



THEMATIC GUIDANCE SHEET

Engaging men and boys for gender equality



Abstract

This paper describes IAMANEH's approach and its experience in engaging men and boys (EMB) for gender equality in the Western Balkans and Western Africa. It serves as a basis for a common understanding of EMB, gives a framework for the work within this field and sets guidelines for action. Furthermore, it shows IAMANEH's experiences and expertise in the EMB-working field and contributes to the reflection about advancement on a technical and operational level. The paper first gives an introductory overview of the main theoretical discussions and their operational implications that guide IAMANEH's strategy and programme orientation. Secondly, it presents key experiences through concrete examples from IAMANEH's main fields of operation. An overview of the key findings is offered as an explanatory framework for IAMANEH itself, its partner organisations in the field and for other interested practitioners in related intervention areas.

Why work with men and boys?

Gender equality¹ is a human right, but our world faces a persistent gap in access to opportunities and decision-making power for women and girls. Globally, women have fewer opportunities for economic participation than men, less access to health and education and less political representation.

Approximately 300'000 women die in childbirth each year, millions suffer from childbirth injuries.² Women all over the world work without any form of social safety net, earn less than men, have less influence in social and political decision-making processes

¹ A concept that is used relatively often as an alternative to gender equality is gender equity. Sometimes, both terms are used interchangeably, but they do not refer to the same thing. Gender equity puts the focus on fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs for women and men, girls and boys. The concept of gender equality has been long established as the preferred wording for equal rights, life prospects, opportunities and power for women and men, girls and boys. It is used in all key international agreements, from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Therefore, the term gender equality is used in this paper.

² World health statistics 2017, monitoring health for the SDGs, WHO



and cannot make their own decisions about their sexuality. An estimated 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner. More than 3 million girls suffer genital mutilation each year in Africa alone. Every year, almost 70 million girls worldwide are married before their 18th birthdays.³ Violence against women is one of the most common civil rights violations in the world today.

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.⁴ A critical element of promoting and achieving gender equality is the empowerment of women. Success rests on overcoming the historical and current disadvantages faced by women and girls, who across the world, live under patriarchy and socially ingrained gender norms. The need is therefore evident: women and girls must be supported in finding a path to empowerment.⁵

Gender programmes have, for a long time, been regarded as programmes purely for the advancement of women. But achieving gender equality requires structural and social change. This cannot be achieved by working with women alone. Attitudes and behaviours of men and boys need to change as well. Ideas about manhood are deeply rooted. From an early age, boys may be socialised into gender roles designed to keep men in power and in control. Many are conditioned to believe that dominant behaviour towards girls and women is part of being a man. Reaching them with programmes that promote attitudes and behaviours toward gender equality is key to

ensuring that the future is free of gender-based discrimination.⁶

Ultimately, engaging men and boys for gender equality is necessary not only for women's empowerment, but also to transform the social and gender norms that reinforce patriarchy and inequality and harm both women and men as individuals. Engaging men and boys is crucial for improving health for all, reducing gender based violence and promoting equal relationships.⁷ With the aim of transforming power imbalances and removing barriers, engaging men and boys in complement to, and as equal partners with women and girls is increasingly becoming a critical strategy for IAMANEH. Both men and women must be actively addressed and involved through programmes and critical self-examination and transformation of gender roles must be pursued.

What role for men and boys?

Men have been identified as gatekeepers for women's empowerment, but at the same time a differentiated analysis of changes in male roles and positions in society has shown their own manifold marginalisation and vulnerabilities. Gender inequalities themselves negatively impact not only women, but also men. Therefore, men and boys are likewise addressors and actors for gender equality work.⁸ The identified vulnerabilities of men as well as their relevant role and potential for changes in power relations also call for empowerment strategies on the male side. Men need to be mobilised and supported to develop gender conscious thinking, critically reflect upon male privilege and patriarchy, and gain independence from stereotypical norms and values that oppress women, but partially also disempower and marginalise men in society.

