

Lessons in good practice from work with men and boys for gender equality



Members of Bangladesh's national social movement Nijera Kori come together to take action against gender and economic injustice. Image from Nijera Kori

1 Why work with men and boys to build gender equality?

There remains much work to do on delivering transformative change towards gender equality; women and girls still have fewer opportunities, rights and freedoms than men and boys. Women continue to be paid less than their male counterparts for the same work, spend significantly more time caring for children or older people than men do, and remain underrepresented in positions of power across business and government sectors (United Nations 2014a; World Bank 2012).

But gender equality will not be achieved without engaging men and boys. The agreement and finalisation of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development recognises the importance of working with men and boys to promote gender equality and

driving momentum on the empowerment of women and girls. Engaging men and boys in work for gender equality is important for three reasons:

- It helps to achieve positive impacts for women and girls.
- It addresses the gendered nature of the socioeconomic or structural drivers of many social and development problems.
- It highlights the fact that harmful masculinities are bad for men and boys, as well as women and girls, and are a key driver of poor health and education outcomes for men.

'Engendering Men: Evidence on Routes to Gender Equality' (EMERGE) is a two year project to build an open repository of accessible evidence and lessons for working with men and boys for gender equality. EMERGE has produced a series of eight case studies, which demonstrate the diversity of promising approaches in this field; it is important to note that each example is highly context specific, engages with different types of men¹ for different reasons and has its own underlying goals and theory of change. Still, when taken together, the lessons of each case study contribute to a broader understanding of why and how to develop

programmes and strategies for working with different men and boys to contribute to transforming behaviours, attitudes and institutions. This brief will be useful for those designing and implementing projects, programmes and other initiatives to work with men and boys for gender equality.

It will address:

- How to focus or target an initiative with men and boys
- Designing a successful initiative
- Challenges and future priorities

EMERGE case study series: aims and approaches

The eight initiatives featured in the case studies series were carefully selected to illustrate a range of different approaches and aims. They are:

Brazil's National Healthcare Policy for Men

Tackling the men's health gap to bring gender transformation for all.

Nijera Kori

A national social movement of women and men mobilising together for economic and gender justice in Bangladesh.

Kembatti Mentti Gezzima

Work to engage men in eliminating female genital mutilation-cutting in Ethiopia.

MenCare

A campaign to engage men as fathers and caregivers across Latin America, for the benefit of women, children and men.

Samajhdar Jodidar

Men supporting women's participation in local politics in India for greater equality and equity in public participation.

Living Peace

Support to perpetrators and victims of gendered violence to heal trauma and promote healthy masculinities in Democratic Republic of Congo.

One Man Can

Community mobilisation with men and women in South Africa to promote gender equality and reduce HIV vulnerability.

Harassmap and Imprint

Women and men working on tackling sexual harassment in Egypt's public spaces.

¹ The eight case studies included in the EMERGE series cover work in a range of domains with men of different ages. Some of the initiatives have targeted their efforts at younger men and adolescents, but the case studies do not feature initiatives that work in the domain of education, or with young boys.

2 How to focus or target an initiative

Every project or programme needs to be designed to engage the right people in a relevant way. Men's relationships to processes of change in gender relations are complex; they may be the source of certain problems or block change, some may be persuaded to accept change, while others may drive change forward in their communities. The projects in the case studies worked with men in a number of ways, including:

- Men as **perpetrators and victims** of violence (Living Peace project in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC))
- Men as **fathers, carers and health service users** (MenCare in Latin America and Brazil's National Healthcare Policy for Men)
- **Young men** as a target group for changing gender norms (One Man Can in South Africa and KMG in Ethiopia)
- Men **working with women** for a particular cause (Harassmap and Imprint in Egypt)
- Men **challenging gender norms** as change makers (Samijhdar Jodidar in India and Nijera Kori in Bangladesh)

Programme design should incorporate a process of thorough participatory analysis and engagement with target groups, taking into account the particular context in which the work will be set.

2.1 Which men and boys? Understanding intersectionality

Gender inequality is related to other issues of social injustice, class, race and age (among other things), which converge with gender to compound disadvantage and discrimination, or power and privilege. Gender inequality cannot be tackled in isolation from other inequalities, so it is important to understand the implications of being in particular age, ethnic and racial groups.

Brazil's national healthcare policy for men (PNAISH) addresses men's health through a gendered lens that considers issues of power, violence and men's upbringing. It also recognises the ways that gender norms combine with race, ethnicity, class, age, (dis)ability and sexuality to impact on access to health services and the risk taking behaviours that threaten men's health and perpetuate unequal gender power relationships.

