequality on women** while also **identifying men's experiences of oppression**. The reflection of one's own positions and dominance, as well as men's vulnerabilities and concerns in a patriarchal system can initiate a process of **questioning of values and norms**. Dealing with emotions and experiences, reflecting power dynamics and critically assessing their own positions in family and society are important steps in gender transformative work. Men and boys have to be encouraged to **develop their own positions outside the masculinity box** by helping them understand that they can make a choice whether to or not to conform with dominant forms of masculinity.

3.3 Transforming institutional and political frameworks

Promoting frame conditions that support gender-related societal changes is key to gender transformative work. **Through policies and legal reforms, countries can institutionalize more gender equitable relations in many spheres of private, business and political life**. Engaging the public sector and working through and with public institutions is a strategic measure to promote gender equitable relations and transformations. It creates space for action in public places where important numbers of people can be reached. It also transforms attitudes and cultures in the institutions themselves.

Actions on national level are to be complemented by **global commitments and pressure** of signatory countries for follow up and implementation. These frameworks and conclusions are relevant instruments for lobbying work where signatory countries can be held accountable for taking consecutive steps and develop action.

3.4 Methodological concerns for transformative work

Transformative interventions with men and boys have until recently remained NGO-led, small scale and short term and have usually failed to reach significant numbers of men and boys. Learning from small local initiative for upscaling and integration in national programs should be considered to reach a broader geographical coverage and to address a significantly bigger number of people.

Furthermore, interventions need to be **multi-dimensional and be conceptualized as change processes** with a longer time-frame. Interventions need to address different target groups (adolescents-parents, men-health structures, perpetrators-judicial system, etc.).

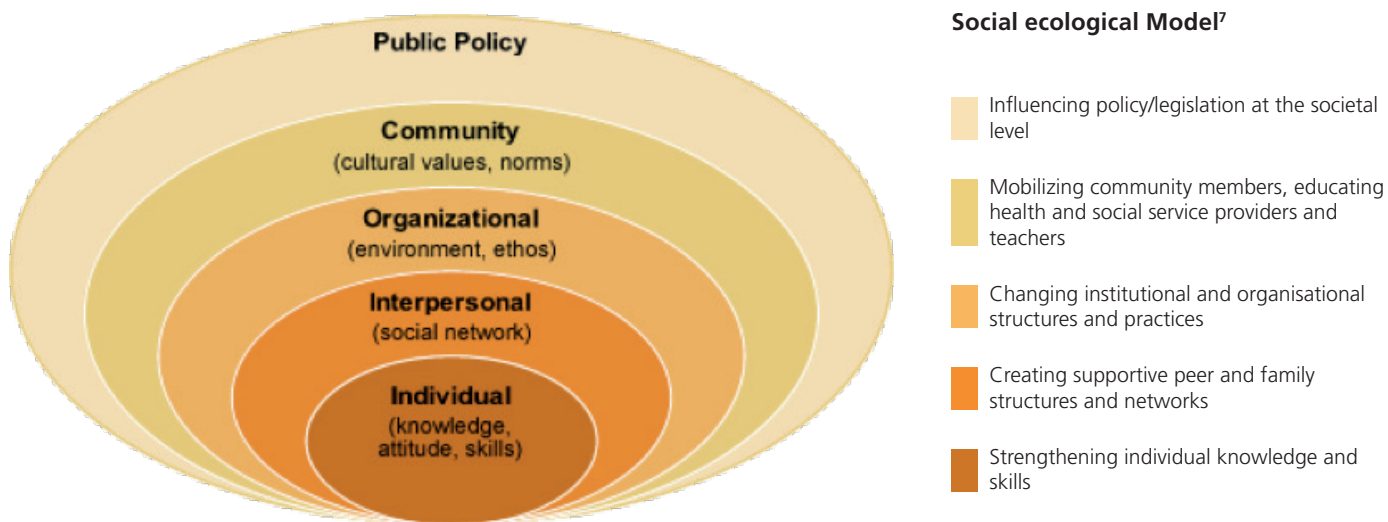
Finally, interventions should be **congruent and complementary with efforts of women's organizations** that seek to empower women. Partnering with women's organisations, defining joint goals and ensuring accountability towards women is crucial.

