

Let's Unite!



**ENGAGING MEN IN
COMBATTING VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN**

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WHAT IS VIOLENCE?



**WHY IS INVOLVING MEN IN THE
MENA REGION IMPORTANT?**



WHAT CAN MEN DO?



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

Violence is defined as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation." *(WHO)*

Violence is not limited to physical harm. It can also manifest in the following manners:



Physical Violence

Using a body part or an object to control another person's actions



Sexual Violence

Coercing someone to take part in sexual activity (whether stranger, acquaintance, friend, partner, or spouse)



Emotional Violence

Saying/Doing insulting things to make someone feel bad (worthless, stupid, hopeless)



Psychological Violence

Using threats, intimidation, or isolation to control another person



Cultural Violence

Causing harm to someone as a result of cultural, religious, or traditional practices



Neglect

Not providing care or assistance to a person, despite having the duty and responsibility to do so



Verbal Abuse

Using language - spoken or written - to cause harm to someone



Financial/ Economic Abuse

Controlling/misusing a person's financial resources without their consent, or abusing someone's financial dependence



Spiritual/Religious Violence

Using someone's spiritual beliefs to manipulate, dominate, or control them

WHAT IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

(UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993)

Every year, violence in the home and the community devastates the lives of **millions** of women. Globally, at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime.

(Amnesty International)



WHY DOES VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN MATTER SO SIGNIFICANTLY ON THE SOCIETAL LEVEL?

Violence against women is rooted in a global culture of discrimination which denies them equal rights with men and which legitimises the appropriation of women's bodies for individual gratification or political ends. (*Amnesty International*)

Thus, violence against women has a large societal impact, both as cause and effect. This makes combating it a social responsibility in which every individual needs to be active.

REPERCUSSIONS ON SURROUNDINGS:

Violence has serious repercussions which affect a victim's surroundings, from immediate family members and friends, to larger circles.

STUNTING OF SOCIAL ROLES:

Violence limits women from practising their roles effectively, which seriously impacts their individual and collective status, as well as social progress.

DENIAL OF VIOLENCE INCREASES SEVERITY:

Denying the existence of this problem, as well as perpetrators' lack of accountability, can greatly contribute to the escalation of its severity within society on a number of levels.

HARMFUL EFFECTS ON PERSONAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH:

With the absence of an adequate public health framework, coupled with a common lack of women being aware about their rights (including sexual and reproductive health rights), gender violence can often result in the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

CHANGE COMES FROM WITHIN:

In order to put a halt to violence, the "culture of discrimination" needs to be addressed at its root. Effecting change in individuals' behaviours cannot be separated from influencing and creating change in a society's norms and values.

1

“I HAVE SPOKEN!”



ADDRESSING KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETIES

Most institutions in the Middle East and North Africa, on both the macro and micro levels, are structured to be dominated by leaders that are almost always men.

Thus, making men (especially those in places of power) allies in the fight against VAW and in promoting women's human rights will directly affect the institutions they head. This will in turn pave the path to change at a larger level within society.

In some cases, creating effective and full-fledged allies of these men may be difficult. However, sensitising them to the cause and to the importance of gender equality will facilitate many of the women's rights initiatives as well as their support for women's leadership, both in the near future and on the long run.

2

THE DOMINO EFFECT



MEN ADVOCATING WOMEN'S RIGHTS CAN LEAD TO MORE MEN ADVOCATING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Even among men who have been sensitised to gender equality and relevant messages, it is not uncommon to find that these men continue to believe that they would be “lesser” men if they looked up to, or listened to women. Thus, it is safe to assume that men can accept messages of gender equality from other men with much less resistance. Influential men who speak about women's rights can have a profound effect on other men.

Instead of alienating men and treating them as perpetrators or as unwelcome guests, the use of positive ideas and scripts will go a much longer way. Giving positive examples of men and how men within a society can act in a gender equal fashion helps men reformulate identities as gender equal men.

Working with men in their roles as fathers is another important step. This would not only entail incorporating less gender biases in their actions around the house (cooking, cleaning, helping with other chores), but it would also allow them to take on more active roles with their children in terms of emotional expression and communication, as well as in increasing non-violent behaviour and attitudes. This work, if successful, will have effects that will be seen for generations, in the actions of that man's daughters, sons, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren...!

WHY IS INVOLVING MEN IN THE MENA REGION IMPORTANT?



3 EQUALITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS



Human rights are exactly that: the privileges of ALL humans. This holds true regardless of sex, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, socio-economic status, ethnicity, marital status, religion, age... It is the responsibility of all people to respect those rights, and ensure they do not infringe upon them. It is also important to speak out against human rights transgressions.

***"Silence in the face of injustice is complicity with the oppressor."* Ginetta Sagan**

Thus, women's rights cannot be dealt with as a separate field from human rights. Considering women's rights to be something outside of the context of human rights in general may convey the message that women's rights initiatives come at the expense of men and their rights.

Thus, placing women's rights in the context of human rights – where they rightfully belong – places men and women on the same side instead of against one another.



WHY DOES VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN CONCERN ME AS A MAN?

