



Changing social and gender norms toolkit

Retreat curriculum

Training manual

Transforming Masculinities

Equipping faith-affirming social media influencers to promote positive masculinities, gender equality and child spacing



Tearfund

Transforming Masculinities curriculum

**Promoting positive masculinities,
gender equality and child spacing**

A retreat manual for faith-affirming
social media influencers

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Transforming harmful gender norms to end sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and promote gender equality

Transforming Masculinities is an evidence-based, transformative approach for shifting norms related to gender-based violence prevention, gender equality support and family planning uptake. In Democratic Republic of Congo, a randomised control trial demonstrated a 44 per cent reduction in intimate partner violence (IPV) through Transforming Masculinities¹ while, in Nigeria, through the Masculinities, Faith and Peace (MFP) programme, the reduction was 22.2 per cent.² In both contexts, there were also improvements in attitudes toward gender equality and increased acceptance and use of modern family planning methods.

Transforming Masculinities adapted for faith-affirming social media influencers is a values-driven initiative designed to reach online communities. Rather than simply delivering predefined messages, the goal is that these influencers will undergo a deeply personal transformation as they fully embrace the principles of gender equality, family planning and the reduction of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), in order to shift norms and behaviours among their online followers. This resource sets out a sessions schedule for three days of training as part of a four-day retreat.

This pilot digital adaptation will test whether supporting faith-affirming digital influencers through the Transforming Masculinities journey leads to norm shifts and behaviour change in their online communities. The evaluation will also consider whether this is a cost-effective, scalable model for norms-shifting and behaviour change in SGBV, gender equality and family planning more generally.

Project objectives



Equip influencers to develop and disseminate positive gender and family planning messaging across core social media platforms.

Equip up to ten faith-affirming digital influencers to promote norm-shifting through social media platforms, and co-create affirming messages on gender equality, SGBV and family planning.



Promote positive attitudes and behaviour change related to SGBV and family planning among online communities through sustained digital advocacy and engagement.

Create a supportive online environment where attitudes towards SGBV and family planning evolve through consistent, relatable and values-driven messaging.



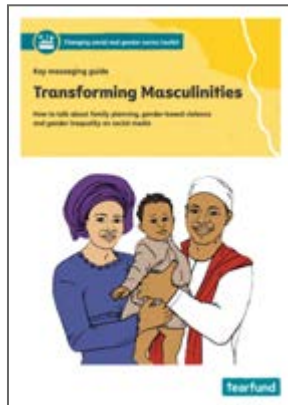
Prepare for scale by learning about and testing the impact of influencers' messages on norms, attitudes and behaviours relating to SGBV and family planning.

Assess the effectiveness, feasibility and acceptability of this approach for potential adaptation and scale-up, and for informing other digital social norms-shifting strategies. Identify shifts in norms, attitudes and behaviour among the followers of the participating faith-affirming digital influencers.

¹ <https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/research-report/rethinking-relationships-moving-from-violence-to-equality>

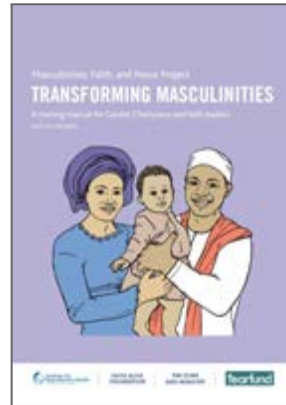
² <https://www.irh.org/resource-library/mfp-project-results/>

The key resources for the biblical reflections on the topics of SGBV, gender equality and positive masculinities are:



Transforming Masculinities: Training manual

Training manual used for faith leaders' workshops and to train Gender Champions



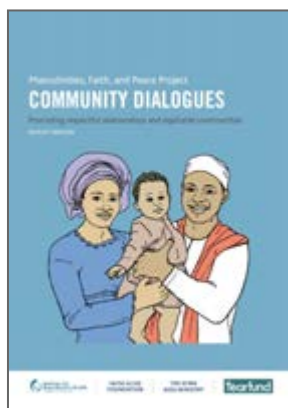
Transforming Masculinities – Masculinities, Faith and Peace: Muslim version

The Muslim training manual for Gender Champions in the Masculinities, Faith and Peace (MFP) project



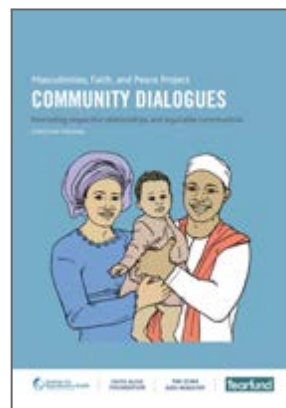
Transforming Masculinities – Masculinities, Faith and Peace: Christian version

The Christian training manual for Gender Champions in the Masculinities, Faith and Peace (MFP) project



Community dialogues – Masculinities, Faith and Peace: Muslim version

Promoting respectful relationships, equitable communities, child spacing and social cohesion



Community dialogues – Masculinities, Faith and Peace: Christian version

Promoting respectful relationships, equitable communities, child spacing and social cohesion



Hand in hand: Bible studies

Resource for faith leaders on healthy gender relationships, as a support in delivering sermons, sharing testimonies and counselling couples

Introduction to detailed activities

This resource gives details of relevant activities a facilitator could use in the different training sessions in the retreat. Our recommendation is for three days of training, based around this resource, followed by a fourth day spent discussing content creation.

The number of facilitators will depend on your group size but we recommend a minimum of two, ideally a man and a woman. This is helpful (though not essential) for activities requiring participants to break into men's and women's groups.

Depending on the context and the time you have, you can adapt the specific training activities and the guidelines for each of the sessions. Alternative scriptures for both Christian and Muslim participants are provided throughout.

Following the chronology of the activities and explaining clearly the concepts they deal with will help create a coherent, step-by-step process that will facilitate understanding, learning, change and impact. Write key definitions/concepts on a flipchart prior to the workshop and display it on the wall for participants to see and refer to throughout the programme.

Activity 1:

Why should we address sexual and gender-based violence?



Learning objective:

- To make SGBV relevant to participants' faith and cultural context as a critical issue that needs to be addressed both from a spiritual and social point of view

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts, marker pens, sticky notes/flash cards or small pieces of paper (you could cut pieces of paper into eight), sticky tape or sticky tack for sticking paper to walls. There are different options for this activity: choose the most appropriate.

Part 1 – SGBV in my community: sharing stories

Suggested steps:

1. With participants, decide on a set of ‘group agreements’ or ground rules, such as the need to maintain confidentiality and mutual respect (see ‘Activity 3: Group agreements’ in the Transforming Masculinities training manual for more detail).
2. Ask the participants to get into groups. (Depending on the number of participants, divide them into groups of three to four. You can sort them into groups by going around the circle and giving everyone a number, ie 1, 2, 3... 1, 2, 3... People with the same number gather in the same group.)
3. Hand each group a flipchart and markers and give them the following instructions:
 - a. Think of an incident in your online community/village/parish relating to domestic or sexual violence (rape, physical violence on women and girls, etc).

Note:

Explain to the groups that they should not name specific people in their example, but rather include just general information such as their gender, age and perhaps role, eg a student, a young girl of [x age] or a married man of [x age], or a police officer etc.

- b. What was the story?
- c. Who was the victim?
- d. Who was the perpetrator?
- e. What would you have done better if you were involved or asked to intervene?
- f. Are you aware of the latest SGBV statistics?
- g. Why do you think it is important to address SGBV?

Scriptures to reflect on:

- **For Christians:**
Draw a diagram of a church building on a flipchart, and write ‘1 Corinthians 12:12–27’ as the title.
- **For Muslims:**
Draw a diagram of a mosque on a flipchart and write ‘Qur’an 3:104, 16:90 and 4:135’ as the title.

Questions to reflect on:

- a. What do you do on a daily basis to protect yourself and others from sexual and gender-based violence?
- b. What do you lack that would help protect others or yourself?

Part 2 – Speaking out

Ask the participants to remain in their small groups. Tell them that, as people of faith and good citizens and neighbours, we can't keep silent on these injustices.

Explain that, within the context of religious faith, the scriptures give us a mandate to act. Read a couple of relevant key passages:

For Christians:

Proverbs 31:8–9

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Isaiah 1:17

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

As we fulfil this mandate to challenge injustice, we become a part of God's mission to restore and redeem all of creation. This mission will ultimately be fulfilled in the new creation (Revelation 21:1–5), where there will be no more injustice. Later in the manual, we will be exploring the life of Jesus as an example of this mission.

For Muslims:

Qur'an 3:104

And from among you there must be a party who invite people to all that is good and enjoin the doing of all that is right and forbid the doing of all that is wrong.

Qur'an 16:90

Surely Allah enjoins justice, kindness and the doing of good to kith and kin, and forbids all that is shameful, evil and oppressive. He exhorts you so that you might be mindful.

Qur'an 4:135

Believers! Be upholders of justice, and bearers of witness to truth for the sake of Allah, even though it may either be against yourselves or against your parents and kinsmen, or the rich or the poor: for Allah is more concerned with their wellbeing than you are. Do not, then, follow your own desires lest you keep away from justice. If you twist or turn away from (the truth), know that Allah is well aware of all that you do.

Sahih al-Bukhari (6011) and Sahih Muslim (2586)

The Prophet (PBUH) said: 'The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy are just like one body. When one limb suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever.'

You can also invite Muslim participants or those of other faiths to share with the group examples from their own scriptures that discuss these topics.

Provide an equal space for participants of all different faiths to share reflections relevant to this topic.

1. Read the relevant scripture below.

1 Corinthians 12:12–27

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body – whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’ On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Qur'an 49:10–11

The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful of Allah so you may be shown mercy.

O believers! Do not let some 'men' ridicule others, they may be better than them, nor let 'some' women ridicule other women, they may be better than them. Do not defame one another, nor call each other by offensive nicknames. How evil it is to act rebelliously after having faith! And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the 'true' wrongdoers.

