

**GUIDANCE NOTE #2: ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL TO PREVENT AND MITIGATE RISKS THAT WOMEN AND GIRLS FACE**

1 [Introduction](#)

This guidance note aims at summarizing the steps to engage men and boys in SGBV prevention programs to prevent and mitigate SGBV risks that women and girls face at the community level. It focuses on general engagement (men and boys without specific profiles) and relies on the most commonly used approaches to engage men and boys at the community level: community mobilization, group education and peer-to-peer that target male adults and male youth in the community, or fathers as part of parenting skills interventions.

It does not specifically target interventions with religious leaders, local authorities or service providers, though some of the mentioned guiding principles could be relevant for such engagement.

In addition to each project/intervention, participation in a community of practice and/or coordination mechanisms can provide a framework to improve male engagement in SGBV prevention strategies.

The note includes elements of guidance for 5 phases of the intervention: planning, outreach, implementation (including monitoring and evaluation) and exit.

2 [The planning phase](#)

2.1 [Building partnerships at the community level](#)

Many International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), National NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are actively involved in SGBV prevention. Local authorities might have been trained and involved in SGBV response. Community leaders could have been involved in other projects that have a protection component. Thus, before starting any activity that engage men and boys at the community level, it is important to establish contact and build partnerships with these key actors. This will help to avoid duplication and ensure the sustainability and impact of the project. It will inform on the community structures, the social, economic and cultural aspects of SGBV and the community knowledge and level of awareness on SGBV.

Possible actions to do:

- Undertake a mapping of CBOs, general services (health services, Primary Health Care facilities, community centers, basic assistance, legal services etc....) community leaders and local authorities that are active in the targeted area with the SGBV prevention and response activities they are involved in. The information from the mapping will help a lot in the Outreach Phase (see 3)

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- Participate in coordination frameworks that gather organizations working in this domain (including the Men-Engage network<sup>1</sup>)
- Meet with other partners that operate in the area (protection and community services partners) to better understand their services.

### 2.2 Understanding the context

Ideally, and to ensure that projects engaging men and boys are specifically adapted to the local context, it is fundamental to have a thorough understanding of the community's knowledge and beliefs around violence, power, gender and SGBV issues. Knowing the social and cultural aspects of SGBV (and its causes and consequences) help selecting relevant topics and projects to implement. It is also useful for designing programs that meet the community's need for SGBV prevention and response.

This can be done through:

- Secondary data collection;
- Field surveys;
- Focus group discussions;
- Consultations with actors already working in the targeted area/community.

### 3 The outreach phase

Before starting any activity that engages men, boys or male youth, the first phase is to reach the participants and include them in the project. The outreach phase is critical to ensure the impact of the intervention and sustainability of participation. It is often advised that the following steps are followed:

#### 3.1 Build trust within the community

Before engaging men and boys in any SGBV prevention activities, informing the community about the organization, its mandate, and the services it provides is an important step to help the potential participants to engage in such project. It will enable an environment where the community accepts the organization's presence and action.

This can be done through door-to-door visit and counseling about available services tailored to the population needs, diffusion of key messages and information about services in general (e.g.: Name of the frontline worker, name of the organization, mandate/area of work, services that are provided: services to women and girls<sup>2</sup>)

#### 3.2 Involve women and girls and enable their participation

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<sup>1</sup> Organizations that engage men and boys are often involved in the MenEngage Network. This network can be reach through the internet and provide a community of practices for the male engagement

<sup>2</sup> It is recommended not to introduce any specific activities for women and girls, e.g.: case management, or life skills.

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Any SGBV prevention program is first aiming at preventing and responding to violence - to ultimately - end violence that is directed mostly towards women and girls. It is thus necessary to involve them in such programs.

First, women and girls might feel unsafe and it is important to explain how the project will be implemented and how it will ensure their safety. Second, women and girls can tell the type of SGBV they are facing. They can share their opinion on how to best interact with men and boys (their husband, fathers, children) to stop violence. They have a say in whether they want men and boys of their community to be involved.

This type of consultation should be done during the outreach after asking women and girls if frontline workers engage with men and boys in the community. It is also important at this stage, to share with women and girls the key messages - that if they consent- will be shared with men in the communities.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.3 Include the intervention in a broader program

Engaging men and boys should not be a goal itself but rather an output that participates in ending SGBV. Involving men and boys is a way to reach the broader community and acknowledge that SGBV prevention is everyone's responsibility.

SGBV are based on long-term cultural, legal, social and economical aspects of individuals, communities and societies that exist since centuries. It is misleading to believe that simple interventions could have a durable impact on these types of violence.

While men and boys' participation in SGBV prevention programs can have a short-term impact on the community, there is a need for broader and longer-term programs that ensure men and boys' participation at different levels of the ecological framework (individual, family, community, institutional, society levels) and different stages of a man's life (child, youth, father, employee, community member/leader...)

A good approach is to engage male youth and boys to include non-violent relationships as part of their learning process; or to involve fathers in child care programs to raise their awareness on the positive role they can have in domestic work. This can be done after outreach, after building the trust with men, and once activities with women and girls in the communities have started. Details are included in the section 4: implementation phase.