The One Man Can programme in South Africa targets young men aged 18-35 years in awareness raising activities designed to change perceptions around sexual behaviour, gender equality and HIV. Men in this age group were chosen as the target group for the initiative because they are the primary sexual partners for young women and adolescent girls, and are more likely to engage in unsafe sexual behaviour compared to older men and adolescent boys.

Initiatives should be designed with a clear understanding of the groups they will work with and the needs of those groups. Concepts around intersectionality should be made practical and concrete for programming; tools could be developed to help identify the factors – such as age, education or class – that are relevant for each initiative. It is important to recognise different strategies and approaches that may be more appropriate for working with boys, for example through tailored approaches in sectors such as education.

2.2 Handling gender relations

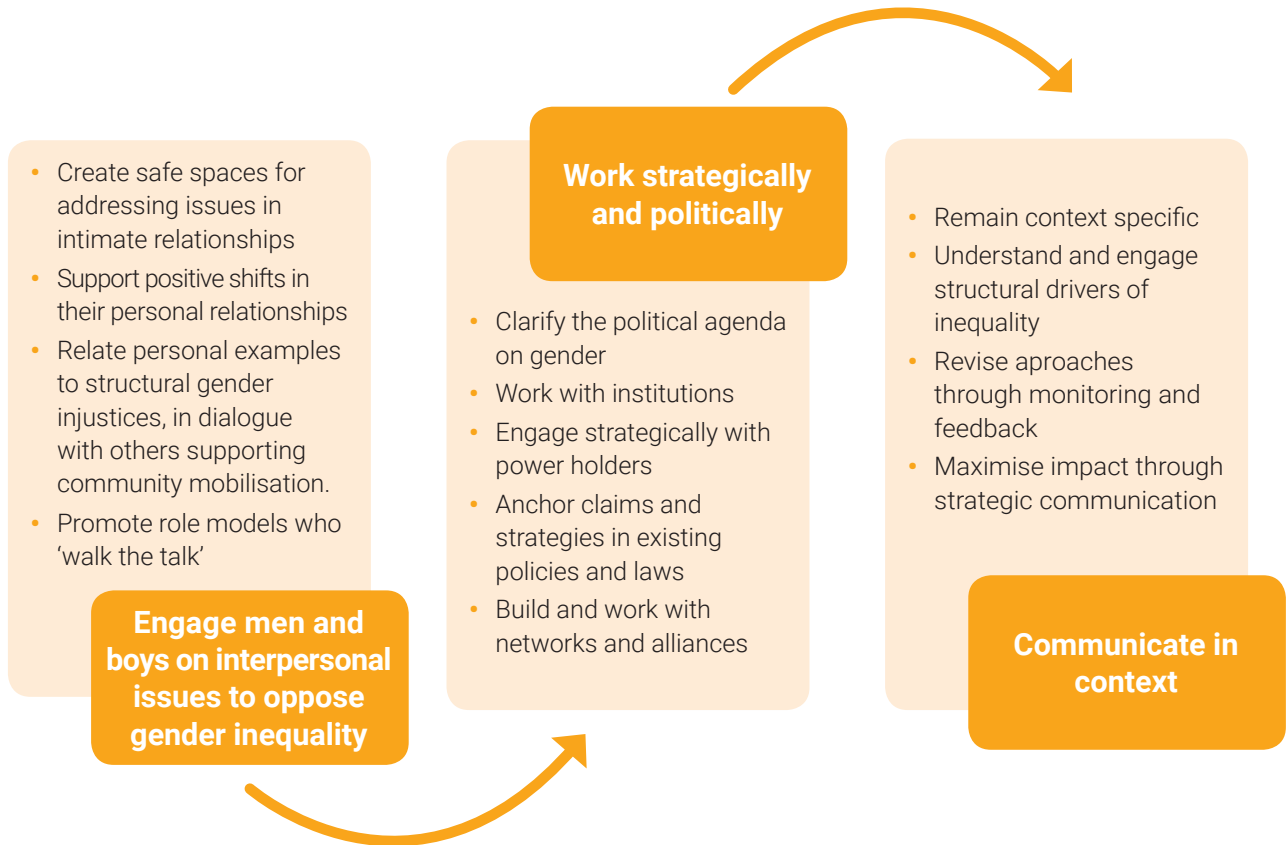
Gender is about relations between women and men, embedded within institutions and specific cultural contexts. Men and women need to be considered separately and together, with opportunities for exchange and collaboration. Initiatives designed in this way might include, for example, safe learning spaces where women and men come together to discuss gender inequality and harmful gender norms, and to challenge inequalities and build more positive behaviours.