2. After the passage has been read, invite the groups to take ten minutes to reflect on the message in relation to the issue of SGBV and those affected by it. (Refer back to Part 1 of the exercise on how it has affected people.)
3. Now ask the group to write on sticky notes two responses to each of the following questions:

For Christians:

- a. Why must Christians address this issue? (Example: It is because we are all one body, and what affects one person affects us all. There are no weak parts of the body: all are equal.)
- b. What is our responsibility towards those who are affected? (Example: As one body we must nurture, care for and support those affected. We can't ignore the suffering of women and girls, because the 'body of Christ' is suffering and affected.)
- c. What should the ideal church (as the body of Christ) be for those who have experienced SGBV in this context? (Example: The ideal church should be a safe space, free of suffering, condemnation, stigma or rejection, and free of discrimination, judgement or abuse.)

For Muslims:

- a. Why must Muslims be involved with this issue?
- b. What is our responsibility towards those who are affected?
- c. What should the community (ummah) be or do for those who have experienced SGBV in this context?

Note:

It is very important to be inclusive in the language you use when there are participants of different faiths. Eg: Use 'people of faith' instead of 'Christians', 'holy text'/'scriptures' instead of 'the Bible', 'places of worship' instead of 'church'.

4. Invite the participants to come and paste their responses on the church/places of worship illustration on the flipchart, filling it in with the sticky notes.
5. Tell them that we will always come back to this whenever we are in doubt or debating why we should do this work so that we can remind ourselves that this is what is expected of us as Christians/people of faith and good citizens and neighbours.
6. Conclude this session by linking Parts 1 and 2 of this session, by underlining that the issue of violence against women and girls is something that has affected all our lives and more recently, online communities. We can see from the stories, and we now understand that it

affects the body of Christ/our faith group. Therefore, as Christians/people of faith, it is our calling to break the silence and not be passive about this. Quote from the relevant scripture:

Proverbs 31:8–10

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Qur'an 16:90

God commands justice, doing good, and generosity towards relatives and He forbids what is shameful, blameworthy, and oppressive. He teaches you, so that you may take heed.

Hadith 13 of An-Nawawi

None of you has faith until he loves for his brother, or his neighbour, what he loves for himself.

(See also **Sahih al-Bukhari (Hadith 13)** and **Sahih Muslim (Hadith 45)**)

These hadiths talk about brotherhood and sisterhood, with the use of 'his brother' here including also sisters, and so highlights the importance of loving both brothers and sisters as oneself. As Muslims, it is our calling to break the silence and not be passive about this, as the Qur'an commands us:

Hadith 34 of An-Nawawi,

Whoever of you sees an evil must then change it with his hand. If he is not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his tongue. And if he is not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his heart. And that is the slightest [effect of] faith.

(See also **Sahih Muslim 49** and **Riyad as-Salihin 184**)

7. Ask people for any feedback, responses or additional comments, then conclude this session.



Activity 2:

What is sexual and gender-based violence?

Key definitions for this section

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV):

SGBV refers to a wide range of acts that violate people's human rights, including the sexual abuse of children, sexual assault and harassment, domestic violence, rape and forced marriages. It includes any abusive act, attempted act or threat of a sexual, physical, emotional or economic nature

- directed at a person because of their gender identity
- using coercion, power/authority or force
- without consent/against their will
- having or likely to have harmful consequences

Violence:

The use of force or power to harm and/or control someone or to enforce/impose one's own preferences, decisions or wants on others. Violence can manifest in physical, emotional, verbal, sexual or economic ways, and includes both actual and threatened violence.

Sexual violence:

Refers to any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined here as any act of non-consensual sexual intercourse.

Gender:

Widely shared ideas and expectations about the economic, social and cultural attributes of women and men. Such ideas include stereotypical notions of feminine/female and masculine/male characteristics, roles and abilities, and commonly shared expectations that guide the behaviour of women and men.

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV):

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is an act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media against a person on the basis of gender. It includes stalking, harassment, grooming, exploitation, non-consensual sharing of intimate pictures/revenge porn, and sending of unsolicited sexual photos.

Learning objective:

- To help participants understand what SGBV is and to be able to differentiate between different forms of SGBV, and also to understand the concepts of gender and violence

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts and marker pens

Preparation: Write these reflection questions on the flipcharts:

1. What is your own understanding of SGBV?
2. What are the different types of SGBV you now know?

Taking each word in turn, invite the participants to discuss in their small groups what they understand by the following terms: 'violence', 'sexual violence' and 'gender'. Then explain to them what is meant by the term 'sexual and gender-based violence', using the notes above.



Activity 3:

What are the root causes and consequences of SGBV?

Key definition for this section

Perpetrator:

A person who directly causes violence or abuse of another against his/her will.

Learning objectives:

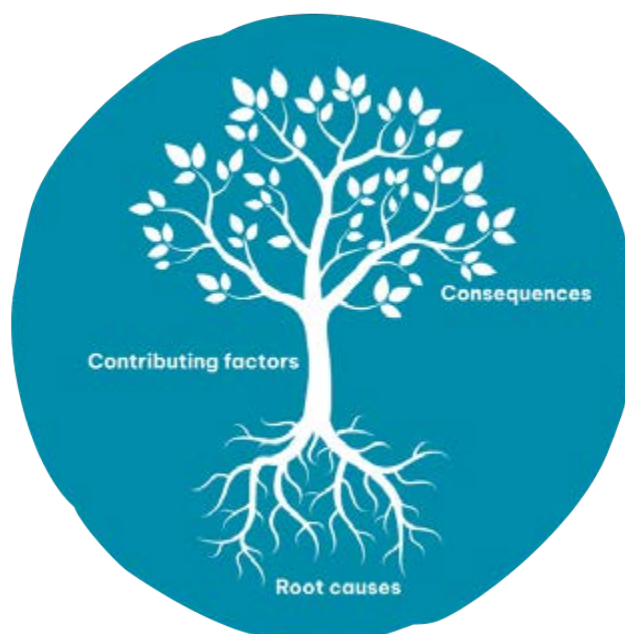
- to learn and understand the root causes of SGBV
- to be able to differentiate between causes, contributing factors and consequences

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts, marker pens, sticky notes/flash cards or small pieces of paper (you could cut pieces of paper into eight), sticky tape or sticky tack for sticking paper to walls

Preparation: Draw a picture of a tree with roots, and title it 'Problem tree'. Write 'consequences' on the branches, Contributing factors on the tronc and 'root causes' on the roots. For Part 1, on four large, coloured papers, write one of the following letters: S, G, B and V.

Problem tree



Problem tree activity: an explanation

A problem tree provides an overview of all the known causes and effects of an identified problem. This is important in planning a behaviour change project as it establishes the context in which a project is to occur. Understanding the context helps reveal the complexity of life and this is essential in planning a successful project. A problem tree involves writing causes expressed in negative words (eg lack of knowledge or money, etc). Reversing the problem tree, by replacing negative statements with positive ones, creates a solution tree. A solution tree identifies the means to end a problem, and provides an overview of the range of projects or interventions that need to occur to solve the core problem.

Suggested steps:

1. Explain to participants that you are now going to work as a group to identify the root causes of SGBV. Stress the importance of understanding the root causes if we are to respond effectively to SGBV. You can explain this using a simple analogy: 'When you are unwell and perhaps running a temperature, you go to the doctor and he/she asks you questions to understand the cause of the fever and to diagnose the medical condition. This is important so he/she can prescribe the correct medicine to cure the illness quickly and properly.' It is also important to discuss the consequences of SGBV and the different layers of its impact on an individual's or the community's life.
2. Divide the participants into groups of three to four and ask them to look at the examples of SGBV they have listed. Give each group a flipchart and ask them to categorise the acts of violence into the following categories: physical, emotional, sexual and economic. It's important to understand and distinguish between the different types of SGBV, such as intimate partner violence (among married couples/intimate partners), non-partner violence/rape, child abuse.
3. After they have done this, display the flipcharts for all to see and proceed with the 'Problem tree' activity (see explanation above).

4. Ask the group why they think violence occurs in our society. Who do they think are the perpetrators? Does it happen disproportionately against women and girls?
5. In their groups, ask them to brainstorm the consequences and root causes of violence. Give them ten minutes to discuss this. Explain to them that the root causes have different layers, such as structural, political and social.
6. After the discussion, ask the groups to list three main consequences of SGBV and three main root causes of SGBV on separate sticky notes/pieces of paper. Invite them then to present these ideas to the larger group and then stick the sticky notes on the relevant section of the 'Problem tree'.

(NB: Make sure that, when discussing consequences, the subject of marital rape is mentioned, as this will make space for further discussion later on.)

7. Categorise the different types of consequences of SGBV according to the following types: economic, physical, social, sexual, political, emotional, etc. Help participants to understand and acknowledge that the consequences of SGBV are multiple; therefore, our response should be the same and not just focusing on one aspect. Faith communities are in a great position to address more than one aspect, and therefore can play a pivotal role in helping/supporting survivors.
8. Reflections questions for participants:
 - a. Do you think that there can be an end to SGBV? Why and how?
 - b. How can you address harmful masculine behaviours and social norms to end SGBV?
 - c. Do you still think that alcohol and improper dress are the reasons why SGBV thrives?
 - d. What are your thoughts on men seeking consent for sexual relations, respecting their partner's choices?
 - e. Can men also speak out when they witness any kind of abuse?
 - f. How can men reject the use of any form of violence in relationships? (Violence is not acceptable under any circumstance.)
9. Conclude this discussion and explain that we will discuss this further in the session on 'Power and status'.

Activity 4:

SGBV in religious texts and religious communities

Learning objective:

- to draw from the previous discussions to give a contextual understanding of SGBV in the Bible/in faith settings

People are often not aware that there is a story of rape in the Bible and the Qur'an. This will also support discussion (based on scriptures) about the harmful masculine behaviours that led to the rape of Tamar and Talle, and other forms of abuse.

Note:

Do this in a safe way so that no one feels that their faith is being singled out or judged.

Time: 60 minutes

Suggested steps:

1. Ask the participants how they are feeling. Do an energiser: you will find many examples in the 'Ice-breakers and energisers' section of the Transforming Masculinities training manual. Invite a participant to share and lead an activity with the group.
2. Tell participants that sexual violence is not something that just started happening recently: this has been going on for centuries and the underlying causes have remained the same. Tell them that we are going to read a story from scripture that some of us may not have come across before.
3. Ask a participant to read the relevant passage below. Then invite participants to go back into their previous small groups. Hand each group a flipchart and marker pens.