4. Engaging men and boys in practice

4.1 Multi-level gender transformative approach – the ecological model

Gender transformative programming means recognizing and addressing the individual, institutional and cultural dynamics that influence the behaviours and vulnerabilities of men and women. An “ecological model” can be a useful tool for mapping out these multiple and dynamic inter-relationships and identifying entry points for gender transformative programming.⁶

The ecological model illustrates the importance of working not only with individuals, but also with diverse and interconnected social groups, systems and structures that influence gender norms and the behaviour of men and women. While it is unreasonable to expect that any single organisation, movement or programme can cover all of these influences, the ecological model can help to contextualize a programme’s possible impact. It can also identify those factors that promote (or constrain) its potential for success and opportunities for linking and collaborating with other programmes.



6 UNFPA&Promundo (2010): Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and Health. A Global Toolkit for Action: 15–16

7 <http://www.esourceresearch.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Images/Glanz/SocialEcologicalModel.gif>

4.2 Entry points for working with men and boys

Three entry points are proposed to orient future transformative efforts for gender-equality in development work:

- Engaging men and boys as allies, change agents as well as specific target group with gendered vulnerabilities
- Enlarging empowerment towards men and boys and including the necessity for power-redistribution between the sexes
- Putting gender transformative action and the engaging men and boys approach into a broader social justice framework (intersectionality)

These entry points have to be seen as parallel interventions to be followed in order to promote gender equality in a transformative way. They shouldn't be seen as replacing any efforts directed towards women.

4.3 Engaging men and boys in selected fields of intervention

Engaging men and boys in SRHR

Men and male adolescents often do not feel responsible for the consequences of their sexual behavior and it is usually women and girls who bear the responsibilities of using contraception and taking charge of the health issues related to the family. However, within their relationship or family they often lack the power to do so. Furthermore, men and boys are exposed to higher health risks due to concepts of masculinity, which hinder them to seek help or to ask for advice regarding their sexual and reproductive health. If the goal is to encourage men and boys to assume responsibility for their own health but also for the health of their partners and children, gender transformative work with men and boys in the SRHR field is important to be developed.



École des Maris, Niger:

A 2007 study in Zinder Region in Niger found that decisions taken by men about women's access to medical care were the most important barriers to the use of reproductive health services. In response, UNFPA Niger has developed the „École des Maris“ strategy, which aims at involving men in health promotion and at fostering a change in behaviour at the community level. In bi-weekly meetings, husbands analyse and discuss specific cases of reproductive health problems within the community, and look for appropriate solutions based on knowledge available within the group or obtained from a specialist resource person. In the areas covered by École des Maris, husbands are taking an increasingly active role in the health care of their families and communities, communicating with their wives, understanding the importance of the health of their wives and children, and some even attending the births of their children. 11 pilot schools have been set up in two health districts, located in especially vulnerable areas with poor reproductive health indicators.

The „École des Maris“-approach builds on men and their role as decision-makers with regard to the health seeking behaviour of their families. The approach is transforming men's function as gate keepers to a focus on their responsibility. This means taking men seriously and putting their preoccupations with reproductive health related questions at the centre of attention. Empowerment takes place through validating of own knowledge as well as input from specialists.. Serious reflection of health related problems in the community and the search for solutions helps them to develop real responsibility and contributes to changing their attitudes in their roles as fathers and husbands.

Mobilizing youth for gender-equality

Young men and boys often find themselves caught up in a position between traditionalism and modernism within their society. They are confronted with expectations regarding their behavior as “a man”. Gender transformative work can be seen as a re-definition of such gender roles and values; it goes much beyond sensitization regarding gender inequality issues. Reaching men and boys on the basis of their personal experiences of negative consequences of dominant masculine roles and attitudes in their own lives is an important component of this work. Another one is giving them a role as a change agent within their peer groups and their communities. Community actions can and should be a crucial part of gender transformative work with young men as it enables them to contribute jointly to the change in their communities.