³ State of world population 2017, UNFPA

⁴ UN Women, OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>)

⁵ Gender Equity and Male Engagement (2018): It Only Works When Everyone Plays, ICRW

⁶ UNFPA 2013: Engaging Men and Boys: A Brief Summary of UNFPA Experience and Lessons Learned

⁷ Gender Equity and Male Engagement (2018): It Only Works When Everyone Plays, ICRW

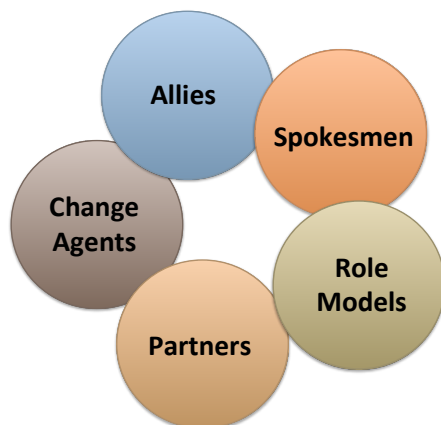
⁸ CALKIN, Sidney 2013: From Absent Obstacles to Allies: Creating Space for Men in Theories of Women's Empowerment, draft paper, University of York, p. 13 (unpublished conference paper, presented at the European Conference on Politics and Gender in Barcelona, March 2013. Quotation with the permission of the authors)



In order to take into consideration the different challenges, entry points and needs for action, male engagement for gender equality can be oriented towards different roles and purposes:

Men as:

- Allies for women's rights movements and issues
- Spokesmen for the vulnerabilities and concerns of boys, men and fathers in pursuit of gender equality
- Role Models for other men and boys
- Change Agents who work as activists for gender equality
- Partners in a larger alliance evolving for social justice and equality for all genders



The engagement of men and boys should mobilise them to develop positive roles as fathers, husbands and brothers and deal with a new masculinity among their peers and in the broader society. Gender equality can only become a reality if we do not miss waking up men's compassion with regard to equality.⁹ There is a need for men's own reflection on dominant masculinity, patriarchy and gender inequality.

The identification of mutual interests among women and men regarding needed changes in power relations and power distribution can form a positive basis for joint action to counteract the social norms and structural

power that lead to gender inequality.¹⁰ Finally, effective male engagement programming must take women into account. Interventions should acknowledge women's existing contributions towards gender equality. They should create opportunities for leveraging this work and for collaborating with women and women's groups to ensure that efforts take account of women's rights and women's empowerment.¹¹

Gender-transformative processes as a goal

Very much in line with theoretical considerations, the everyday experiences of IAMANEH and its partner organisations from the field show that it is not sufficient to develop gender-neutral action (treating men and women the same) or to promote gender-sensitive thinking (raising awareness on gender relations and inequalities) if gender equality is to be reached. Engagement for gender equality calls for gender-transformative processes where a redefinition of gender roles and values needs to take place. Gender-transformative processes place gender-relations at the centre of their attention by addressing the root causes of gender inequality. These types of interventions will have a great impact at individual and community levels, in particular. Initiatives that do not address social norms run the risk of treating symptoms rather than the underlying causes of inequality.¹² Gender-transformative work seeks to transform gender relations to promote equality through critical reflection and questioning of individual practices, institutional dynamics and broader social norms that create and reinforce gender inequalities and vulnerabilities for men and women.¹³

⁹ Theunert Markus (2015). The Role of Boys, Men and Fathers in Gender Equality –Conceptual Frameworks and Political Practice.

¹⁰ Loncarevic Maja: The call for engaging men and boys. Newsletter Gender Equality Network 03_2016. SDC

¹¹ Gender Equity and Male Engagement (2018): It Only Works When Everyone Plays, ICRW

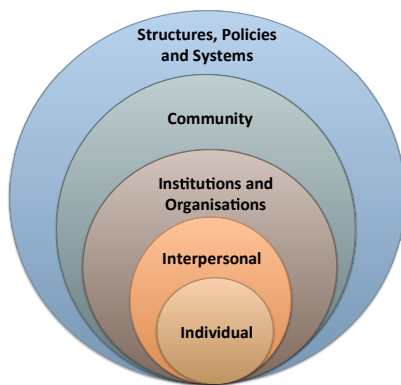
¹² International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Instituto Promundo, 2007

¹³ UNFPA 2013: Engaging Men and Boys: A Brief Summary of UNFPA Experience and Lessons Learned.