2 Samuel 13:1–22

In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David.

Amnon became so obsessed with his sister Tamar that he made himself ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.

Now Amnon had an adviser named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man. He asked Amnon, 'Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me?'

Amnon said to him, 'I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.'

'Go to bed and pretend to be ill,' Jonadab said. 'When your father comes to see you, say to him, "I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand."''

So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, 'I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand.'

David sent word to Tamar at the palace: 'Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him.' So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it. Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat.

'Send everyone out of here,' Amnon said. So everyone left him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, 'Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand.' And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom. But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, 'Come to bed with me, my sister.'

'No, my brother!' she said to him. 'Don't force me! Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.' But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.

Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, 'Get up and get out!'

'No!' she said to him. 'Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.'

But he refused to listen to her. He called his personal servant and said, 'Get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her.' So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing an ornate robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore. Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.

Her brother Absalom said to her, 'Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart.' And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman.

When King David heard all this, he was furious. And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar.

Arma Ya'u and Talle (*adapted from a traditional story*)

In the course of time, Arma Ya'u son of Dahe fell in love with Talle, the beautiful sister of Abashe son of Dahe.

Arma Ya'u became so obsessed with his sister Talle that he made himself ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.

Now Arma Ya'u had an adviser named Madugu son of Chindo, Dahe's brother. Madugu was a very shrewd man. He asked Arma Ya'u, 'Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me?'

Arma Ya'u said to him, 'I'm in love with Talle, my brother Abashe's sister.'

‘Go to bed and pretend to be ill,’ Madugu said. ‘When your father comes to see you, say to him, “I would like my sister Talle to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand.”’

So Arma Ya’u lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Arma Ya’u said to him, ‘I would like my sister Talle to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand.’

Dahe sent word to Talle at the palace: ‘Go to the house of your brother Arma Ya’u and prepare some food for him.’ So Talle went to the house of her brother Arma Ya’u, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it. Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat.

‘Send everyone out of here,’ Arma Ya’u said. So everyone left him. Then Arma Ya’u said to Talle, ‘Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand.’ And Talle took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Arma Ya’u in his bedroom. But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, ‘Come to bed with me, my sister.’

‘No, my brother!’ she said to him. ‘Don’t force me! Such a thing should not be done in Namuduka! Don’t do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Namuduka. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.’ But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.

Then Arma Ya’u hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Arma Ya’u said to her, ‘Get up and get out!’

‘No!’ she said to him. ‘Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.’

But he refused to listen to her. He called his personal servant and said, ‘Get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her.’ So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing an ornate robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore. Talle put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.

Her brother Abashe said to her, ‘Has that Arma Ya’u, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart.’ And Talle lived in her brother Abashe’s house, a desolate woman.

When King Dahe heard all this, he was furious. And Abashe never said a word to Arma Ya’u, either good or bad; he hated Arma Ya’u because he had disgraced his sister Talle.

4. Ask the participants to brainstorm and reflect on the following:
 - a. What is this story about?
 - b. Who are the main characters and what are their roles in this story?
 - c. What caused the rape of Tamar/Talle?
 - d. What were the roles of men in the story?
 - e. What were the consequences for Tamar/for Talle?
 - f. What did David/Dahe do? Was what he did just, as far as Tamar/Talle was concerned?

5. Give the participants 20 minutes to discuss the questions and then invite them to present their conclusions to the larger group.
6. Ensure you underline these key messages:
 - a. The rape of Tamar/Talle was planned and her role as a woman in that household made her vulnerable to exploitation. (She couldn't refuse to serve Amnon/Arma Ya'u or to cook for him, and had no voice despite being a king's daughter. After being raped, she was disgraced, traumatised and shunned.)
 - b. Amnon/Arma Ya'u used his position and power over Tamar/Talle to get what he wanted, despite the harm it caused her. He chose to violate her.
 - c. The impact on Tamar's/Talle's life was devastating, as was the loss of dignity.
 - d. Jonadab/Madugu gave bad counsel to Amnon/Arma Ya'u. (An example of how men and boys don't intervene or model positive behaviours even if they themselves don't perpetrate violence.)
 - e. Absalom/Abashe Talle asked Tamar/Talle to be silent, and did not help her get justice. (Compare with how many survivors today are silenced and asked to suffer in silence, without getting the help and support they need.)
 - f. David/Dahe wanted to maintain the honour of his house, rather than protect his daughter. He also silenced her and didn't act as a fair king or father should have.
 - g. **For Christians:** David had a legacy of sexual violence: he had previously used his power and privilege as the king of Israel to have sex with Bathsheba (who was not in a position to refuse even though she was married to someone else), then he had her husband killed. Remember that SGBV is not always using physical force: most often it's the use of power and coercion to make people vulnerable and powerless.
7. Discuss the following questions:
 - a. Why do you think women are silent in the face of violence?
 - b. Do you think leaders and influencers are really doing enough to reduce SGBV?
 - c. Is there any relationship between power/authority/influence and SGBV?
8. Conclude by making the links between this passage and the previous session on how violence is a choice, and is often not contested. Make the point that often other men don't intervene to stop the abuse. Also emphasise that God condemns SGBV, and so such behaviour is not acceptable.



Activity 5: Gender boxes (Part 1)

Key definitions for this section

Gender socialisation:

The process by which people learn and internalise expectations and stereotypes about how males and females should behave, what kinds of jobs they should hold, and how they are perceived and treated by others.

Power:

The ability to exert oneself in the world and/or control or influence other people and/or resources.

Privilege:

A right or benefit that is given to some people and not others.

Learning objective:

- to reflect on gender socialisation and power/privilege so that participants have a clear understanding of broader gender dynamics and how they are connected to violence

Time: 25–30 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts, marker pens, sticky notes/flash cards or small pieces of paper (you could cut pieces of paper into eight), sticky tape or sticky tack for sticking paper to walls

Preparation: Draw two boxes on a flipchart, and label one box 'Act like a man' and the other 'Act like a woman'.

Suggested steps:

- Start by telling participants that you would like to expand on the issue of gender so that everyone understands better what this means. Say you will look at the different ways in which men and women are seen in our society.
- Divide the group into two groups (mixed), and tell one group that they will discuss 'acting/being like a man' and the other group will discuss 'acting/being like a woman'.
- Ask Group 1 to discuss and answer the following three questions:
 - Give examples of messages that men/boys are given when they are told to 'act like a man/boy'. (Be tough, not emotional, decision-maker, protector, provider, adviser, the person who disciplines, can have multiple partners, shouldn't ask for help, controls the finances and the women in the house, etc). Write these down on coloured sticky/flash cards and stick them on the flipchart in the relevant box.
 - Where (eg home, schools, etc) and whom do these messages come from?
 - How are these messages given, sent or conveyed (eg sermons, TV/radio, school, etc)?

4. Ask Group 2 to discuss and answer the following three questions:
 - a. Give examples of messages that women/girls are given when they are told to 'act like a woman/girl'. (A woman cannot lead, she has to give birth to many children, if she can't then she is dishonourable or not valued, she must not speak too much, she has to be submissive and obedient, be faithful, etc.)
 - b. Where and from whom do these messages come?
 - c. How are these messages given, sent or conveyed?
5. Ask the groups to share ten to 12 key messages and record them in the relevant 'Gender box' on the flipchart.
6. Now ask the participants the following questions, and record their responses outside the respective boxes:
 - a. What happens to men/boys and women/girls who don't conform to these ways? (Beaten, raped, shamed, stigmatised, harassed, coerced to do things they don't want to, etc.)
 - b. How are men and women kept within these boxes? What strategies/tools/actions are used?
 - c. Are there men and women who don't conform to these messages? How do they do that?
 - d. Are there messages here that are harmful to men and women? (Refer to what happens when they don't conform to messages.)
 - e. Are there specific consequences for women and girls who don't conform?
7. Now ask both groups to reflect on how women and girls might feel when they experience these harmful actions/words because they don't conform or when they are forced to conform.
8. You can also ask about how men and boys feel when forced to conform to these 'boxes'.
9. Ask the participants to share their thoughts on this and conclude by saying that we can now begin to see how society creates very different rules for the behaviours of men and women. Explain that these rules are sometimes called 'gender norms' because they define what is 'normal' for how men and women should think, feel and act. Explain that these rules restrict the lives of both women and men by keeping men in their 'Act like a man' box and women in their 'Act like a woman' box.

Activity 6: Gender boxes (Part 2)

Learning objective:

- to help participants imagine/explore an alternative model for being a man and a woman – a model based on equality and equitable relationships

Time: 25–30 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts and marker pens

Preparation: The 'Gender boxes' flipcharts with 'Act like a man' and 'Act like a woman' lists. Another flipchart with two columns labelled 'Transformed man' and 'Transformed woman'.

Suggested steps:

1. Ask the participants how they are feeling and invite one of them to lead the group in an energiser activity.
2. Tell them that we are going to revisit the 'Gender boxes' but we want to end the day on a positive note.
3. Divide them into groups of three to four, and ask them to discuss the following:
 - a. Which gender has been kept in the boxes more? Why do you think that is?
 - b. How can men and women share household chores and caregiving responsibilities?
 - c. How can couples make key household and financial decisions together?
 - d. How can men affirm and appreciate women's efforts and opinions?
 - e. How can men support their wives' professional or personal ambitions?
4. After about ten minutes of discussion, ask each group to come up with five characteristics each of men and women who are living outside of these 'Gender boxes'. What do these men and women do? etc. Ask them if they know any real people who are doing this.
5. After giving them another five to ten minutes, ask for their responses and record these in the respective columns on the 'Transformed man' and 'Transformed woman' flipcharts.
6. Stress that change is not impossible and that, with time, persistence and faith we can become these 'transformed' men and women. It is important to commit to this process of change.
 - a. Ask them: if there was one thing they could change about themselves, what would they want it to be?
 - b. Ask them to share what they will do to work towards this change.
 - c. What challenges might participants face if they chose to live out these transformed values? How can we address these challenges and support each other?
7. Conclude the session by thanking them for their active participation.