“Que Tuani No Ser Machista”, Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, a gender transformative approach was implemented to prevent sexual violence and pregnancy. The local initiative, called “Que Tuani No Ser Machista,” worked with adolescent boys between the ages of 10 and 15 years on preventing sexual violence and adolescent pregnancy. The campaign operated in 43 municipalities with young adolescent males, and encouraged questioning gender norms including stereotypes and behaviours. This involved challenging the concept of „machismo” through exercises that encouraged boys to express their feelings especially in terms of what it means to be a young man. Group education and advocacy that promotes respect for women and girls and non-violent behaviour, the initiative prompted young men and boys to reflect on who defines what it means to be macho and why. Using techniques that were appealing to this age group, the campaign tackled challenges such as not making pregnancy prevention a priority, defining sex as uncontrollable, using violence, blackmail and other pressures on partners to obtain sex, not using a condom during sex, etc. The campaign also used the media and various modes of communication to reach additional adolescent groups. It is estimated that about 3'000 teenagers joined the first stage (2009–2010) and up to 20'000 were engaged in the second stage (2010–2011) of the project.

This approach focuses on “machismo”, one of the main traditional concepts of masculinity that determines male attitudes and behaviours. Young men are brought together in a setting where they are addressed on a personal level, giving space for their own experiences and feelings. They are invited to reflect critically on what it means to be a young man in a society that is determined by machist attitudes. They discuss about the negative impacts it has on women and girls as well as on themselves and learn to question set rules and norms and to think about possible alternatives in behaviour. Through joint campaigns where youngsters from different villages participate they are empowered to take a stand for their own views and are given

the experience of personal contribution to community mobilisation. Community mobilisation again leads to broader acceptance of the proposed changes in male attitudes and sets grounds for application of newly adopted behaviours.

Paid/unpaid care work

The unequal distribution of unpaid care work is a critical factor for understanding structural constraints to women's economic empowerment and women's participation in the labour market. Deeply rooted gender roles tend to assign unpaid care work to women and paid work to men. Globally, 2/3 of unpaid care work is carried out by women. To overcome these structural barriers and promote gender equality in the world of work, a cultural shift is needed: a quarter of all men worldwide have never participated in household tasks and care work. Men are fathers and need to engage more pro-actively in their care role, because the economic empowerment of women does not reduce the responsibilities and work at home.



“The part-time man”, Switzerland

Men remain the principal breadwinners in Swiss families, contributing with 73.7 % to the family income. On the other hand, a study has also revealed that the majority of men aged between 35 and 40 years are very dissatisfied with the status quo of the division of tasks within their partnership. The project “part-time man”, implemented by maenner.ch, the umbrella organization of men's and father's organizations advocating for gender equality in Switzerland, promotes part-time work for men, enabling them to assume more responsibility within the family, and not only taking responsibility for the family as the main breadwinner. The entry point are companies, where maenner.ch organises exhibitions, brown bag lunches and provides success stories of men who reduced their remunerated activity to have more time for responsibilities in non-remunerated care work. Coining these men as modern heroes helps to disrupt the longstanding perception within the Swiss culture on how a family should divide the roles and responsibilities. maenner.ch has developed an online-portal where they publish part-time jobs and support men, willing to shift to part-time work, with tools, training seminars and individual coaching. They also engage in advocacy work for the issue of part-time work and valorisation of unpaid care work for women and men.

Since the launch of the campaign, the percentage of men who work part-time, has increased in proportions much higher than expected. In 2015, 403'000 men, i.e. 16.4 % of the male workforce, worked part-time.

By accepting the offer of maenner.ch, the companies engage in a consciousness rising and structural reflection effort of men's roles. This offers a supportive environment for men to question their attitudes and practice, and reflect about possibilities for change. Men are accompanied further through trainings and coaching, allowing for a longer-term process for potential change and daring first steps in this direction. Making it a topic on company level offers men a space of shared sensitization and back up by peers and the structure itself.