Multi-level gender-transformative work

An ecological model is a useful framework for mapping out these multiple and ever-changing inter-relationships and identifying entry points for gender transformative processes. The ecological model illustrates the importance of working not only with individuals, but also with diverse and interconnected social groups, systems, and structures that influence gender norms and the behaviour of men and women.¹⁴



While the individual level is the crucial entry point for personal self-reflection and attitude change, families and interpersonal relationships need to be included and integrated in the processes for further backup and lasting change. Changing institutional practices and cultures, furthermore, allows the creation of gender-transformed structural frameworks that allow corresponding responses to emerging transformed needs of members of society. Finally, communities, policies and governmental systems are directly interrelated when it comes to a broader anchoring of gender-transformative change on a societal level.

Key areas of concern for gender-transformative work

Trying to summarise the most relevant aspects that need to be taken into consideration when entering the engaging men and boys field, the following overview presents four central fields of consideration in

order to promote gender-transformative change:

1. Men’s livelihoods as entry points and references for addressing men and boys and their lived realities
2. Critical gender-focus as an important working lens for addressing patriarchy and inequalities
3. States and politics as frameworks for scaling up and installing durability of change
4. Methodological concerns that take into consideration the needed time, depth and multidimensionality of interventions.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men’s places • Men’s needs and concerns • Men’s responsibilities and spaces for change • Youth • Men as fathers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men to understand oppressive effects of gender inequalities on women • Understand that they must not conform to dominant forms of masculinity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws and politics to include men and boys • Necessity for global commitment & accountability • Scaling up needs: institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duration, frequency and scale of intervention • Multi-dimensional and integrated • Complementarity with women’s efforts

(IAMANEH 2014)

On an **inter-personal level** gender-transformative work within this framework means:

- Addressing men and boys not only through their dominant expression of masculinity, but also through their own vulnerabilities and needs
- Making them recognise and understand the oppressive effects of gender inequalities on women, but also on themselves
- Questioning patriarchy and privilege, and critically reflecting their own positions in family and society
- Helping them understand that they must not conform to dominant forms of masculinity, because it is about themselves, and not about others
- Drawing on men’s responsibilities from a human-rights based perspective and helping them define spaces for change

¹⁴ UNFPA & Promundo (2010): Engaging men and boys in gender equality and health. A global toolkit for action



- Empowering men to take action on an individual but also societal level and accompanying them in this process.¹⁵

On a structural as well as a societal level, it is important to take into consideration that:

- Broad scale transformation of values and norms needs to take place in a wider societal context
- Programmes have to promote frame conditions that support such gender-related societal changes
- Enacting laws and policies is important to help to institutionalise more gender-equitable relations and to underline men's and boys' roles and responsibilities at various levels.
- Gender-transformative action cannot remain limited to NGO-led small-scale projects with limited duration, but must be brought about on a larger scale with a broader impact on societies
- Interventions need to be multi-dimensional and integrated, and complementary to women's efforts for equality.

IAMANEH: engaging men and boys in practice

For almost 30 years, engagement for gender equality as part of the work of IAMANEH Switzerland has been synonymous with the promotion of women's empowerment. Based on field experiences and on the background of a broader gender discussion, the question of the role and responsibility of men and boys has increasingly been raised at IAMANEH since 2008.

The new strategy 2017-2020 therefore focuses on gender-transformative processes as a crosscutting issue that is addressed throughout the programme. Gender transformative action is applied by focusing on women's empowerment and men's engagement. Within the framework of efforts to

increase gender equality, enabling women to represent and to shape their interests in an active, self-determined and independent way remains constant. At the same time, engaging men and boys constitutes the basic condition for successful gender equality projects for IAMANEH Switzerland.