It is a mistake to portray all men as the “perpetrators” and the “aggressors,” as this does not always apply; a number of men have been great allies and proponents of women’s rights, and have spoken up against violence against women. Taking a stand and setting an example is an important step to pave the way for engaging other men in the struggle to end violence against women. Men are often told what not to do, but there are few positive examples of men speaking out against VAW, and it is time to change that.

BECOME A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL! YES, YOU! HOW, YOU ASK?



- **Brush up on resources:** There is a wide range of interesting and informative publications and studies addressing Gender Equality, Gender Roles, Gender-Based Violence, Violence Against Women, Domestic Violence, Feminism and the different Global Feminist movements, as well as Masculinities, which is becoming an increasingly prominent topic.
- **Find out about global efforts and decrees:** A number of international decrees, documents, laws, conferences, and recommendations deal with issues of gender discrimination and violence against women. Some such important documents are the CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, among others.
- **Get legal:** Learn about laws and governmental policies in your country and surroundings. What laws exist in your country to protect women in their own homes from domestic violence? What laws exist to protect women from gender discrimination or abuse in other settings, such as in the workplace?
- **Expand your knowledge on Masculinities:** As mentioned above, read about the growing field of Masculinities within studies of gender. This will lead to ideas and recommendations for personal growth on how to understand, build, and commit to a new identity as a gender-sensitive man.
- **Get actively involved:** Now that you have sufficient knowledge to formulate your own opinions on the matter, an important complementary step is to be actively involved. To do so, as well as get a more accurate view on the topic of Gender Equality in your country and region, contact governmental agencies and non-governmental organisations working in the field (get in touch with us at **ABAAD**, we will gladly provide guidance and information!). This will support your quest to learn more about initiatives for the advancement of women’s human rights, in addition to working on engaging men and masculinities.



LISTEN!

What pressures do women experience in their daily lives? What challenges and problems do they face merely due to the expectations society places upon them as women?

Listen to women. Listen to their perspectives about different societal issues and how said experiences differ from those of men.

ACT!

- **Lead others:** Set a good example. Even gender-aware activists who have been working in the field for years have participated in exercises that have proved that gender discrimination is instilled in them since birth. With the knowledge we gain, we can be more aware of these biases and calculate our steps accordingly. Defy gender discrimination. Before acting, analyse. Always take the time to re-analyse your actions. Do the same for your attitudes and your perspectives. With time, your behaviour will also reflect your rejection of gender discrimination.
- **Lead the debate in your circles:** Lead positive debates about the importance of being women's human rights advocates. Challenge your family's, friends', and acquaintances' patriarchal ideologies, challenge beliefs (conscious or unconscious) that oppress women, challenge gender roles, and challenge members of your circles to consider their actions and the actions of others in their cultures. Do so non-aggressively, non-violently, and non-judgmentally.

CONTEMPLATE!

- How do you see women and men? What is your outlook on each?
- As a child, what were you taught a man "should be?" What about a woman?
- Were/Are men and boys treated differently in your household than women and girls?
- What about social roles? Were/Are there any differences between those of men and those of women?

ANALYSE!

- Do you regard and treat women as equals? How so?
- Domestic violence. A great taboo in our society. How often have you, or people around you, spoken up rather than stayed silent, and responded to such incidents in your surroundings?
- When was the last time you attended an activity or event related to women's human rights? Do you do that often? Are you outspoken about supporting women's rights?
- Are you aware of what the technical definition of abuse is and the different types that exist? Are you or have you ever been violent (physically, sexually, verbally, psychologically, emotionally, economically, culturally, spiritually, or neglectful) with a woman?

CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AND ORGANISATIONS



We are fighting for women's empowerment, independence, and equality. If we engage men in this highly specialised movement, are we not negating our goals, giving them the ultimate power, and making them "saviours" here as well?

Engaging men in work on ending violence against women and masculinities actually complements and strengthens the women's empowerment movement; it creates men who are allies. Engaging men will always go back to increasing women's collaboration, empowerment, and rights. When applied correctly, engaging men sensitises them to women's human rights issues, and paves the way for them to take a supportive stance on those issues. This applies both, on the levels of private life and personal beliefs, as well as in terms of legislating laws and policies that promote gender equality. It is important to always remember that the inclusion of men does not mean the exclusion of women! If the work, on any level, is resulting in exclusion of women, or is not creating positive change in women's lives and empowerment initiatives, it is time to revise efforts and implementation techniques.



I understand the importance of engaging men and boys in EAW and masculinities. However, doesn't that take crucial funding, attention, and work efforts away from women's rights initiatives?

No. First, it is important to note that engaging men and boys in women's human rights and empowerment initiatives does not entail excluding women. A women's rights organisation can launch a project focusing on engaging men within its existing work. This project's messages can target both women and men as recipients of its message. Next, engaging men expands the circle of human rights defenders working on gender equality and **gender equity.**"

» *Gender Equity is the process of fairly allocating programmes, resources and funding, and decision-making to both women and men indiscriminately. It also addresses any imbalances in the benefits made available to both sexes.*





Doesn't the promotion of understanding the costs of masculinity or how men are socialised to being violent seem like "feeling sorry" for men or making excuses for their violence?