Recapping and closing

Learning objective:

- to recap on the day, remind everyone of what has been learnt and emphasise key learning points

Time: 15 minutes

Suggested steps:

1. Thank the participants for their active participation during the day, and acknowledge their input.
2. Recap by taking them through the agenda for the day and by summarising key points discussed in each session.

Note:

Ask your co-facilitator (if you have one) to take notes, and write them on a flipchart to revise at the end of the day or the morning of the following day.

3. Give a brief outline of the programme for the following day.
4. Take them through the group agreements and ask for feedback, questions, additions and reflection.
5. Close the day with prayer, and invite different people from different denominations/faiths to pray.

Day 2

Activity 7: Prayer session, key reflections and learning from Day 1

Learning objective:

- to enable the group to reflect on their key take-away for Day 1

Time: 30 minutes

6. Welcome the participants and ask them how they are feeling. Give them time to respond and acknowledge their responses.
7. After asking a participant to pray and bless the day, invite the group to reflect and share by asking them for general feedback. Then invite participants to share their most important take-aways from the previous day.
8. Facilitate the discussion informally using open-ended questions to explore how they could apply what they've learnt so far, and to encourage deeper reflection.
9. Summarise the main points and themes to affirm the group's contributions.
10. Set the stage by briefly explaining what will happen on Day 2.

Activity 8: Gender and creation

Learning objectives:

- to follow on from the earlier discussion on gender and link it to creation
- to help participants understand that current gender norms, which are harmful, aren't compatible with the creation story
- to debunk the myth that men and women were not created as equals

Time: 45–60 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts, marker pens, sticky notes/flash cards or small pieces of paper (you could cut pieces of paper into eight), sticky tape or sticky tack for sticking paper to walls. Last activity flipcharts to be visible for easy reference.

Suggested steps:

1. Tell the participants that you are now going to look again at scriptures and reflect on what you discussed yesterday.
2. Ask a participant to read the relevant passage from the options below, for everyone to hear.

Genesis 1:26–28

Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

Qur'an 49:10–13

The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy. O ye who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed: And those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong. O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: And spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it...But fear Allah: For Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)).

Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

Qur'an 30:20–22

Among His Signs in this, that He created you from dust; and then, - behold, ye are men scattered (far and wide)! And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are Signs for those who know.

3. Display the two 'Gender boxes' from Activity 5, the characteristics of men and women and their roles and responsibilities, and ask the participants whether they see a pattern. Allow for a few responses. Follow up by asking if they think these are based on equality. Do they reflect the equal value of both men and women? Do they reflect the equal status and power of men and women?
4. Divide them into groups of three to four and ask them to reflect on these questions and to write down five key thoughts per group. Give them about ten minutes to discuss and five minutes for each group to present.
5. The message that needs to be emphasised is that, based on what we see and what we know from our lived experience, men and women aren't considered, treated or thought to be equal. Men are considered to be superior to women, and this is reflected in the messages seen in the 'Gender box'.
6. Ask the groups to discuss the following based on the scripture reading and to present their thoughts to the larger group. Give them 15 minutes.

For Christians: Do you think men and women were created in the image of God?

For Muslims: Do you think men and women were created from one soul?

7. Key messages:

For Christians: We were created in the image of the Trinity, equal in power and value, different in our skills and talents. We were created for companionship with God and one another. Sin separated us from God and one another. Ask them to read the following scripture: Galatians 3:28. Ask participants to share other scriptures they know that promote gender equality and write them on flipcharts and stick them on the wall.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

For Muslims: We were created in a unique form, equal in power and value, different in our skills and talents. We were created for companionship with Allah and one another. Ask them to read the the following scripture:

Qur'an 49:9–11

If two groups of believers fight each other, reconcile between them. But if one group aggresses against the other, fight the aggressing group until it complies with God's command. Once it has complied, reconcile between them with justice, and be equitable. God loves the equitable. The believers are brothers, so reconcile between your brothers, and remain conscious of God, so that you may receive mercy. O you who believe! No people shall ridicule other people, for they may be better than they. Nor shall any women ridicule other women, for they may be better than they. Nor shall you slander one another, nor shall you insult one another with names. Evil is the return to wickedness after having attained faith. Whoever does not repent—these are the wrongdoers.

Qur'an 9:71

The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practise regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise.

8. Key reflections:

For Christians: We were created equal; sin separated all of us from God, and one another. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. We were all redeemed from our sins, our relationships with God were restored, and we have been made aware of the need for restoring relationships with one another, man and woman. We can see this in how Jesus interacts with women, as equals. In Christ we are able to restore those broken relationships; even though it is hard, we must work towards this by the grace of God who makes all things possible (Philippians 4:13). Also the greatest commandments, as Jesus shared, reflect these principles of restoring relationship between people and God, and between each other. We do not kill, destroy and use violence because we love our God with all our hearts, minds and strength, and also because we love others as ourselves.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

For Muslims: We were created from the same source; our relationships with Allah were restored after the work of Shaitan, and we have been made aware of the need for restoring relationships with one another, man and woman. We can see this in that the Prophet (PBUH) interacted with women as full human beings. In Islam we are able to restore those broken relationships; even though it is hard, we must work towards this by the grace of Allah who makes all things possible.

Qur'an 66:4

If you repent to God, then your hearts have listened. But if you collaborate against him, then God is his Protector, as are Gabriel and the righteous believers. In addition, the angels will support him.



Activity 9: Power and status

Key definitions for this section

Gender socialisation:

The process by which people learn and internalise expectations and stereotypes about how males and females should behave, what kinds of jobs they should hold, and how they are perceived and treated by others.

Power:

The ability to exert oneself in the world and/or control or influence other people and/or resources.

Learning objective:

- to create an understanding of how status in society gives power to individuals and how people use power to interact with others

Time: 45–60 minutes

Materials:

Option 1: The card game

Part 1: A pack of playing cards

Part 2: Two flipcharts with titles 'More power' and 'Less power' written on them

Option 2: Power and status – community roles

Cut paper/labels with the respective community roles written on them

Additional: Flipcharts and marker pens

Note:

There are two different activities to choose from, so read through when preparing and select the most appropriate/practical activity for your group.

Option 1: The card game

Part 1 – Status

Suggested steps:

Explain that you are now going to discuss status by playing a game.

1. Shuffle the pack of playing cards.
2. Explain that the highest value in the deck is the ace, then the king, queen, jack, ten, nine and so on. If they're not familiar with the order in a pack, explain it, or remove the ace and make the king the highest-value card.
3. Ask the participants to choose a card from the deck, and to keep it face down without looking at it.
4. Now ask each of them to hold up the cards on their foreheads for others to see. They are still not allowed to look at their own card or to tell others what their card is. Explain that when you give the command/clap, they will be invited to get up from their seats and mingle with each other. Before they get up, give them the rules and make sure they understand them:

Do not talk, except to greet others according to the status or social position of their card. For example: The king will be treated with much respect, while the person with the lowest card (eg a two or three) may be ignored or excluded.

5. Encourage participants to greet each other and react to others' status through gestures and facial expressions, not words.
6. After a few minutes of interaction, ask the participants to organise themselves into a line, with the highest status at one end and the lowest at the other end, still without talking.
7. While they are in the line, ask them to look at the line and their position in it, and then to guess what their card value is, and to explain how they arrived at this conclusion.
8. Ask the participants to look at their cards now. Ask for feedback using the following questions:
 - a. How did it feel, especially for those with higher cards?
 - b. How did it feel not to be treated well, especially for those with lower cards?
 - c. How did it feel to be in the middle?
9. Ask people to take their seats and reflect on whether this happens in their communities. Are some people in our families and communities treated differently according to social status?
10. Explain that status is one's social standing in community. This refers to how they are viewed by others in the community and how much power they are perceived to have.

Emphasise the following to consolidate their understanding: Status is not something that we as individuals necessarily determine. It is usually determined by social norms, as the 'Gender box' exercise showed.

11. Ask them how they think this affects women, given that they generally have a lower status in homes, communities and wider society.

Part 2 – Power walk

Suggested steps:

1. Explain to the participants that you will build on the previous activities on 'Gender boxes' and status to look at power.
2. Ask them how power is connected to our discussion on SGBV. Refer back to the discussion on root causes of SGBV.
3. Now ask them how important they think it is to address power in preventing and responding to SGBV.
4. Review their responses and highlight the fact that:
 - a. Inequality in power and status is one of the root causes of SGBV, so it is important to understand how power operates in society, in relationships and individually.
 - b. Working to end SGBV requires that we understand how gender socialisation is connected to SGBV.
5. Write the word 'Power' on a flipchart and ask the following questions:
 - a. What do you think of when you hear the word 'power'?
 - b. How do you know if someone has power?
 - c. Who decides who has more power and who has less power?
 - d. What are some different types of power you know of?
6. Introduce the following concepts:
 - a. Power over: this refers to controlling the actions or choices of another person or group of people, limiting their freedom or opportunities, or devaluing them as a person.
 - b. Power with: this refers to working in equal partnership with others, supporting those in need and those coming together to bring change, asking for support or help.
 - c. Power to: this refers to experiencing the freedom to make your own decisions, voice your opinions, work, go to school and advance yourself as a person, and believing within yourself that you have the right to these things.
7. Ask them to look at the 'Gender box', and to think about who has more power and who has less power.
8. Ask them to share and write down their responses on the flipcharts. (More power: men, adults, employers, the wealthy, politicians, pastors, gunmen, majority ethnic groups. Less power: women, children, youth, those living in poverty, refugees, minorities, church members)

9. Now ask them to think about and reflect silently on which groups they belong to. They also need to reflect on how they felt when they had less power, and how it felt to be in that position. Invite them to reflect on times when they had more power and what that felt like.
10. Tell them that you will reflect on how power and privilege are being used in this training among participants, especially on how the men interact with women in the group.
11. Conclude by reviewing what has been covered: that we all have different levels of power, and that power is relative. Some groups or individuals tend to have more power and opportunities. The same can be said about people who have less power: there might be situations where they can have more power than others.
12. Stress that higher-status groups tend to have more power.