Many of IAMANEH'S projects address men's and boys' engagement in women's empowerment across fields such as reproductive and sexual health and rights, as well as gender-based violence. An important emphasis is put on treatment programmes for male perpetrators of gender-based violence that combine behaviour and social norm change. Work is also focused on engaging key community leaders in order to get their support for programming goals. Within the last few years, attention and support has grown for involving men as allies for a broader gender justice agenda. Activities with men and boys began to encourage them to examine how patriarchy affects their own lives and opportunities, alongside deeper questions about what it means to stand as an ally for gender equality.

Men as supportive partners in the promotion of SRHR

In many parts of the world, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are largely considered the sole responsibility of women. This leaves women and girls to bear the burden of their own and their families' SRHR, allowing too many men to neglect their SRHR needs and responsibilities and those of their family. While support and promotion of SRHR for women is to be continued, attention must also be placed on the specific needs and role of men and boys as partners and clients in SRHR.¹⁶

A strong focus in IAMANEH's programme is set on improving family planning services and comprehensive sexuality education. In cooperation with schools and health centres, the aim is to enable women and men to deal

¹⁵ Reisewitz, Roland/Loncarevic Maja. Introducing perpetrator counselling in the Western Balkan countries: The challenge of gender-transformative action in a patriarchal society. New Delhi 2014.

¹⁶ Men Care+ (2014). Engaging boys and men for Gender Equality. Position Paper.



with their sexuality in a self-determined and responsible manner and to reduce the risks of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. Active involvement of men and boys in family planning promotes a shared sense of responsibility and communication between relationship partners and their respect for the needs of the partners. Young people are an especially important target group for gender-transformative work in SRHR.

IAMANEH is active in countries where women have little choice in whether they become pregnant or not, and where sexual activity by young people is not socially accepted. In this context there is a need to increasingly involve men and boys as partners in this work. Engaging men and boys strengthens their active role as partners and fathers, and increases their own involvement with personal issues of sexual and reproductive health. Informed decisions and more equal opportunities for women and men in this context lead to healthier families, improved prospects for life and less poverty, thereby contributing to a life in dignity.

GAD (Groupe Action Développement): „Maris pionniers“¹⁷, Mali

The „Maris pionniers“ strategy aims at strengthening the involvement and active participation of husbands in health promotion and fostering change in behaviour at the community level. Therefore, IAMANEH’s partner organisation GAD in Mali implements a context-adapted method to sensitise men and boys to their shared responsibility for family planning and family health.

Engaged men have been identified in several villages. Husbands analyse and discuss specific cases of reproductive health problems within the community and look for appropriate solutions based on reliable knowledge available within the group or obtained from an

individual acting as a specialist resource person. Activities such as educational talks for men, counselling and home visits, and forum theatres are being conducted to increase their interest and involvement in reproductive health issues.

Because of the high illiteracy rate within the target population, theatre and radio are particularly important media. These channels highlight the significance of medically assisted pregnancies, the benefits of family planning, the risks and prevention of obstetric fistulas and the relationship between men's behaviour and women's reproductive health.

The activities use a combined approach of knowledge transfer, mobilisation and gender-transformative work. The self-reflective work and taking of responsibility in their role as men, husbands and fathers are highly significant.

This focus has led to a visible mobilisation process among the male target groups. First behavioural changes can be observed: husbands are taking an increasingly active role in the health care of their families and communities, communicating with their wives, understanding the importance of the health of their wives and children, and some even attending the births of their children (which has never been the case before). This has increased intergenerational communication about important health issues in families. Many couples have reported improvements in their relationships.

AFAD (Alliance Fraternelle Aide pour le Développement): „Club de papas“, Togo

„Club de papas“ and „club de mamas“ are groups of men and women who work together to promote maternal and child health, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. In the very remote villages in central Togo, dedicated men and women who showed interest in the subject have been identified. These were supported by IAMANEH’s partner organisation AFAD in

¹⁷ The strategy is based on the "école de maris" approach, firstly implemented through UNFPA in Niger. However, a contextual adaptation and development has been implemented.



order to be able to act as contact persons or mediators in their villages as well as in the families and as facilitators in the „clubs“.