SGBV prevention through addressing men as perpetrators and survivors

In many conflict affected settings, not only women and girls but also men and boys become targets of sexual violence. Services for women and girls are insufficient; for men and boys services hardly ever exist. Men also often witness violence and abuse to their female partners or family members and experience complete helplessness and a breakdown of their male role as protectors of their family. Communities are weakened in their social cohesion and in their capacity to deal collectively with the situation. As a consequence of such individual and collective traumatization, violence is often perpetuated in family relations.

For this reason, interventions must consider the needs of the survivors as well as of their family members. Psychosocial community based approaches to address SGBV should address men as perpetrators and/or survivors and seek work towards de-stigmatization of both men and women survivors.



Men's Centre, Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Men's Centre in Modrica, a central Bosnian town in the Serb Entity, was founded as an initiative of a group of young male social workers engaged in community outreach work of the women's shelter of the local women's NGO Buducnost. (Both, the Men's Centre and the Women's Shelter are supported by IAMANEH Switzerland.) The Men's Centre offers targeted and professional perpetrator counselling as indispensable service for combating domestic violence against women and children that is widespread in the Bosnian post-conflict society. In order to reach men and to create trust and acceptance in the male population, the Men's Centre also serves as daily meeting point for men (newspapers, internet, social games). It offers a wide range of men focused activities such as educational workshops on topics selected by its users, documentary film presentations with guided discussions on topics related to men's problems in the Bosnian society, self-help study groups, anti-stress sports program etc. At the same time, the centre has integrated a social, legal as well as psychological counselling for men. Targeted perpetrator counselling with a group approach remains the key activity of the Centre. The Men's Centre reaches up to 700 men a year through different activities, while approx. 25 men in 4-5 treatment groups pass through the perpetrator counselling program.

This intervention is based on the joint interest of male and female activists, i.e. the reduction of violence in the post-conflict society. The process is rooted in the community and the men and women oriented offers are tightly interlinked, allowing to address the problems from the perspective of the family systems. Also, men aren't being addressed only from the problem side (as perpetrators of violence), but also with regard to their needs and vulnerabilities (i.e. war-time trauma, loss of social status). Trust building, reducing stigma and empowerment are important elements in the work with men at the Men's Centre to strengthen their personal resources and strengthening their self-esteem while at

the same time critically addressing harmful masculine behaviours. This leads to a basic predisposition for behavioural changes, also with regard to gender relations. It also establishes readiness for developing alternative non-violent strategies for crisis management.

Work on policy and institutional level, addressing leaders and structural change

Identifying, engaging and influencing the key actors and decision-makers becomes crucial for a sustainable and transformative change that also tackles the root causes of gender inequalities. Religious leaders, community leaders, or political groups and other stakeholders can act as gatekeepers, but also as powerful advocates. Working with decision makers at local governance and policy levels also means tackling dominant hegemonial masculine patterns that are deeply enshrined in institutional cultures and in the persons representing them. Fostering allies among influential actors and elites who have broader societal influence – i.e. religious leaders and political officials – can be important for promoting broader change in norms but requires careful selection, training and support. Laws and policies are an important instrument for highlighting and promoting such processes and identifying concrete actions and responsibilities. They give a basis for monitoring, push governmental accountability and prepare for desired changes of behaviour in the society as a whole.



Laws, policies and governmental working groups:

Botswana: UNFPA provided critical support to the Ministry of Health in developing a policy guidance on involving men in SRH, including in preventing HIV and in preventing and managing GBV. As a result of this advocacy and support, this key guidance was developed as an addendum to the SRH Policy Guidelines and Service Standards.

Costa Rica: UNFPA supported the passing of the innovative Law of Responsible Fatherhood. It frames paternal obligations in terms of the right of children to know their parents and to be supported by them. This legislation, which established procedures for mothers to present legal claims and which mandates genetic testing where paternity is in question, is credited with a drop in the number of children who are unrecognized by their fathers. This law also calls for annual budgetary appropriations to cover the testing and the formulation of a national policy on the promotion of responsible fatherhood.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Women's organisations in collaboration with the entity gender centres have initiated two inter-institutional working groups in two pilot regions where they gather the most relevant governmental stakeholders with regard to domestic violence. The aim of the working groups is to identify the shortcomings in existing anti-violence legislation with regard to protective measures and compulsory perpetrator counselling, to follow legal reform processes and to formulate targeted changes and addendums to be submitted to the relevant bodies for processing and adoption.