Option 2: Power and status – community roles

Suggested steps:

1. Ask participants each to represent a role in a community:
 - male subsistence farmer
 - church leader
 - married mother of six children
 - male village leader
 - adolescent girl in primary school
 - male village moneylender
 - male landless labourer
 - unmarried woman living with HIV
 - female primary school teacher
 - survivor of sexual violence/or intimate partner violence
2. Give each participant a label identifying his or her role.
3. Ask them to line up side by side, with plenty of space in front of them.
4. Call out a phrase that relates to activities and opportunities. If the participants in their role feel that the phrase is true for them, they step forward one pace.
5. Other phrases are called out and the process is repeated. Examples of phrases:
 - You are first to speak in a meeting
 - You control the money you earn
 - You can vote
 - You have free time
 - You are literate
 - You own land
 - You have formal education
 - You are free to wear what you like
 - You are free to travel
 - You have access to transport
 - You are able to speak your mind
 - You have influence over your community
 - You can choose where you go at whatever time
 - People listen to you and respect you
6. After all these questions, ask everyone to look around and see where the different people are now standing. Some will have taken many steps forward: some will be left behind. Facilitate a discussion using questions such as 'Who is most powerful/has most access to education, services, opportunities?', 'Who has least access/power?' 'Who has the highest/lowest status?'
7. Repeat the exercise but this time, call out a list of skills and attributes. Ask participants, still in role, to take a step forward if they believe they would have that skill.

Examples of skills/attributes:

- planning
- cooking
- writing
- organising events
- teaching
- physical strength
- childcare
- report writing
- budgeting
- reading
- resourcefulness
- local knowledge
- persuasive powers
- networking
- listening
- vegetable gardening
- public speaking
- negotiation
- sewing
- organising groups

8. Conclude with a further discussion using questions such as ‘Did people with less power move further in the second part of the activity compared with the first?’ ‘Does this surprise you?’ ‘Why?’

The activity reveals different levels of power, status, access and disadvantage, as well as diverse skills, expertise and knowledge. The least powerful may have very useful skills. And the most powerful have influence and status in society, but sometimes because of our gender, ethnic groups or status in society, people treat/interact with us differently: either with respect and dignity or without. These are social norms that govern how one group/person interacts with another. There are unwritten rules that govern our communities and sometimes they can be harmful for those with less status and power.

Attitude checklist

- What do you do on a daily basis to protect yourself from any type of violence?
- What do you lack in order to protect yourself?
- Reflect on the scripture relevant to you:

1 Corinthians 11:11–12

Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

Qur'an 4:135

Believers! Be upholders of justice, and bearers of witness to truth for the sake of Allah, even though it may either be against yourselves or against your parents and kinsmen, or the rich or the poor: for Allah is more concerned with their well-being than you are. Do not, then, follow your own desires lest you keep away from justice. If you twist or turn away from (the truth), know that Allah is well aware of all that you do.

This activity has several benefits, as it helps:

- build understanding within the group
- identify people with useful skills
- increase people's understanding of local power structures and how these need to be taken into account in subsequent activities

Activity 10: Persons and things

Learning objectives:

- to understand the presence of power in our interactions in our communities, families and in general, and how that impacts individuals and relationships
- to help participants understand that when there's an imbalance of power, the risk of violence is high

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts and marker pens

Suggested steps:

1. Divide the participants into three equal groups.

Note:

If the number of participants does not allow for equal numbers, assign the 'extra' participants to the third group which, as described below, will be the 'observers'.

2. Tell the participants that the name of this activity is 'Persons and things'. Choose, at random, one group to be the 'things', another to be 'persons', and a third to be 'observers'.
3. Read the following directions to the group:
 - a. Things: You cannot think, feel or make decisions. You have to do what the 'person' tells you to do. If you want to move or do something, you have to ask a 'person' for permission.
 - b. Persons: You can think, feel and make decisions. Furthermore, you can tell the 'things' what to do, and you have power over your 'thing'.
 - c. Observers: You just observe everything that happens.
4. Assign each 'person' a 'thing' and tell him or her that they can do whatever they want with the 'thing' within the space of the room.
5. Give approximately five minutes for the 'people' and 'things' to act out their roles and interact.
6. After five minutes, tell the persons and things that they will switch and that now the 'persons' will be 'things' and 'things' will be 'persons'. Give them another five minutes to carry out the new roles.

7. Finally, ask the groups to go back to their places in the room and use the questions below to facilitate a discussion.
 - a. How did your 'person' treat you? How did you feel? Did you feel powerless? Why or why not?
 - b. How did you treat your 'thing'? How did it feel to treat someone this way? Did it make you feel powerful? Why or why not?
 - c. Why did the 'things' obey the instructions given by the 'persons'?
 - d. Were there 'things' or 'persons' who resisted the exercise?
 - e. In your daily lives, do others treat you like 'things'? Who? Why?
 - f. For the 'observers': How did you feel not doing anything? Did you feel like interfering with what was happening? If yes, what do you think you could have done?
 - g. For the observers again: Why didn't you do anything, even though you said you felt uncomfortable, sad and sometimes angry at the way the 'person' was treating their 'thing'?
 - h. If you had been given the chance to choose between the three groups, which would you have chosen to be in and why?
 - i. Why do people treat each other like this?
 - j. In your communities, do men most often belong to one of these three groups? Which group? Do women most often belong to one of these three groups? Which group? Why do you think this is?
 - k. How does society/culture perpetuate or support these kinds of relationships?
 - l. What can we do to make sure that different groups such as men and women live in a fair world where they can enjoy the same opportunities, equal treatment and equal rights?
8. Also point out the controlling, dominant and sometimes violent ways the 'persons' treated 'things'. Ask them why they acted in such ways. Were they asked to behave in a harmful way?
9. When the roles were reversed, did you see a pattern? What was it? (When 'things' take on the role of the 'person' after experiencing what they did, most often they tend to remodel the behaviour and are sometimes even more harmful.)
10. Explain how usually when there's an imbalance of power, those with more power tend to use it in harmful ways over those without power, voice or rights. We see these dynamics between men and women in our homes, communities and relationships.
11. We also can see how our children repeat some of these behaviours: boys learn how to be a man by seeing and hearing, and girls learn how to be a woman in the same manner. They learn that one is more powerful and dominant over the other, and that they may have no voice to change things. Generally, they accept this situation as the norm and perpetuate it themselves.
12. Point out that sometimes women exert power over women and also men, and that, when the power shifts, roles shift too. Today, these roles are changing due to the changing economic and social environment, and women are increasingly becoming the primary breadwinners. Men can increase their involvement in caregiving roles, allowing their spouses to earn an income, and they can work together for the wellbeing of the family. This change in economic power can cause conflict at home if it is not discussed and agreed on in an equitable way.

13. Mention specifically how power and gender roles are used to justify marital rape. The belief that 'a husband is entitled to his wife's body' is so widespread that most people don't even acknowledge it as rape.

For Christians: The scripture from 1 Corinthians 7:4 is often used to justify such beliefs. If this comes up, ask them to read the entire section, which puts men's roles into context.

1 Corinthians 7:4

The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.

For Muslims: The first part of the Qur'anic verse 2:187 is sometimes used to justify such beliefs, while taking it out of context and misunderstanding its message. Reading the entirety of each relevant section not only explains the purpose of intimate relations but also their reciprocity:

Qur'an 2:187

Permitted for you is intercourse with your wives on the night of the fast. They are a garment for you and you a garment for them.

It is absolutely unlawful (haram) for a man to harm his wife. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) prohibited harming others in general including one who is one's 'garment', and who lives under one's care and shepherding, as mentioned in a prophetic tradition. See also:

Qur'an 30:21

And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, so that you may find tranquility in them; and He planted between you love and compassion. In this are signs for people who reflect.

Therefore, rape, abuse, ill-treatment and inflicting harm – be it physical, verbal or psychological – are completely unacceptable in such a relationship from a faith perspective.

14. Draw attention to the fact that men who aren't violent often do nothing to intervene, or engage their peers, when violence occurs, so they are just like the 'observers'. This is mainly because this use of power is acceptable behaviour and that the unwritten rules in our communities hold us back from speaking out when we see something that is not right.

For Christians: Yet, as Christians we are called to be the 'voice of the voiceless'. We can read this in Proverbs 31:8–9, and in Isaiah 58:6–7. If there's time, ask a participant to read these verses aloud.

We see Jesus intervening, speaking out against harmful behaviours and actions throughout his ministry. He rebuked social norms that were harmful; he broke through boundaries by interacting with the marginalised and oppressed, and with sinners, those who were shunned by society, including the 'religious community'.

Proverbs 31:8–9

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.

Speak up and judge fairly;

defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Isaiah 58:6–7

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter –
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

For Muslims: Read the following scripture from the Qur'an (or 16:90). You can also ask Muslim participants to suggest further verses.

Qur'an 4:135

O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

15. In conclusion, ask them to continue to reflect on this activity and their behaviour during role-play in relation to their own behaviour at home, with the women/girls in their lives, and with those who have less power in their community.

It is clear how differing levels of power and status due to gender can lead to violence in our relationships, communities and society. This is why we need to address gender norms, especially masculine norms that centre around power and control, if we are to be effective in preventing violence against women and girls or SGBV in our communities.

We can see how sometimes we have been a perpetrator, victim and an observer. Even though we have experienced traumatic events, this somehow doesn't always prevent us from using violence on others, or when we see violence we tend not to do anything about it, despite knowing how it feels.

You can also follow up with this activity if you have time: Here's a self-reflective exercise that makes the participants aware of their own position and power and how this affects others. It gives them a chance to reflect on how they can act in ways that empower others and do not dominate them.

- Ask each person to make a poster entitled 'Who am I?' They draw themselves in the centre and then list their attributes, identities, characteristics, roles – everything that might affect how others see and experience them, eg sex, age, education status, ethnicity, language, roles/jobs (economic and in the household and community), if they are a parent, membership of groups, how they dress, if they are confident/shy etc.
- Then ask them to present it to their small group and discuss the ways in which these attributes might affect others.

- Ask them to discuss how they might act to empower others, so others feel comfortable and confident (eg how they speak, how they dress, how they listen).
- You can ask for a couple of people to present back to the whole group to ensure key points are covered.