Within the „club de papas“ they discuss topics related to health, women's rights, benefits of participation and taking up responsibility. In a further step they deal critically with norms and gender relations, masculinity/femininity, violence against women, as well as patriarchy and power inequality. By participatory animation methods, role-play, personal stories, etc., men and boys have been motivated to reflect their own vulnerability to gender inequality and to encourage the development of new attitudes independently from dominant forms of masculinity. This confrontation makes them aware of their responsibilities and enables them to be positive role models as fathers, husbands or brothers.

In addition to the meetings within their own club, there are also meetings between the clubs, between men and women, or boys and girls, in which the groups exchange their views, needs, perspectives, social norms and expectations. By defining common interests and goals with women and girls, they can counteract the social norms and power structures that lead to gender inequality. Men reported that they have better mental health, were more likely to be happy, talk to their partners and have better sex lives. Women reported that their partners participated in daily care work. They have even started taking over “women's tasks” such as sweeping the village square in public spaces. Both women and men report that, thanks to the „club de papas“, there is greater cohesion and "more peace" within the family.



Work with men and boys in gender-based violence prevention and intervention

Gender-based violence is a violation of human rights, and compromises physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. The high levels of gender-based violence around the world are inextricably linked to stereotypical masculine gender norms and unequal power relations between men and women.¹⁸

While the overall goals such as the improvement of women's rights, protection of victim's and a reduction of violence against women and children remain, men and boys have to take an active stand for changing gender roles and against violence. This needs to be pursued through prevention as well as intervention.

IAMANEH's experience shows that the first professional responses to violence against women and children need to focus on protection and psychosocial support for the survivors. In addition, context-adapted activities within the community as well as activities at schools have proven to be important tools for raising awareness of gender and violence issues. Engaging men and boys in prevention work makes a significant

¹⁸ Men Care+ (2014). Engaging boys and men for Gender Equality. Position Paper



contribution to the necessary gender transformative change processes for a sustainable reduction of gender-based violence.

On the other hand, programmes for perpetrators of violence, which are embedded in victim protection and violence prevention, are important elements of an integrated and comprehensive approach to preventing and combating violence against women. Working with male perpetrators of domestic violence can lead to a broader process of cultural and political change to eliminate gender hierarchies, gender-based violence and gender discrimination as well as other forms of personal and structural violence and discrimination.

Office for Men and Boys - Zyra për Djem dhe Burra (ZDB): Work with perpetrators, Albania

In the Western Balkan region, the work with perpetrators, i.e. violence counselling with men and youngsters who use violence, is one of the main pillars of the programme implemented by IAMANEH Switzerland and its local partner organisations. In collaboration with Croatian and Swiss experts, male professionals have been trained as counsellors of perpetrators. Violence counselling approaches include important gender-transformative elements of critical work on oneself and have been adapted to cultural and contextual realities. As a consequence, in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as in Albania, trained male professionals have established counselling centres for men and boys and engage in pioneering work with men against gender-based violence.

One of these counselling offices has been opened in the very patriarchal north of Albania. Two male psychologists, trained as counsellors of perpetrators, offer professional counselling to violent men. In close collaboration with the victim protection branch of the organisation, they are establishing partnerships and collaborations with relevant institutional actors and creating a formalised referral mechanism in order to be

able to motivate and mobilise violent men to receive counselling. Coordination with victim protection services is allowing a coordinated response and helps to mitigate risks for the survivors, and to monitor the impact of the violence counselling work. In the very traditional rural communities, intense sensitisation work has created a basis of understanding and trust in the society that enables reaching out to men and making people accept the new idea and the service.

University forums on the topic of work with perpetrators are an additional instrument to create interest among future professionals for this completely new intervention field. Within a short time, ZDB has become a highly professional counselling service that is well established in the community and that successfully spreads gender-transformative convictions and involves a growing number of young men in the fight against SGBV.