These techniques, which are part of engaging men in ERAW processes, employ empathy rather than sympathy. A key step towards ending violent behaviour is understanding the reasons behind it, NOT condoning it. We must delve into and understand the social expectations and rules of what a man should be, and how men are consequently raised. It is only then that we can begin to effectively work on transforming the cultural understanding of what a man is, and what a man should be.



I still don't feel that men can be partners in the fight towards gender equality. How can we trust the intention of men to change, especially stakeholders, men in positions of power, and those who benefit from patriarchy?

Trust is something that is built gradually and with effort. We need to begin by coming to the table, initiating dialogue, and going to conflict resolution. We are not asking these men (politicians, religious leaders, and other influential men in our society) to become spokespersons on gender equality, but we need to engage them, strategically and idealistically. Resistance may be strong at first, but if we continue to avoid working with stakeholders, this will prolong the existence of the problem, both for women, and for society as a whole.

GENERAL QUESTIONS



So are you fighting to protect men from abuse?

We believe in a society free of abuse, regardless of gender or age. That said, we work on engaging men in ending violence against women, as well as in work on masculinities. This means that our work aims to better explain to men gender equality, gender equity, and the vitality of uniting in the struggle against violence. Our perspective takes into consideration what the gender experience is for men, and what steps men can take with women as equal partners to create a just, fair, and equitable society.



Doesn't engaging men in ending violence against women only target men who are physically violent with women? Those who do not cause harm to women need not be involved, correct?

Actually, violence is not limited to physical harm. There are nine different types of violence: physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, spiritual/religious, cultural, verbal, and economic violence, as well as neglecting someone you have a duty to protect. Thus, a man may not be physically aggressive towards a woman, but he might be practicing a different form of violence without even being aware of doing so. Additionally, work on Engaging Men focuses on engaging all men and boys, and providing them with information on how to speak up and become active advocates for women's human rights, as well as positive role models for other men. This not only includes supporting laws and governmental policies, but also speaking to men in their social circles about the importance of ending violence against women, and what they as men can do to reach that goal.



Men seem to greatly benefit from patriarchy. Why should they care about working on Masculinities or getting involved in these efforts?

Many men are unaware of "masculine gender roles" and their socialisation into them, especially in patriarchal cultures. They therefore may not have considered or noticed the costs and burdens masculine gender roles have on them, or the benefits of ridding themselves of those unreal and stressful societal expectations. Examples of "masculine" behaviours that are "expected" of "real men" can be:

■ "What is wrong with you? Man up, stop crying like a girl!"

Men are expected to have all of the answers. When facing moments of difficulty, they are not allowed to break down. They should ABSOLUTELY NOT cry. They should not express fear. They should not question themselves. How many times have you been around men having to put up a tough façade at the funeral of a loved one, because "you need to be strong for the women and children?"

Such issues put men under great psychological stress. These stresses often result in **somatisation**.»

» *Somatisation is the conversion of mental experiences or anxiety into physical symptoms. Often a result of stress or panic disorders.*

■ **“What, you want your wife to spend on you? What kind of a man are you?”**

A man is expected to be the sole and primary “breadwinner” of the household. This puts great pressure on him in his role as a provider. Any inability to do so decreases his perceived worth as a man. In a gender equal society, men and women work together as equal partners, and together plan and act upon their financial well-being.

■ **“What is that you’re playing with? Give that to your sister and grab a car. Or a football. Or a gun!”**

Walk into any toy store and look around. Toys are clearly segregated through a gender lens. Girls get the overwhelming pink aisles featuring dolls, dolls, and more dolls, accessories and settings for those dolls, as well as kitchen sets, ovens, beads and jewellery, tiaras and wands... Boy aisles feature army and action figures, cars, guns, swords, balls, bats, engineering sets, science sets, and more. Boys are encouraged primarily to be violent, and secondarily to be “the thinkers.” Boys displaying affection among each other are scolded, told they are behaving like girls, or get teased and bullied for being emasculated, and are taught to be rough and tough from a very young age.

■ **“Those kids are pampered enough by their mother – as their father, you ought to give them tough love. Discipline.”**

Society looks down on a man who is an emotional, sensitive, and loving figure. In many if not most cases, the man is expected to be the supreme disciplinarian, the higher authority, and the threat that mom would use to scare her children into behaving. He is not expected to play with his children (especially since he is too busy fulfilling his role as provider), show physical affection, or have open discussions with them on a regular basis... The greatest gifts of being a father cannot be enjoyed by many men, simply because such actions are not considered befitting of a “real man.”

■ **“He stepped on your foot? Step on his NECK. Don’t you ever let anyone get away with laying a finger on you!”**

Men are also victims of men’s violence. In times of war and conflict, men are expected to fight and die. Men are expected never to back down from a fight if challenged by another man. It even goes as far as to consider non-violent men “wimps” or “women.”





HIV/AIDS • Gender Equality • Human Rights



MenEngage
boys and men for gender equality

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