## 4 The implementation phase

### 4.1 Identify needs of men in the community

Once the outreach phase has been carried out and contact with the community has been established, the intervention should be planned according to the community's needs (men

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<sup>3</sup> An example about general information about the services to be shared with men: we are from X organization, we work in X areas, we provide services to women and girls. Services that we provide are based on their needs and interest. They can be recreational activities: drawing, they can be skills building activities: accessories etc.... No further information is recommended to be shared at the stage of outreach with men.

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and women). Starting the engagement of men and boys by addressing their general needs is considered a good practice. Sessions tailored for this purpose can be included before starting the activities directly related to SGBV prevention.

For instance, a first step would be to refer persons to appropriate services (legal, social...) to ensure that their needs are covered before engaging them in a SGBV prevention strategy. Also, disseminate messages about services and ensure women and girls' needs are responded are important actions to include in the intervention. This can be done through a needs assessment, where men are asked about their needs. E.g. need: legal information, response: coordinate with a legal service provider to facilitate a session that responds to the legal information needs of men.

This step is key to build trust and ensure that participants' voices are taken into account.

PS: this has to be done in parallel while assessing the needs of women and girls in the community.

### 4.2 Chose content

Men and boys engagement at community level is mostly done via group education. While some organizations chose to involve men and boys with a one-off intervention, researches show that efficient programs involve men and boys on a several weeks basis. Using a specific curriculum ensure that specific topics are covered and dealt without doing harm (e.g.: the difference between gender and sex, anger and stress management, healthy relationships, power and violence...)

It is also possible to use informal discussions, videos or other types of material. In this case, facilitators should have a detailed plan to make sure the intervention follows a specific strategy (according to the identified community's needs).

A good practice is to adapt the content of the sessions for addressing men's multiple interest in change (toward gender equality) and highlight men's role in care work (including child care).

It's utmost important for group education with men to start in parallel with the group education (life skills, emotional support groups etc...) with women and girls in the communities to ensure that a holistic service is provided to community members.

Note: In the below paragraph, you can find a list of toolkits in the footnote that can be used to engage with men at the community level, after going through the above-mentioned process.<sup>4</sup>

### 4.3 Facilitation skills

Facilitation skills are decisive for men and boys to engage in programs or intervention to prevent violence against women and girls. In fact, to avoid backlash and to make sure men

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<sup>4</sup> Many curricula include facilitation guidelines. See for instance: *Hand and hand against violence* (Kafa, Oxfam); Program P (ABAAD); *Male engagement toolkit* (IRC); *Resilient Communities through Community Based Interventions*; *Practical Guidelines on Engaging Men Against Gender-Based Violence For the promotion of Gender Equality* (DRC-ABAAD)

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and boys understand the objective of their engagement, it is necessary to guide them through the different steps, acknowledging their individual specificities and know how to react in case of harmful statements.

Communication skills are critical in the engagement of men and boys. This is why many guidance and manuals include a communication skills component.

It is advised to include facilitation skills guidelines in the curriculum and to train facilitators before they start engaging men and boys.

Men facilitators should be preferred: this way men and boys can better identify themselves and feel at ease sharing their ideas and opinions.

### 4.4 Safe spaces

In the case of group education, it is important to ensure that the men or boys participating are in a “safe space” where they can express their views without being blamed or judged by others and where confidentiality is respected. It is the facilitator’s role to ensure that participants feel safe by:

- Choosing an adequate location for all participants by asking them where and when they would like to meet.
- Setting up the session’s space including
- Setting up group agreement before starting the sessions
- Listening to participants and make sure their questions and remarks are taken into account
- Encouraging exchange of ideas and opinions
- Making sure participants do not feel judged or mocked while sharing their views
- Challenging harmful statements

### 4.5 Monitoring change and evaluating interventions

As part of a SGBV prevention strategy, the engagement of men and boys has the overall objective to end violence against women and girls and to ensure that women and girls feel safer in their communities. The impact of each program should be monitored and evaluated to continuously improved SGBV prevention and response.

In group sessions, it is recommended to have pre and post-tests to be handed to participants to assess their attitudes and beliefs before and after the intervention. A post-test can also be proposed 3 or 6 months after the intervention to monitor the evolution of the participants’ attitude- depending on the length of the group education/group intervention.

Focus group discussions with men and boys can be realized to evaluate the level of information and knowledge they have acquired during the intervention. It can also assess the attitude shift.

As well, focus group discussions with women and girls and safety audits can inform on the general feeling of safety existing in the community.

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In general, monitoring and evaluation reports are a good way to capitalized on programs and improve practices by sharing what has/has not worked and provide recommendations for future programming.

*Important: number of SGBV reported cases do not inform on men and boys' behavior change (an increase of SGBV reported cases does not necessarily mean that SGBV cases are increasing. It can be because women feel safer in reporting it)*

5 [Exit strategy](#)

After the implementation of an intervention engaging men and boys to prevent SGBV, a specific exit strategy<sup>5</sup> should be applied. Any intervention engaging men and boys at community level should include an exit strategy, either as part of the project or to plan possible cuts in funding. It ensures that:

- Men and boys participating in the project understand what are their future role in SGBV prevention and/or response
- Community volunteers are independent in pursuing their engagement
- Women and girls feel safer after the intervention
- The project is sustainable.

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<sup>5</sup> See for instance the EMAP implementation guide: “check in meetings with male participants regarding their personal action plans, or involvement of women participants in another group within the community”

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