Budučnost: Men's Centre Modriča, Bosnia-Herzegovina

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, in 2011, four young male professionals established the first Men's Centre, a contact and counselling service for men in crisis. The main focus lies in perpetrator treatment, but they also offer needs oriented counselling for men in difficult life situations. The centre also has a strong prevention focus, runs anti-stress-programmes for men, and addresses issues of gender roles, violence and conflict resolution through workshops and study circles with interested men and youngsters. Overall the centre serves as a daily meeting point for men in town (newspapers, internet, social games) and offers a wider range of male-focused



activities. The organisation is reaching out to a variety of men's associations and sports clubs in order to sensitise them about gender and violence issues and make them familiar with the service offered by the Men's Centre. Through the work with sports clubs the centre tries to reach out to men's circles and places, where traditionally stereotypical male behaviour is being cultivated and replicated, and to initiate critical reflection on traditional male roles, norms and values.

Male professionals have developed consciousness about the need for action from the men's side. They are the owners of the initiated process. Men are not being addressed only from the perspective of being a problem (as perpetrators of violence) but also with regard to their needs and vulnerabilities. Trust building and empowerment are important elements in the work with men at the centre.

At the same time, the Men's Centre team is engaged in an active negotiation process with governmental structures and especially the justice system. The Men's Centre is taking a leading role in pushing the formulation of bylaws and regulations in the new law against domestic violence and in sensitising police, judges and courts to issuing compulsory perpetrator counselling orders, as it is foreseen in the law but is not being implemented for the moment.

Engaging youth to advance gender equality

Realising gender equality is critical to progress across all the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and requires actions by states, civil society and the private sector alike. A wide range of initiatives and interventions now exist for engaging men and boys, aimed at increasing men's support for gender equality and women's empowerment. Initiatives that seek to change norms, often using collective action, connecting up at individual, community and institutional levels, and targeting young people are seemingly most effective in this.

During adolescence and young adulthood, there is a critical period of opportunity to engage boys and young men in understanding why gender equality is good for everyone and to recognise their role in promoting the empowerment of girls and young women. By reflecting on their own power and privilege, boys and young men have the ability to shift the dominant norms and ideas about gender and masculinity, and challenge the patriarchal beliefs, practices, institutions and structures that drive inequality between men and women.

Woman to Woman (WtW): School integrated gender work, Albania

Woman to Woman, a local women's NGO, has developed gender-transformative work at secondary schools in northern villages of Albania. Gender workshops with pupils aim at initiating joint reflection about gender roles and stereotypes with girls and boys, combined with training on non-violent conflict resolution, specifically targeting boys.

This NGO-initiated programme reaches out to girls and boys in an institutional setting that provides a framework for basic acceptance of the topic and active participation of the target group. It reaches boys and girls in a setting where they are already very familiar with each other. It empowers youngsters of both sexes to develop their own positions that can be integrated into a changing world between tradition and modernism.

Parallel to the programme integrated into the basic school programme, the NGO is called upon to intervene in conflict situations in school classes related to peer-to-peer violence where inter-personal violence, discrimination and marginalisation, as well as mobbing can be used as a starting point for reflecting on the roots of violent behaviour. Joint problem-solving leads to the conceptualisation of alternative ways of conflict resolution that are based on mutual respect, a commitment to non-violence and a critical position taking with regard to patriarchal concepts of masculine behaviour. Teachers are integrated into the



programme and receive additional targeted training with the aim of adopting elements from the gender modules into their regular teaching.

This combination gives an excellent framework for tackling very personal positions and vulnerabilities, addressing critical behaviours that are rooted in the patriarchal value system. It is a concrete step towards gender-transformative action where boys are targeted specifically, but girls also participate, and where common interests and the need for more gender-just behaviours form an important starting point for individual appropriation of the topic.

Furthermore, the integration of teachers into the programme as well as the efforts for curricular integration of gender modules are important steps forward and foster institutional learning and change.



Main findings as a guiding framework for future interventions

- Work on one-self and share: be the change you want to bring about

One of the most important experiences and lessons learned is that the development of a gender-transformative attitude in men and boys is only possible if they engage in a process of personal self-reflection, dealing with their own emotions and experiences as men in their societies. This is a difficult task, since men are not used to talking about emotions and to admitting to feeling weak.