In Bangladesh, the national social movement Nijera Kori works with landless men's and women's groups, first separately and then together in mixed spaces, to support group learning on the gender dynamics of interpersonal relationships. This process enables shared political analysis and effective collaboration between women and men, leading to collective action strategies to challenge unfair norms and institutional practices around access to land for both women and men.

3 Designing a successful initiative

The diverse set of projects described in the case studies leads to a set of principles and guidance for practitioners and policy makers wanting to design initiatives. This is not a generic template for action, but a set of prompts that will be more or less

relevant in different contexts. The principles must be considered in relation to the above framing of gender as socially constructed through social relations, privileges and inequalities.



3.1 Engage men and boys on interpersonal gender issues

Gender transformation often begins at a personal level and grows into political change at community and institutional levels. Initiatives that engage men at an individual level to reflect on their personal relationships might, for example, create single sex spaces where men can come together to reflect on, and take action to address, unequal gender power relations in their home lives. These group spaces provide peer support that can enable collective mobilisation for wider change, including working with women. It can also create role models within communities who act to promote positive masculine norms.

In rural Maharashtra, India, the Samajhdar Jodidar project works with local men's groups to provide spaces where men can begin to build more supportive relationships in the home. They then go on to act as role models and community mobilisers, supporting women's participation in public life. The project has led to a marked move toward more gender equitable beliefs among male participants.

In Democratic Republic of Congo, the Living Peace project provides group therapy for men to reduce gender-based violence and rebuild communities in post-conflict settings. Bringing different men together (e.g. men who have been violent, husbands of rape survivors and men traumatised by conflict) to learn from each other, reflect on gender norms and rehearse new behaviour in safe spaces, has led to improved attitudes toward women and children, violence and gender equality.

3.2 Work strategically and politically

Work with institutions

Institutions provide both a way in to working on gender through other issues and a setting within which to challenge gender norms. Institutional settings provide important sites and opportunities to transform gender relations within public services and national policies. Successful initiatives have focused on sectors such as health or agriculture, or structures such as ministries or local government, using them as an entry point to promote wider changes in gender norms and relations as well as accountability for more gender equitable services.

In Brazil, the National Healthcare Policy for Men (PNAISH), developed as a result of partnerships between the Ministry of Health and civil society actors and academics working on men's health issues, has been influential in bringing a gender transformational approach to the work of the ministry itself as well as the broader health sector in Brazil.

The health sector is also an important focus for the MenCare campaign in Latin America. MenCare partners produce guidance and training for healthcare providers on engaging men in prenatal consultations – a key opportunity when men may be more open to new caregiving behaviours. They also support healthcare professionals to train the public on issues around caregiving, parenting and gender roles, and they engage in targeted advocacy work around men's health issues.

Engage strategically with power, policies and laws

In many contexts existing laws and policies provide an opportunity for men to work to promote gender equality. In some of the case study examples, men played a key role in promoting accountability; working alongside women to monitor policies to promote women and girls' empowerment and to identify, prevent or highlight the misuse of equality legislation.

The Samijhdar Jodidar project utilises government legislation that reserves 50 percent of seats on local governance bodies for women, promoting its implementation and challenging efforts to circumvent it. In doing this, it helps to bridge the gaps between policy and practice. The project has resulted in a greater number of women claiming political space and taking on public leadership roles.

Harassmap and Imprint initiatives in Egypt have drawn strength from the newly introduced articles in the country's criminal code which recognise and define sexual harassment. The new law is helping the initiatives' members to spread the messages that blame should not be laid on the victim of sexual harassment, but rather on the perpetrator, and that women should report and press charges without feeling guilty of breaking gendered norms around respectability.

Successful initiatives have developed strategies to challenge, negotiate and shift power around gender norms. Power holders can be both enablers of, and obstacles to, change toward gender equality. Initiatives designed to create shifts in gender norms should include activities to map and identify the gender power relations present in their particular context. They should also develop strategies to engage with power holders in firm and directed, yet respectful and non-patronising ways as part of their implementation – whether power holders (household members, community leaders, service providers or policy makers) are supportive, ambivalent or obstructive.