All three initiatives build on progressive and problem conscious attitudes of the involved ministries and institutional stakeholders. Here, an important process of information, awareness rising and consciousness building, also accompanied by elements of gender transformative work with the involved actors has preceded the actual work of policy development. Strategic selection of governmental interlocutors and good timing of policy related influencing are important elements for gender transformative structural change. The anchoring of the gender-based, men oriented topics

on policy level is setting a ground-breaking frame for implementing institutions as well as for the population in general. It underlines men's responsibility and their potential to act as change agents, but also addresses their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

5. Lessons learned and ways forward

Self-reflection, personal experience, vulnerabilities

- The **reflection of personal experiences** (especially own personal hurtful experiences or losses caused by harmful masculine norms) is an important entry point towards developing own stand points and daring to take opposite positions towards mainstream norms and values. This includes the confrontation with one's own feelings towards the consequences stereotype male behaviour may have for others, but also for oneself.
- Reflection of personal experiences needs to integrate the men's own **traumata**. Men's perpetuation of violence against women and children is often a consequence of their own struggle with harmful expressions of masculinity and coping with trauma. Early childhood exposure to violence increases the probability of violence perpetration in adolescence and adulthood. Trauma and violence are directly linked to power dynamics that need to be better understood and addressed.

Men's empowerment

- **Men and boys are willing to participate** in actions towards changes in gendered roles and behaviours. Working on their motivation is an important resource for gender transformative work.
- **Empowerment** plays a crucial role in all programs that address men and boys. Empowerment takes place, when men can expand their knowledge and their personal experiences and resources are taken into consideration for finding new ways of dealing with problems that are linked to relevant spheres of their lives. Empowerment is also experienced if specific gendered vulnerabilities of men are addressed. Empowerment furthermore takes place if men/boys are supported in their new roles as change agents, be it in the frame of campaigns for non-violent conflict resolution or in developing health related alternative behaviours.

Appropriate entry points, communication channels, messages (the 'how')

- Identifying the **appropriate entry points** for accessing/reaching is relevant for success. Programmes should invest in social spaces - such as education, sports and culture –where both men and boys as well as women and girls can easily be reached.
- Another relevant topic is the question of **attitudes in communication and appropriate messaging**: there is a need for a high level of empathy and the understanding of vulnerabilities, needs and concerns of men. Defining the right hierarchy for messaging is important.



Role models, transformative approach and collective action

- Patriarchal structures can only be overthrown if we have **positive male role models** in families and communities. Having family members or other influential individuals who present alternative, more equitable and nonviolent views about gender roles can be an important orientation point for men, especially young men, to question their own attitudes and to follow their examples for their own transformation.
- **Re-distribution of power** must be seen as an important element in gender transformative action. Re-distribution of power starts on small scale, but can represent a relevant basis for more equitable gender relations. The key is for men and boys to understand how balanced power relations benefit not only women, but also themselves, their families and communities.
- **Collective approaches** are effective: Addressing men and boys in a peer group setting allows the sharing of experiences in the group; it can offer a safe space to challenge inequitable norms. Collective action and solidarity among men favours the practice of change and helps them to remain determined despite negative reactions from the surrounding environment.

Enabling environment and institutional settings

- **Gender transformative work needs a supportive environment for change:** if young men or adolescent boys and girls develop new views and are ready to take on new gender attitudes, roles and actions they will need adults and parents that support rather than hinder their actions. If husbands and wives develop new attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health and related help-seeking strategies, then health institutions must be prepared and receptive towards such changes. Furthermore, if men develop new, more gender equitable attitudes and behaviours, then women need to be prepared for this change and supported to seize the space. This shows that actions need to be multi-dimensional and integrated and that they have to be conceptualized as change processes on a longer term perspective.
- **Institutional settings and legal frameworks** form an elementary basis for anchoring and supporting introduced change processes. Laws and policies that target, introduce and value men and boys as relevant actors of responsible fatherhood, or SRH-related problems, or that allow to both penalize men as perpetrators but at the same time offer them a frame for changing behaviour contribute to the transformation of values and norms in a broader societal context. All policies must offer protection from marginalization and discrimination for those who develop alternative attitudes and counter traditional norms and values.

