

# Preventing violence and promoting fatherhood in Pakistan



## ABOUT RUTGERS PAKISTAN

Since 1997, Rutgers works in Pakistan to improve Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), with a strategic focus on promoting Life Skills-based Education (LSBE), youth friendly health services, eliminating gender-based violence (GBV) and reducing child marriages.

Engaging men and boys is considered a priority in all Rutgers Pakistan initiatives. Our strategies include capacity building for stakeholders (e.g. trainings for government institutions, community members and youth), youth empowerment initiatives, participation in alliances and advocacy activities.

## ENGAGEMENT AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

A campaign on fatherhood was conducted in Pakistan to encourage the transformation of negative gender norms to prevent GBV and to promote the rights of all women and girls. A set of community strategies were designed and implemented as part of this outreach, with a view to engaging multiple stakeholders in an effort to reduce violence and promote the key role of responsible fathers in society.

### 1. Engaging community and religious leaders in preventing violence

Community and religious leaders are involved through sensitization sessions on GBV and responsible fatherhood. Some of these leaders are selected to become master trainers or community facilitators and are trained on the key concepts of gender transformation, prevention of violence and fatherhood. They then use their new skills and position to work with the community to persuade men and boys to avoid using violence.

### 2. Engaging men as positive role models to promote respectful relationships

Part of the community work is a trajectory of sessions where men and boys are emboldened to break through gender stereotypes. The characteristics of an ideal/responsible father are discussed as being supportive, friendly, non-discriminatory towards their sons and daughters' rights and non-violent. The sharing of personal experiences and challenges are also encouraged in the sessions, enabling the group to then jointly devise possible solutions to the given obstacles.

### 3. Engaging young boys and girls for community mobilisation and outreach

Youth participation plays a big role in the promotion of gender equality and the prevention of violence across Pakistan. Therefore, a network of boys and girls has been sensitized on GBV, where they are encouraged to mobilise in their own communities as informed, positive role models.

### 4. Engaging government staff to prevent GBV

To ensure that government staff from various departments, as well as healthcare providers, case workers, police and staff of crisis centers are trained and equipped on violence against women, gender transformation, harmful gender norms and also, how to engage men and boys in violence prevention.

## THE IMPACT

The concept of responsible fatherhood builds upon the foundation of social values already in existence in Pakistani society, where the extended family and men's role as the patron of that family is seen as the pivot of change. Placing men and fathers at the forefront of national efforts to prevent GBV and promote the rights of women and girls received buy-in from many segments in society, especially from the main target group - young men and boys. The Ministry of Human Rights has also shown an interest in adopting and upscaling the community work on the role of responsible fathers. Collaboration with the relevant government departments, ministries, academia, religious leaders, media and a large number of community members indicates potential for the concept to bring about positive social change in attitudes towards GBV.