

Checklist: Programmatic Approaches for Engaging Men and Boys Around Positive Masculinities

Men and boys are critical to any effort to promote gender equality and foster women's and girls' agency. Volunteers, with their counterparts, have many opportunities to engage men and boys, including structured discussions around the role and impact of masculine norms in their lives, opportunities for dialogue that emerge in the context of other activities (sports, clubs etc.), and challenging conversations that arise in everyday situations. This checklist outlines best practices for ensuring discussions facilitate meaningful reflection and long-term support for positive, gender-equitable norms, and can be used by Volunteers, counterparts and any community members engaging in conversations with men and boys. The approach emphasizes relationship and trust building and providing safe and supportive spaces for dialogue. They highlight the benefits of gender-equitable relationships for men and women, building space for learning from women and girls, beginning with "where they are," and striving to understand the deeply rooted fears and limiting roles that men and boys may have internalized and adopted.¹

Italics indicate that the action is also included as a quality standard that Volunteers report on under the GenEq/LGL CSPP in the VRF.

Identify appropriate, supportive places and timing

- Map community using PACA or other community assessment tools to learn where men and boys already congregate.
- Identify opportunities to engage boys and young men in already-planned or ongoing activities (i.e. camps or clubs).
- Create single-sex spaces so that boys and young men will feel comfortable and not be judged sharing their fears, concerns, and hopes.*
- Identify mentors, allies, and/or peer groups for support in the face of potential peer pressure and stigmatization from other community members.
- Work with community members to lead or co-facilitate discussions with men and boys around positive gender norms and to ensure that those discussions are "owned" by the community.*

Emphasize benefits of gender equality

- Identify examples of the economic and educational benefits of gender-equitable relationships for men, their families, and their communities.

¹ Edström, J.; Hassink, A.; Shahrokh, T. and Stern, E. (eds) (2015) 'Engendering Men: A Collaborative Review of Evidence on Men and Boys in Social Change and Gender Equality', EMERGE Evidence Review, Promundo-US, Sonke Gender Justice and the Institute of Development Studies

- Provide examples of positive behaviors for men and boys that support an enabling environment for girls and young women.*
- Frame discussions with men and boys around the role and impact of power dynamics in their lives.
- Use an asset-based approach to ask: “What do you like about being a boy or a young man?” “What is your role in supporting girls and young women?” “What is the role of women in supporting men?”
- Provide examples of the benefits of positive health-seeking behavior and healthy relationships for themselves, their partners, and their families, and what this looks like in specific contexts.
- Identify the restrictions and limitations that traditional gender roles place on men and boys.
- Provide examples of positive male gender roles that allow men to express their emotions.
- Provide examples of positive male gender roles that allow men to express support for girls and women.
- Practice and develop non-violent conflict resolution skills with men and boys, including for example, self-awareness, empathy, compassion, and effective communication.

Implementing activities

- Use activities that are appropriate for the specific age group and developmental stage. Target separate activities and discussions for different age groups and developmental stages.
- Find trusted, male peers, allies, and role models in the community to serve as facilitators and champions and who can help lead discussions.
- Shape activities that reflect the range of boys’ and young men’s experiences including with societal and cultural norms.
- Ensure that discussions recognize and are sensitive to the particular experiences and challenges faced by marginalized boys and men.
- Begin with discussions and small steps that are appropriate for where men and boys are rather than focusing on immediate transformation of attitudes and behaviors.

Encourage listening to and learning from girls and women

- Find opportunities such as clubs, sports, or other events that allow men and boys to hear from and learn about the challenges and priorities that women and girls identify for themselves.*
 - Use supportive, age-appropriate activities for men and women, boys and girls to hear and learn from each other about their experiences, challenges, fears, hopes, and aspirations.
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