Accountability and Intersectionality

- **Accountability** is a crucial issue when it comes to engaging men and boys. Accountability to the women's movement and to other historically oppressed social groups is a necessary practice for building collaborative and equitable partnerships. Accountability requires the development of a receptive and self-critical capacity in men and others who have been placed in positions of power and privilege so that they can listen to the perspectives of the oppressed groups in order to become authentic allies.¹⁰
- Additional impact can be reached, where male action is based on mutually identified and **agreed interests between men and women** for opposing traditional norms and values and engaging for changing behaviours and attitudes towards more gender equality and where men/boys can develop ownership for the male part of needed transformation (gender-synchronized action).
- Work with men and boys, and on masculinities, as well as work with women and girls, must assure that **intersectionality** is part of the framework to promote transformative change in gender power relations. Connecting patriarchy with other manifestations of social injustice can support men to re-frame their ideas about gender equality. Policies that recognize intersectionality can reach those who are marginalized by traditional approaches and create social change on a larger scale.

¹⁰ <http://menengage.org/accountability/>

References

Promundo (2011):

International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES).

IMAGES measures men's attitudes and practices – along with women's opinions and reports of men's practices – on a wide variety of topics related to gender equality.

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

Calkin, S. (2013):

From Absent Obstacles to Allies: Creating space for men in theories of women's empowerment

draft paper, University of York, p. 13 (Unpublished conference paper, presented at the European Conference on Politics and Gender in Barcelona, March 2013. Quotation with the permission of the author.)

Chant, S. (2000):

From „woman-blind“ to „man-kind“: should men have more space in gender and development?

IDS Bulletin, 39 (2), 7–17

Glinski, A., Schwenke, C., O'Brien-Milne, L., & Farley, K. (2018):

Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It only works when everyone plays.

Washington, D.C.: ICRW.

Heilman, B. with G. Barker (2018):

Masculine Norms and Violence: Making the Connections.

Washington DC: Promundo-US

IAMANEH Schweiz, Baier A., Loncarevic M.(2018):

Thematic Guidance Sheet: Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality

IAMANEH Schweiz, Loncarevic, M.:

The call for engaging men and boys.

Newsletter Gender Equality Network 03_2016.

Swiss Agency for Development.

Loncarevic M. and R. Reisewitz:

Introducing perpetrator counselling in the Western Balkan countries: The challenge of gender transformative action in a patriarchal society.

Graduate Journal of Social Science November 2016, Vol. 12, Issue 3, pp. 206–221.

MenEngage-UNFPA Advocacy Brief (2012):

Engaging Men, Changing Gender Norms:

Directions for Gender transformative Action.

Pascoe, L. and J. Hopkings (2019):

Men and Boys' non-HIV Sexual and Reproductive Health Needs and Rights and Access to Corresponding Services: A Review of the Literature

DRAFT (submitted as part of UNFPA's Eastern and Southern Africa Regional SRHR Needs Assessment for Men and Boys undertaken by Sonke Gender Justice)

Peacock, D. & Barker, G. (2012).

Working with men and boys to promote gender equality: a review of the field and emerging approaches.

Bangkok: UN Women.

Peacock, D. & Barker, G. (2014).

Men and Masculinities. Vol. 17(5) 578-599.

Working with Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-based Violence: Principles, Lessons Learned, and Ways Forward.

UNFPA (2013):

Engaging Men and Boys: A Brief Summary of UNFPA Experience and Lessons Learned.

UNFPA & Promundo (2010):

Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and Health: A global toolkit for action.

Photo credits:

Roland Reisewitz (Photos Albania)

SDC Burundi (Photos Great Lakes)

Iamaneh Switzerland (Photos West Africa)

