

Quick guide to...

TRANSFORMING MASCULINITIES

An evidence-based approach to transforming harmful concepts of gender and masculinities, and to promoting gender equality.

One in every three women and girls will experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. That is 1 billion women and girls in our world today. Violence against women and girls happens in every sphere and strata of society in various forms such as rape, physical abuse, harassment and discrimination. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) deprives women and girls of a life of dignity which is why ending it is critical. Statistically, the majority of perpetrators of SGBV are men and boys; our work specifically addresses the understanding and behaviour of individual men and boys as well as the social norms that lead to male violence against women and girls. It is important to note that men and boys also experience sexual and gender-based violence. Our goal is to change social norms and behaviour around SGBV, which will have a positive outcome in the lives of both men and women.

OUR APPROACH

A significant majority of the global population are affiliated to a religious tradition or faith beliefs*. Belief systems influence and shape social norms, including gender norms on roles and values, and can have a negative or positive impact on achieving gender justice. Faith leaders (who are predominantly male) and certain interpretations of scriptural texts can play an influential role in reinforcing patriarchal norms, dominant forms of masculinity and rigid gender roles and responsibilities that are harmful to both men and women, boys and girls. These interpretations perpetuate and sustain gender inequality, and are often even used to justify violence, and shame survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

The aim of the Transforming Masculinities approach is to work towards gender justice through a gender transformative model, founded on the principles and sacred texts of the world faiths that value the wellbeing and equality of all human beings. As a faith-based organisation our

experience and understanding is that faith leaders and faith traditions can equally be powerful agents for change in addressing sexual and gender-based violence. While it is important to challenge existing gender roles directly, our approach is also to question the values that underpin those gender-ascribed roles, and the values, power and status assigned based on people's gender identities. The goal is to promote positive models for being men and women, for leadership, for restoring relationships and for promoting gender equality in every sphere of society.

Our engagement with faith leaders and our training of 'Gender Champions' who then facilitate community dialogues, aims to promote change in individual behaviour and social norms on gender, masculinities and SGBV. We strongly believe that this will lead to systemic changes in social, political and economic structures that will build a society that lives out the values of gender equality and is free of sexual and gender-based violence in all forms.



FAITH LEADERS

National, provincial and community level faith leaders attend workshops that engage and equip them to provide leadership and support for the Transforming Masculinities process.



GENDER CHAMPIONS

Community faith leaders select key male and female members of the community to be trained as facilitators of small group discussions named 'community dialogues'.

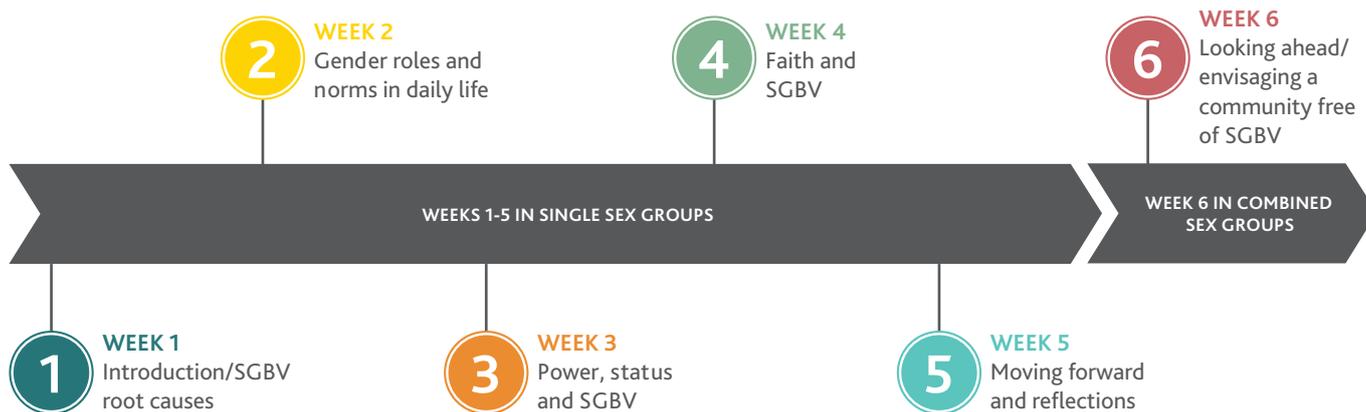


COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

Small groups of men and women meet weekly in their communities for six weeks for discussions led by Gender Champions. Weeks 1-5 are conducted in single sex groups and Week 6 in combined sex groups.

The Transforming Masculinities process works with both men and women through workshops or structured small group discussions, which draw on scriptural reflections on gender equality and positive masculinities. Themes include understanding sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and how it affects everyone, addressing unequal power and privilege, and discussing positive masculinities.

Community dialogues run for six weeks and follow key themes in the order described below.



Male only sessions are led by male Gender Champions and female only sessions by female Gender Champions.

The Transforming Masculinities curriculum and process have been designed and developed based on the evidence from our formative research. Distinctive aspects of the approach are:

- It is structured to accompany men and women in a process of identifying and unlearning harmful norms that impact their lives.
- It brings the discussions on gender, masculinities and sexual and gender-based violence within the context of participants' faith and culture, and aims to address underlying beliefs rather than to prescribe behaviour.
- It engages both faith leaders and faith community members through discussion and activities with practical application.
- It involves group learning and a safe space for dialogues with single sex groups for men and women separately and then joint sharing in the mixed-group discussion.
- It promotes accountable practices at all levels (participants, facilitators, church leadership and related staff).
- It is designed to integrate easily into church activities including marriage counselling and men and women's small discussion groups.

Sexual and gender-based violence is not purely a women's issue; it is a gender issue that warrants work on gender justice and the equality of individuals, rather than solely a focus on women's empowerment. The contextualised Transforming Masculinities approach focuses on the cultural norms, theology and beliefs that promote harmful gender norms and concepts of masculinities that perpetuate gender inequality.

Our hope, through this gender transformative approach, is to see men and boys on a journey of transformation that will lead to them living and promoting a lifestyle of positive masculinities and gender equality. This will significantly improve the lives of both men and women, their relationships and the wellbeing of their families. We desire to see both women and men living with dignity, being equally valued and able to live free of violence and abuse. We hope to see more men and boys involved as allies in the work to prevent violence against women and girls and living as role models motivating others to do likewise.

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



HAND IN HAND: BIBLE STUDIES

Resource provided to faith leaders regarding healthy gender relationships, as a support in delivering sermons, sharing testimonies and counselling couples.



TRANSFORMING MASCULINITIES

Training manual used for faith leader workshops and to train Gender Champions.



COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

Guide used by Gender Champions to facilitate the community dialogue group discussions.

Resources are written from a Christian faith perspective with suggestions for adapting to a Muslim/mixed faith setting with references from the Qur'an.

*The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050, Pew Research Centre, April 2015