Activity 11:

Accountable practice

Key definitions for this section

Accountability:

Accountability is an active process of identifying and challenging harmful ideas and norms in order to bring about social change.

Accountable practice:

Accountable practice underscores the need to listen to all voices, including the voices of women. It provides programme staff with ways to reflect on and change their own attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, as well as those of others in their communities.

Learning objectives:

- to introduce the concept of accountable practice to participants, and provide an overview of the concept and expectations
- to help them understand why this is important, and encourage them to practise it in their personal lives and relationships

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts, marker pens, sticky notes/flash cards or small pieces of paper (you could cut pieces of paper into eight), pre-printed pledge cards (optional)

Suggested steps:

1. Explain that you are going to discuss briefly the concept of 'accountable practice' and why this is important, both at individual and community levels.
2. Ask the group what they understand by the word 'accountability'. What is the first word that comes to their mind? Write down their responses.
3. After listing the responses, provide the working definition of accountability given above: 'Accountability is an active process of identifying and challenging harmful ideas and norms in order to bring about social change.'
 - a. It requires a recognition that power and privilege lead us to prioritise our own entitlement and to discount the perspectives, needs and priorities of disadvantaged groups.
 - b. Accountability requires self-awareness and a commitment to individual action.

4. Explain to the participants the following types of accountability:
 - a. **Personal:** Refers to the ways in which we learn about and challenge our own personal biases and beliefs. Continual self-reflection works to identify, assess and transform the everyday beliefs, attitudes and interactions (big and small) that support violence against women and girls. It focuses on transformational change and learning for us, so we can model change for others.
 - b. **Relational:** Refers to the ways in which we interact with others and assess dynamics of power and privilege. It requires us to reflect on how we work with others, with community members, and with colleagues. It focuses on being an ally to women and girls, starting with you as participants of this training/workshop. This includes our relationships at home and in our workplaces, churches and community.
5. Read the relevant scriptures:

Ephesians 5:21–28

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Galatians 6:2

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

Qur'an 49:103

Hold fast together to the cable of Allah and be not divided. Remember the blessing that Allah bestowed upon you: you were once enemies then He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brothers. You stood on the brink of a pit of fire and He delivered you from it. Thus Allah makes His signs clear to you that you may be guided to the right way.

Hadith 6065 of Sahih Al-Bukhari

Allah's Messenger said, "Do not hate one another, and do not be jealous of one another, and do not desert each other, and O, Allah's worshippers! Be brothers. Lo! It is not permissible for any Muslim to desert (not talk to) his brother (Muslim) for more than three days.

Ask the participants to break into small groups of three to four and reflect on the following questions:

- a. Do you agree we should submit to one another? How?
- b. Is it only women who should submit to men, and not vice versa? As slaves to their master?
- c. Do you agree women are not entitled to make decisions regarding their bodies?

- d. What happens when there is accountability at home, and/or in the community?
 - e. Who needs to be held accountable at home/in the community?
6. After giving them ten minutes to discuss, invite them to share their discussions. After the presentations, emphasise that accountability is a crucial part of our work with men and boys, to end impunity at all levels with reference to SGBV. The need is for it to start with us individually, and for us to model behaviour that will lead to a change of culture and practice that is more accountable, especially on this issue.
 7. Ask them to write down individually two points for each of the types of accountability that they will start to practise as a result of this programme (two each for 'personal' and 'relational').

Note:

It would be good to have some pre-printed pledge cards and get them to sign them. They could then keep them to remind them of the pledges they have made.

- a. **Personal accountability** – a daily reflection about how you interacted with others, the words you used, your body language. And whether you used your power/status in a harmful way. For example, ask yourself: 'Have I criticised anyone harshly today?' and 'Did I make anyone feel uncomfortable today?'
- b. **Relational accountability** – allowing yourself to be held accountable by those you interact with. Asking them how they felt and whether there is anything you can do to improve. Giving them permission to challenge you when you misuse your power or privilege. For example, 'When I next give my child instruction at home with my wife present, I will ask her afterwards how she felt about it and whether I could have improved the way I taught my child' and, 'When I next ask my wife to do something for me, I will ask her afterwards how she felt about what I asked for and the way I asked for it'.



8. Ask those who are comfortable and willing to share their thoughts with the wider group. They can hold on to their pledge cards (if used) and come back to them occasionally to check where they are at. They can also share within their small groups of three or four, to hold themselves accountable.

Activity 12: Jesus/Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) – Model for positive masculinities

Learning objectives:

- to teach an alternative model for masculinities that can be modelled and promoted in the community dialogues
- to explore the characteristics of Jesus/Muhammad as a model to aspire to

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts and marker pens

Suggested steps:

1. Ask the group if they would like an energiser, and if they do, start a quick energiser or ask a volunteer from the group to facilitate one.
2. When everyone is settled in their seats, tell them that you are going to focus on the concept of positive masculinities.
3. Ask for suggestions from the group. Can they think of any good examples of positive masculinities? Give a few participants the opportunity to share their views.
4. Now you can introduce the title of the session: 'Jesus/Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): Model for positive masculinities'.

For Christians: State that, in many instances in the New Testament, the ultimate model for a Christian can be found in the life of Jesus. We can see how he interacted with women, those who were oppressed, those in need, those in authority and his family. Scriptures such as Ephesians 5:22–25 allow us to see that Christ is the model for our relationships.

Ephesians 5:22–25

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

For Muslims: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showed us the model for social and gender relations. He advocated for social justice, inclusive of justice in the family and fairness between women and men, supporting women's rights and interests. He included women in his teachings and prayers. At times, he was mocked by others because of the principles and causes he stood for in his times and for humanity in the longer term.

An-Nasa'i Riyad al Saliheen 33, 270

'O Allah, I declare inviolable the rights of two [physically] weak ones: the orphans and women.'

The last sermon of Prophet Muhammad, The Book of Pilgrimage

'O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers.'

It is important to note that men are reminded of their responsibilities to care for their families in a situation where many men still abandon their families, leaving women to struggle alone. Men are expected to always act in ways that are not harmful to women, but should rather show mercy at all times.

5. To explore this further, invite participants to get into groups of three or four. Each group should make a list of ten to 12 characteristics of men from their community, and then ten to 12 of Jesus Christ/Muhammad(PBUH).
6. Ask each group to discuss the following and present back key points to the larger group, giving them 20 minutes to discuss/reflect:
 - a. If you were to be Jesus or Muhammad(PUBH) today, how would you respond to SGBV survivors, wives, girls, daughters?
 - b. What kind of leader/influencer are you?
 - c. How do you interact with your followers? How best can you respond to their SGBV challenges?
 - d. Do you serve and lead with humility just like your icons of positive masculinity?
 - e. How can you promote this model in your communities, mosques and homes?
 - f. How can you personally model such behaviours just as the icons did?
7. Reflect on relevant scriptures, including those earlier on this page and below:

John 21:10–14

Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Luke 10:38

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.

Other relevant passages for Christians are: John 11:35, Luke 10:38–42, John 8:1–11 and John 4:1–26.



Activity 13:

Gender fishbowl – safe space for conversations

Learning objective:

- to create a safe space for participants to listen to each other, especially for the men to listen to the women, and for women to listen to men on their experiences, expectations and hopes

Time: 60 minutes

Preparation: Arrange the chairs/seating in such a way that there's an inner circle and an outer circle, both facing the centre.

Suggested steps:

1. Divide the participants into one group of men and one of women.
2. Invite the women to come to sit first in the inner circle. Instruct that only the inner group is to talk and the outer group (men's group initially) must listen and observe without interrupting.
3. Facilitate a discussion for 20 minutes, starting with the women's group talking. Then (without discussion between the groups) invite them to swap places, and facilitate another 20-minute discussion, this time with the men in the inner circle talking, and the women in the outer circle listening and observing. Ideally, you would have a female facilitator for the women's group and a male facilitator for the men's group – but, equally, one facilitator, either male or female, can facilitate both groups.
4. If you do not have time for all the questions, the questions in bold are important questions to ask.

Questions for women:

- a. What is the most difficult thing about being a woman/girl in... [insert the country or community name as appropriate]?**
- b. What do you want to tell men that will help them better understand women?**
- c. What do you find difficult to understand about men?
- d. How can men better support women?**
- e. How can men be better allies with women?
- f. Is there something you never want to hear said again about women?
- g. What rights are hardest for women to achieve in... [insert the country/community as appropriate]?
- h. What do you remember about growing up as a girl in...? What did you like about being a girl? What did you not like? What was difficult about being a girl?
- i. Who are some positive male influences in your life? Why are they positive?**
- j. Who are some positive female influences in your life? Why are they positive?**
- k. Is there one Bible/Qur'anic verse that you feel uplifts, protects or supports women?**
- l. Is there one Bible/Qur'anic verse that you feel disempowers women or is used against women because of misinterpretations?

Questions for men:

- a. **What is the most difficult thing about being a man/boy in... [insert the country or community name as appropriate]?**
 - b. **What do you want to tell women that will help them better understand men?**
 - c. What do you find difficult to understand about women?
 - d. How can men better support women?
 - e. How can men be better allies with women?
 - f. **What do you remember about growing up as a boy in... [country/community]? What did you like about being a boy? What didn't you like? What was difficult about being a boy?**
 - g. **Who are some positive male influences in your life? Why are they positive?**
 - h. **Who are some positive female influences in your life? Why are they positive?**
 - i. **Is there one Bible/Qur'anic verse that you feel uplifts, protects or supports women?**
 - j. Is there one Bible/Qur'anic verse that you feel disempowers women or is used against women because of misinterpretations?
5. After both groups have finished their discussions, ask the following questions to facilitate a discussion between both groups:
 - a. What surprised you about this activity?
 - b. How did you feel about talking when others were listening? Did you feel you were heard?
 - c. What did you learn?
 6. You can tell them how this activity and similar discussions in the same format can be facilitated in communities through community dialogues for a mixed group.
 7. It is important to create a safe space, so that what is said is not harmful to anyone, and so that truth is spoken in order for you to work together towards a solution. In a world where most women don't have a voice, or aren't listened to, it is important that we create a safe space for them to speak out, and to be heard.