Kembatti Mentti Gezzima's work in Ethiopia to end female genital mutilation-cutting (FGM-C) recognises that men often have decision making power at the household level, in the community and in legal and religious bodies. KMG works to challenge rather than reinforce this power, but it also engages men as critical agents, who can learn about the negative consequences of FGM-C and reach out to other men and boys through community activism. Religious leaders and community decision makers are trained to provide prevention information and to implement sanctions against those who continue the practice. KMG's work has led to an important reduction in the prevalence of FGM-C and the social norms that condone it.

Build and work with networks, alliances and partnerships

Some initiatives have been greatly strengthened by becoming involved in a wider network, or by partnering with others engaged in similar and related work. When designing initiatives to engage men and boys around gender equality, it is also important to consider how to engage with and build alliances with women's organisations and movements, as well as wider social justice movements with shared goals, in order to promote a joined up, unified approach.

MenCare engages with a range of other stakeholders – from grassroots movements, to academics, government ministries and UN agencies – working on related issues of caregiving, childhood development and fatherhood. In Brazil, MenCare formed an alliance with the National Network of Early Childhood, which enabled a range of events and activities for fathers around health and recreation, and training for healthcare providers on men’s health and fatherhood. Joining with national and international networks helped to increase the visibility of MenCare partners’ work, and encouraged its continuation beyond specific funding and activity periods.

3.3 Communicate in context

Maximise impact through communication and awareness raising

Initiatives that take a coordinated approach to awareness raising through media, advocacy and popular education are associated with effectiveness in changing social norms and behaviour. The development of communication, engagement and uptake strategies is an important element of the design of programmes to engage men and boys for gender equality.

As part of the South African One Man Can approach, community mobilisers reached out with door-to-door campaigns, soccer tournaments, performances and mural painting, as well as digital stories and photo voice projects, to raise awareness about the importance of HIV testing in communities. The majority of young adults felt that strategies using media and art were engaging ways to share information and raise awareness about inequitable gender norms.

In Ethiopia, Kembatti Mentti Gezzima’s work has incorporated awareness raising campaigns aiming to change social norms around FGM-C. These include televising and celebrating the weddings of uncut women, and annual ‘whole body, healthy life’ events to replace former celebrations of FGM-C of girls.

Remain context specific, rooted and flexible

Gendered attitudes and behaviours are context specific, embedded in structures and incentives, and reinforced by community expectations. They can vary over time and according to location in public and private spaces. Initiatives to work with men and boys for gender equality should be designed to recognise this fluidity, and to build in and act on continuous learning and evaluation.

In Egypt, the Harassmap and Imprint initiatives have faced a range of challenges to the continuation of their work within a context of rapid political change. They adapted their approaches as restrictions on the use of public spaces changed and political opinion toward sexual harassment altered, finding new spaces to work within and developing strategies to retain volunteers as the nature of the groups’ activism altered.

In DRC, the Living Peace project was designed for a context where conflict has led to millions of deaths, mass displacement and many victims and perpetrators of violence. This is combined with a culture of deeply rooted inequitable gender norms and behaviours and violent partner relationships. Recognising this combination, the project’s work moves beyond perceptions of violence in conflict, perpetrated singularly by combatants. Instead its focus is on understanding and preventing both post-conflict and non-conflict sexual and gender based violence.

4 Challenges, solutions and future priorities

The examples collected for the EMERGE case study series illustrate a range of important points to take into account when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating initiatives to work with men and boys for gender equality. However, there remain a number of challenges, gaps and priorities for future work in this area.

4.1 Improve evidence collection and impact assessment

Challenge: Evidence on the long term impact of initiatives working with men and boys for gender equality remains limited. Programmes need to become better able to evaluate whether their efforts transform patriarchal relations, norms and institutions or whether they, albeit unintentionally, reinforce such structures or values.

Solutions: Robust and appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes should be put into place at the start of programmes, using indicators and forms of documentation that go beyond disaggregating data by gender, and can trace change not merely in attitudes or reported behaviour, but also relationships, institutions, resources and practice. In depth participatory and qualitative approaches, based on bottom-up, contextual, stories of change can complement quantitative methods to achieve this goal. Strategies could be developed to capture change in under-measured areas, such as the building of partnerships leading

to strengthened infrastructure, or the experiences of those indirectly affected by a project (such as the women and girls affected by the work of a project with men and boys).

Those working in the Harassmap and Imprint initiatives in Egypt found that measuring quantifiable impact is not easy for the type of activities and activism they are engaged in. They have developed some quantitative indicators, such as the number of reported successful efforts to stop the harassment of women on the street. However, they have also developed powerful qualitative stories of change from the experiences of volunteers from the ground. These stories illustrate the broad ranging impact that the initiatives are having.