Note:

Remind participants about the group agreements around confidentiality, respect etc during this sensitive discussion.

8. To conclude this activity, explain how most of what we know and learn about one another is shaped, influenced and challenged by stereotypes and gender and social norms. These are then re-emphasised and reinforced by many sources, such as the media and even our sermons at church. It is important to create safe spaces for dialogue to better understand each other in our homes, churches, schools and communities. Dialogues are important to work towards a society free of violence, free of SGBV.

Recapping and closing

Learning objective:

- to recap on the day, remind everyone of what has been learnt and emphasise key learning points

Time: 15 minutes

Suggested steps:

Thank the participants for their active participation during the day and acknowledge their input.

For homework, ask them to consider the following:

- a. What is your personal reflection on gender, power and the Bible/Qur'an from today's sessions?
- b. Share this reflection with your spouse/partner or a member of the opposite sex in your family and ask them how they feel about how you relate to them in this regard.
- c. Share your two pledges about personal and relational accountability with your partner/spouse/colleague and be ready to report back on their response the following day.
- d. When sharing with your partner/spouse, give some context for these reflections. You can talk about how you're attending a retreat on improving the wellbeing of the family and relationships at home and in your community, and explain this is a reflective exercise to facilitate this process of change.

Recap by taking participants through the agenda for the day and by summarising key points from each session.

Give a brief idea of the programme for the following day.

Take them through the group agreements and ask for feedback, additions and reflection.

Close the day with prayer.

Day 3

Activity 14: Prayer session, key reflections and learning from Day 2

Learning objective:

- to enable the group to reflect on their key take-away for Day 2

Time: 30 minutes

1. Welcome the participants and ask them how they are feeling. Give them time to respond and acknowledge their responses.
2. After asking a participant to pray and bless the day, invite the group to reflect and share by asking them for general feedback. Then invite participants to share their most important take-aways from the previous day.
3. Facilitate the discussion informally using open-ended questions to explore how they could apply what they've learnt so far, and to encourage deeper reflection.
4. Summarise the main points and themes to affirm the group's contributions.
5. Set the stage by briefly explaining what will happen on Day 3.

Activity 15:

Reflections on child spacing from a faith perspective

Learning objective:

- to reflect on texts in scripture that support child spacing

Time: 90 minutes

Materials: Flipchart paper, Bible/Qur'an, marker pens

Suggested steps:

1. Introduce this session on the benefits of child spacing with this activity.
 - a. Invite all participants to stand up. Then:
 - Ask participants to sit down if a member of their family has died due to childbirth or maternal health complications.
 - Ask participants to sit down if a friend of theirs has died due to childbirth or maternal health complications.
 - Ask participants to sit down if someone they know of has died due to childbirth or maternal health complications.
 - b. Invite the group to look around the room and see the fatal impact of not prioritising maternal health. Let the group know that in today's sessions we will be looking at child spacing from a religious perspective, and its benefits.

Note:

Acknowledge that this exercise may bring up strong emotions. Allow a moment of silence or reflection, and remind participants that they can step outside if they need to.

2. Remind participants about the discussions (in Activity 8) yesterday where they discussed 'Gender and creation'. Ask them to recap some of the key lessons. These should include:
 - a. Men and women are equally created in God's image.
 - b. They are not to harm each other, but to support each other
 - c. Couples should dialogue together to make decisions together that affect their family and lives together.
 - d. They both have responsibility over creation.

Note:

The following reflections will enable people to discuss the benefits of child spacing for women, children and men. They will help people see how God created men and women to be in partnership, with a plan and a purpose, and understand that each person has great value and the need to respect that value in planning our families with our partner.

3. Read out this definition of child spacing: 'Child spacing enables couples to determine the number and timing of pregnancies, including the voluntary use of methods for preventing pregnancy that are harmonious with their values and beliefs.'
4. Ask participants to reflect on what this means for them. Tell them that this session is going to explore this topic further. Acknowledge that there may be diverse views in the room. Assure participants that this is a safe space where all views will be heard. Encourage them to be open to learning from each other and from scripture.
5. Ask the group to share some of the benefits of child spacing and capture these on the flipchart.

These are some points that should be emphasised if not brought out by the group:

- maternal health
- welfare of the child (health, financial and emotional support)
- economic capacity of men
- benefits to the whole community because of reduced numbers of neglected children

Note:

Highlight children in society who are not cared for, and the health burdens on women often arising out of pregnancy. Avoid discussions slipping into debates on child spacing methods.

6. Once everyone has shared their thoughts, read out the following to the group:

Every two minutes, a woman dies from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes somewhere in the world. Most of these deaths can be prevented with adequate maternal healthcare and with the use of child spacing methods for the healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies. It is estimated that there are 80 million unintended pregnancies every year worldwide. Child spacing has an important effect on women's and children's health, family wellbeing and harmonious family life. Men should be more involved in child spacing as supportive partners and as users themselves, to reduce the currently unequal and unfair burden of responsibility on women and girls worldwide. The benefits of child spacing go beyond individual families and have a positive impact on wider society. Child spacing is not just important for health-related reasons, but it will also greatly benefit marital relationships.

As people of faith, it is important to understand this is not just about the world we live in. It is also a response to scriptural teaching. We, as people of faith, are called to partner with God in restoring creation. We are to be responsible stewards of all that we have been given, in our personal lives, our communities and the world.

For Christians: When talking about child spacing, it is important to start at the beginning of creation to reflect on God's intention for man and woman. As we have discussed previously, we were all created in the image of God, with equal value, worth and importance. Being made in the image of God also means that we share some of God's characteristics, such as creativity, a desire to live in relationship, and wisdom. In Genesis, we see that God carefully planned for creation by giving each creative act its own time: on day one, he separated light from dark, on day two he separated sky from water etc. He was intentional about his plan for creation so that when he finished he could say 'it was very good' (Genesis 1:31).

Furthermore, the world was created by God in relationship: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:26). God also invites us to take part in the creative process by giving us free will. God gave us the freedom to choose, to make decisions and to be stewards of creation. We are to do so responsibly, thinking of one another, of humanity and of the earth, and all living things.

For Muslims: When talking about child spacing, it is important to start at the beginning of creation, to reflect on Allah's intention for man and woman. As we have discussed previously, we were all created in the best form, with equal value, worth and importance. Being made in the best form also means that we share some of Allah's characteristics, such as creativity, a desire to live in a relationship, and wisdom. In the Qur'an, we see that Allah carefully planned for creation by giving each creative act its own time: on day one, he separated light from dark, on day two he separated sky from water etc. He was intentional about his plan for creation so that when he finished he could say 'it was very good' (Al-Baqara 2:29). Furthermore, the world was created by Allah in relationship: Allah alone created everything (Al-Hadid 57:4). Allah also invites us to take part in the creative process by giving us free will (Al-Mu'umin 23:14). Allah gave us the freedom to choose, to make decisions and to be stewards of creation. We are to do so responsibly, thinking of one another, of humanity and of the earth, and all living things.

7. Ask participants to reflect on this: if it is true that God gave us the wisdom to live responsibly, does this also include the number of children we have and spacing between births? As we are co-creators with God, we must do this responsibly by planning together through discussion and agreement with our husband or wife.

For Christians: As we read in Genesis 1:26–27, 'Let us make mankind in our image', we can see that this decision was not made alone, but in consultation with the equal members of the Trinity.

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

For Muslims: Ask participants to read the texts below and reflect on them individually.

Qur'an 16:72

And Allah has made for you mates (and companions) of your own nature, and made for you, out of them, sons and daughters and grandchildren, and provided for you sustenance of the best: will they then believe in vain things, and be ungrateful for Allah's favours?

Qur'an 42:49

To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills (and plans). He bestows (children) male or female according to His Will (and Plan).

8. Ask participants to reflect on the questions below in groups for ten minutes, and then invite them to share back with the rest of the group. Record responses on the flipchart.

For Christians:

- Should married couples be encouraged to practise child spacing?
- Are there religious messages in our communities and sacred texts that we can use to support this process?

For Muslims:

What do the texts above tell us about the following?

- children
- children and Allah

Additional reflection for participants:

How would you communicate these ideas – care, wisdom, and shared responsibility – to your audience without teaching, judging or prescribing?

9. After all groups have shared, emphasise in conclusion that we plan when making an important decision, such as buying/building a house, making a large investment or deciding to move to a different area. For matters that are important to us, we are careful to make the right decision. Likewise, because children are precious, it is important to plan for them responsibly, through dialogue and agreement with both the man and woman. Responsible planning of family size and number of children will not only mean a healthy pregnancy and child but also a healthy relationship between the man and woman, and a healthy community.

For Muslims: Note the following key messages as part of the conclusion:

- Children are a blessing from Allah.
 - Both male and female children matter as it is God who decides which sex to give.
 - Allah, in his wisdom, has created conception in such a way that the man's contribution carries what leads to a male or female child. This process operates by Allah's decree, reminding us that the outcome is not a woman's fault or responsibility, but part of how Allah has designed creation.
 - These blessings are given to us through the spouses. This means that both men and women are important in child birth.
10. Ask participants to reflect on the questions below in pairs. Thereafter, allow the pairs to share and allow discussions from the groups. Take notes from the feedback, preferably on a flipchart.
 - a) Should married couples be encouraged to practise child spacing?
 - b) Are there religious messages in our communities and sacred texts that we can use to support this process?
 11. In groups, ask participants to discuss:
 - a. What responsibility do we have as parents for children God has entrusted to us?
 - b. How do we know if we are doing this duty well? What more could we do to fulfil this role?
 - c. If it is true that God gave us the wisdom to live responsibly, does this also include the number of children we have and spacing between births?

Activity 16:

Men's involvement in child spacing

Learning objectives:

- to learn about the role male partners can play in supporting couples' child spacing and safe motherhood
- to highlight harmful actions to avoid
- to address how men can be supportive through pregnancy and childbirth

Time: 105 minutes

Materials: Flipchart paper, Bible/Qur'an, marker pens

Part 1: Men's support for child spacing

Suggested steps:

1. Remind the group that child spacing is an important determinant of women's and children's health, family wellbeing and a healthy family life.
2. Remind participants that child spacing is also a critical area in which men can be involved as supportive partners, where a couple can discuss and agree this together. Men can also use child spacing methods themselves. Unfortunately, men can also block access to child spacing within their families, including through using physical violence that makes women too afraid to use child spacing methods. Involving men in child spacing can also support greater equality between men and women, including improving a couple's communication and decision-making.