4.2 Design context specific initiatives in collaboration with communities from the start

Challenge: Not all projects to engage men and boys for gender equality are planned collaboratively from the beginning, or with careful attention to local context; political, historical, geographical, social and economic. Work that is begun without this analysis at the outset may not meet the needs of local people, attract local buy-in, or achieve a sustaining impact.

Solutions: Initiatives should be planned and implemented in partnership with local community and civil society actors, utilising local knowledge. Consulting with potential target groups is especially important for initiatives that aim to change behaviour and attitudes. Taking extra time to consult and consider in detail how context specific issues will be addressed and which local partners will be involved will pay off in terms of impact and success; working in this way is more likely to help to build ownership, citizen action and ultimately, movement building for gender justice.

4.3 Promote greater engagement between women's and men's organisations and movements

Challenge: Given that work to engage men and boys in building gender equality has the same end goals as the work of many women's and feminist organisations and movements, it is important to build synergies and alliances between the two so that women and men can work together to achieve these goals. However, this does not always happen. In Brazil, those implementing the national healthcare policy for men (PNAISH) have built some alliances with organisations in the women's health sector and the youth sector, but case study interviewees

felt that a lack of strong relationships with women's organisations and movements was a weakness for PNAISH.

Solutions: When men and women work together, using a 'gender relational' approach that recognises the experiences of both women and men, productive alliances and collaborative strategies can result. A detailed mapping at programme inception phase could help to enable the building of relationships between women's movements and work to engage men and boys. This mapping can help establish the issues that women's movements and organisations are already working on and where men's groups can support or partner with this work. It should recognise the opportunities for partnerships, but also the importance of retaining separate spaces where women's organisations can work alone. Inviting actors from women's organisations and movements to collaborate in this mapping is one way to begin bridging gaps and building alliances.

In order to tackle the mistrust that is sometimes observed between women's movements and men engaged for gender equality, it is important to create spaces where the different actors can come together to discuss issues around voice, accountability and gendered power dynamics. Organisations working with men and boys for gender equality (and those working on other social justice issues) can help promote gender equality through their own structures and practices; encouraging women's leadership and helping to build movements of women and men working together for a common cause.

A key part of Nijera Kori's work to organise landless women and men in Bangladesh is the establishment of democratic decision making structures across the movement, with gender equitable divisions of labour and support for women's leadership. This helps build relationships of trust and accountability on which progress toward gender equality depends.

4.5 Consider opportunities for scaling up, scaling out and sustainability

Challenge: Many existing initiatives working with men and boys are small scale and intensive, and their implementation is often restricted to a limited period of time. It is important, in order to maintain and increase impact, to design and enable initiatives that are sustainable in the long term and capable of expansion.

Solutions: In order to create opportunities for initiatives to scale up (expand the scale or scope of their work) or scale out (expand the reach of

their work through partnerships or networks), it is important to enable learning opportunities for the sharing of good practice and strategies to overcome challenges. Bringing different organisations working on engaging men and boys together in networks and partnerships can support efforts to scale up, as together they can work to adapt successful approaches, understand change in new contexts and areas, and develop ideas to incorporate ownership, sustainability and relevance.

Working with organisations or groups with fair, accountable and democratic leadership structures and workplace policies will help increase possibilities for scale up and sustainability. Such organisations are more likely to be able to build and transfer learning and leadership skills to work in new areas and to build the internal dynamics needed for expansion and change. Longer term funding for successful initiatives is also important in order to enable the sustained changes needed to transform gender inequality.

The Living Peace project in DRC began as a pilot scheme, working with 324 men and their partners. Recommendations and learning resulting from evaluation of the pilot phase led to the development of a scale up phase; in January 2015 this new phase began, with the aim of reaching 6,000-9,000 people in group therapy and 100,000-300,000 through campaigns. The project has widened its scope, working with communities and civil society as well as individual men, and seeking to improve the quality of public services.

The Kembatti Mentti Gezzimma (KMG) initiative in Ethiopia was founded by the women's rights campaigner, Bogaletch Gebre, who was born and raised in the Kembatta zone where the work began. KMG's approach of listening to, respecting and learning from local communities has allowed it to scale up its work to cover the entire southern region of Ethiopia.

Further reading

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, Brighton: IDS

EMERGE Stories of Change and Case Study series on work with men and boys in building gender equality (2015), available at <http://menandboys.ids.ac.uk/men-boys-and-gender-equality/case-studies>

United Nations (2014a) *Framework of Actions: For the Follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014*, New York: United Nations

World Bank (2012) *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank

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