Note:

Highlight that this discussion is not about blaming men, but about recognising behaviours that harm families and identifying healthier alternatives rooted in care, respect and partnership.

3. Ask the group:
 - What specific things can men do to support the use of child spacing?
 - What are the ways in which men can hinder the use of child spacing?

Give them five to ten minutes to respond and write up the responses on the flipchart.

4. Ask the men in the group:
 - How do you support your partner to access child spacing?

Give time for the men to respond, and then ask the women:

- How would you like your partner to be involved in supporting child spacing? Or would you prefer he was not involved?

5. Remind the group of the following if it has not been covered in discussions:

Ways in which men can support child spacing:

- financial support (eg by helping her pay for the method)
- emotional support (eg by accompanying her to the clinic, discussing the reasons for choosing one method over another, and/or supporting her choice of method)
- help with the method if she wants it (eg supporting agreed method being chosen, or reminding her when to use it)
- sharing responsibilities in ways that reduce the burden on women

Ways in which men can hinder child spacing:

- withholding the types of support described above
- using or threatening violence to discourage a partner from using any method
- forbidding a woman to use any method, thereby forcing her to use one secretly if she chooses
- not allowing her the time to use the method before sex
- complaining about or criticising her for the inconvenience of her method of choice
- pressurising her to use a method that may be harmful to her health
- pressurising her to have sex during her fertile periods

Male partners should be encouraged to be full partners in a couple's reproductive life. One way to do this is to have respect for their partner and their partner's contraceptive choices. In all cases, men should consider which method is most beneficial for their partner and for themselves.

Additional reflection for participants:

How can messages about male involvement, care and shared responsibility be communicated online in ways that encourage reflection rather than defensiveness?

Part 2 – Men's support for safe motherhood

Suggested steps:

1. Read the relevant paragraph and scripture below, then divide the group into smaller, mixed groups for reflection, discussion and peer learning in a safe, more intimate setting. Then invite the small groups to share their key points with the whole group:

For Christians: Because pregnancy is a gift from God, we must take care of the mother and baby. Thus, planning before and during a pregnancy is important. Remember: this involves both partners, both men and women, the husband and the wife. Men play a key role in deciding whether and when a pregnant woman seeks emergency care and by what means of transport she arrives at a health facility – factors that can have a direct impact on outcomes for the mother and the child. Men should be encouraged and informed to play a positive role in supporting safe motherhood.

Psalm 127:3

Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him.

For Muslims: Because pregnancy comes through the spouse given to men by God, we must take care of the mother and baby. Thus, planning before and during a pregnancy is important. Remember: this involves both partners, both men and women, the husband and the wife. Men play a key role in deciding whether and when a pregnant woman seeks emergency care and by what means of transport she arrives at a health facility – factors that can have a direct impact on outcomes for the mother and the child. Men should be encouraged and informed to play a positive role in supporting safe motherhood.

Men's responsibility and involvement do not end when the baby is conceived. They must continue throughout pregnancy and raising the child. This is a gift of God to both parents so both must be involved in taking care of this gift.

2. Ask the group:

- What do men in your congregation do to support safe pregnancy?
- What things can couples do to make sure the pregnancy is safe for both the mother and the baby?

Give them five to ten minutes to respond and write up their responses on the flipchart.

- 3.** After allowing 20 minutes for discussion around the flipchart, stress again the importance of both men and women being involved. The couple must work together as companions, as in the creation scripture passage(s) we read in Activity 8. (For Christians: Genesis 1:26; for Muslims: Qur'an 2:30–39; 30:20–22; 49:10–13). This is a gift to both parents so the responsibility lies with both individuals. Men can support their wives by attending clinic visits with them and getting more information on practical steps they can take to keep mother and child safe. The couple can also spend time at the start or end of the day to pray together throughout the pregnancy. This will help the bond between the partners to grow strong and healthy.

Activity 17:

Positive parenting

Learning objectives:

- to improve participants' ability to be positive parents and positive role models for parenting in their communities
- to emphasise the involvement of the father in childcare

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Flipchart paper, Bible/Qur'an, marker pens

Suggested steps:

1. Explain to the group that this reflection is going to focus on positive parenting, particularly men's involvement in childcare or positive fatherhood. We are discussing 'positive' parenthood because we know that sometimes children are abused or don't grow up in a healthy environment at home. They are not treated as the precious gift they are. Therefore, they grow up believing they are not important or have no value. This is not true, and as parents we have the God-given responsibility to ensure our children know that they are loved and valued and have worth to their parents and to their creator God. Childcare does not just mean taking care of the child but also showing love and encouragement.

Note:

Studies show that boys witnessing their fathers being involved in childcare and household jobs are more likely to do the same in later life. This will help fathers be a positive role model for youth and other men in the community.

2. Explain to the participants that evidence shows that, if children know they are valued and loved by their parents, they are less vulnerable to abuse and to behaviours that are harmful to them and others.
3. Divide the participants into groups of three or four. Ask them to reflect for 15–20 minutes on the following questions, acknowledging that some participants may find them difficult, and then report back to the larger group:
 - a. What was your experience as a child with your parents? What was good, and what was not so good?
 - b. Did your father ever help with household chores? Do you as a man/does your husband share household chores?
 - c. How do you think that parenting can play a positive role in the lives of your children?
 - d. What can men do to be better fathers, following Christ/Muhammad (PBUH)'s example?
 - e. Do you as parents talk with each other? Do you discuss family matters with your partner before making decisions? How can you improve on this?

4. Emphasise how important a role parents play in a child's life and future. This experience during childhood can decide the future of a child, even in terms of sexual and gender-based violence. Studies show that children who have traumatic childhoods are at risk of abusive relationships/intimate partner violence. If children are a gift from God, then this gift must be taken care of responsibly, nurtured and loved, by both men and women.
5. Close by asking someone to pray for all participants as they commit to strengthen and support their families and marriages.

Activity 18:

Myths and misconceptions around child spacing/family planning

Learning objective:

- to create a safe, respectful space where participants can examine common beliefs about child spacing and family planning critically, and replace misinformation with accurate, value-aligned understanding

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts and marker pen

Part 1 – Exploring myths and misconceptions

Suggested steps:

1. Invite participants to freely mention common beliefs, rumours or statements they have heard about child spacing and family planning.

Ask them to write out these beliefs, either on a flipchart or in a notebook, without correcting them immediately or labelling them as wrong at this stage.

Note:

Expect faith-based, cultural and gender-based beliefs to emerge.

2. Encourage participants to reflect on:
 - a. Where these beliefs came from
 - b. Whom they affect the most
 - c. Whether they protect or harm family wellbeing
3. Ask them:
 - a. 'Who usually carries the burden of these beliefs?'
 - b. 'How do these ideas affect women, men and children?'
4. Gently address the myths that have been raised by offering clear, simple clarifications. Use value-based (respectful) language that aligns with love, responsibility and fairness. Avoid technical explanations.
5. Make participants pair up and ask them to practise responding to common myths using respectful language, a non-judgemental tone and accurate information.

Our role is not to argue with people's beliefs but to offer clarity, and accurate information that supports healthy choices. Do not shame beliefs, and avoid debating faith interpretations. Keep the focus on dignity, choice and wellbeing.

Part 2 – Getting the messaging right: Dos and Don'ts

Suggested steps:

1. Help participants to reflect how messages can be framed in a respectful, accurate and value-aligned way, especially in conversations around family planning and child spacing. Here are some useful tips you can share to guide them:

Dos

- ✓ Share values-based messages about:
 - ✓ love and responsibility
 - ✓ healthy timing and spacing
 - ✓ care for mothers
 - ✓ family wellbeing
 - ✓ mutual consent and communication
- ✓ Use storytelling and relatable examples
- ✓ Normalise seeking professional guidance
- ✓ Redirect personal questions to trained providers
- ✓ Maintain a respectful, calm tone in all interactions

Don'ts

- ✗ Provide medical advice
 - ✗ Recommend or compare family planning methods
 - ✗ Diagnose health conditions
 - ✗ Suggest products, brands or dosages
 - ✗ Engage in religious or moral debates
 - ✗ Argue in comment sections
 - ✗ Shame or pressure followers
2. Ask participants to give examples of accurate and value-aligned messages. Share the following useful tips:

Before posting, ask:

- Does this message respect people's values?
- Is it accurate and non-harmful?
- Would this message build trust or create resistance?
- Does this message impose decisions?

Activity 19:

An ideal community: a life of abundance for all

Learning objective:

- to create a vision of an ideal community where every member is able to aspire to a life of abundance and dignity – a community without violence against women and girls

Time: 30–45 minutes

Materials: Flipcharts and marker pen

Preparation: Write on a flipchart the title 'An ideal community'.

Suggested steps:

1. Tell the participants that you are going to take them on a journey, a journey towards an ideal community that is very different from the one we live in now. Ask them to close their eyes for a few minutes, and clear their minds.
2. Tell them that when you start narrating, they need to imagine what you are saying, and to reflect on it in silence. Later they will share with one another what they have imagined and what they felt or experienced.
3. Read out this narrative:
'When you wake up tomorrow, you find you are living in a community in which there is no violence against women and girls. All members of this community enjoy a life of abundance – individually, in their relationships and in their community. Therefore, this is a community where women and girls are safe and respected and can aspire to be anything they want. They have no worries about violence happening to them, their daughters or mothers, their friends or sisters. Gender inequality, harmful masculinities and violence against women and girls have ended!'

Pause for ten to 20 seconds.

Invite the group to discuss these questions.

- How do you think men and women should act in an ideal society?
- How do you think men should treat women in an ideal community?
- What do you think should change so that an ideal community becomes a reality in our homes and societies?
- Are you interested in creating such homes/communities?
- Is it possible to create those places?
- If not, what are the barriers?

***Transforming Masculinities* is Tearfund's evidence-based intervention to end sexual and gender-based violence and promote gender-equal societies.**

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