Reflection on one's own positions and dominance, but also one's vulnerabilities and concerns as a man in a patriarchal system can initiate a process of critical questioning of values and norms and the need for transformation. It is equally important to create a space where new attitudes and behaviours can be tested and learning shared with likeminded individuals.

Reaching out to young men is an especially productive investment. Young men find themselves in a personal transformation process between tradition and modernism regarding gender roles and therefore carry a high level of interest and readiness for change. Strengthening opportunities for boys and young men to participate in supporting gender-equality efforts will have an impact not only on women and girls but also on their own lives. Furthermore, it is crucial to empower men as role models, i.e. to search for those men who can take a pioneering role and to work with them.

- Gender-specific versus gender-mixed interventions: acting in a gender-synchronised way

Experiences from the field show that gender-specific interventions need to be complemented with gender-mixed activities, especially in order to improve the communication between the sexes: traditionally in many contexts communication between men and women is rather limited, as societal definitions of roles clearly define gender-specific tasks and spaces. In such gender-mixed settings, different perspectives and needs can be shared and discussed and shifting norms and values experienced and commented upon.

Collaboration of women's and men's organisations or groups produces far more mobilisation power. Acting together for joint goals leads to targeted corporate action and prevents women's and men's interests being played off against each other. "Gender synchronisation" is the key term trying to describe the need for the complementary and



coordinated work of female and male activists in this field. Apart from the individual processes of the two groups, moments of bringing them together for exchange, joint agenda setting and coordination are crucial to the pursuit of shared goals and experiencing a broader effect from individual engagement.

- Reaching out to leaders and penetrating institutional settings: advocacy and accountability

Another important realisation is that it is essential to bring the issue on the political agenda. It is important that efforts not only focus on individuals/couples and communities, but that they also consider the important implications of working at institutional and policy levels. This is where dominant hegemonial masculine patterns are deeply enshrined in institutional cultures and in the persons representing them, and where deeper and longer lasting change is a precondition for supportive frameworks and corresponding institutional practices and response. Gender-transformative work therefore needs to reach institutions and political structures.

Fostering allies among influential actors and elites who have broader social influence - religious leaders and political officials - can be important for promoting broader change in norms but requires careful selection, training and support to align their lives and work toward gender equality.

Furthermore, it is not sufficient to concentrate only on targeted small-scale pioneer projects that might produce good results, but only have a limited range. Reaching the policy level and providing the necessary legal framework produces the required backup on a structural level and will contribute to a broader integration of social norm changes in the society. In Bosnia as well as in Albania for example, efforts have been deployed to push for governmental responsibility with regard to perpetrator treatment as well as boys-centred prevention programmes at schools that are integrated into the teaching curricula. As not

every intervention can engage at all levels, programmes should look to partner with others to fill these gaps.

- Culturally and contextually adapted forms of gender-transformative work

As gender-transformative work is about social norm change, cultural and contextual aspects are key elements to be taken into consideration. Beliefs, behavioural codices, traditional practices, but also specific contextual imprints may easily be considered as strong barriers for any form of gender-transformative process. At the same time, they can offer interesting paths and vehicles to be used when trying to initiate critical self-reflection and gender-transformative processes, be it on a family level, in sex-specific peer groups or at village and community levels. For example, in Western Africa, traditional men-only community meeting places can be transformed into places for dialogue and joint decision making for women and men at village level. Traditional social hierarchies that translate into speaking orders and messaging functions at community level can be used to installing spokespersons and change agents at the right level for certain circumstances. Finally, the relevance of strong family cohesion and the responsibility of brothers for their sisters can be used to win over the male members of families to defending the interests and rights of their female relatives before family chiefs or vis-à-vis social networks and communities. Developing consciousness for these cultural or contextual elements and strategies on how to integrate them as working elements into gender-transformative processes has been shown to be an important means to break down barriers and to engage in changing rigid societal frameworks that reinforce gender inequality.



Concluding remarks

Building on these theoretical reflections and the different experiences and lessons learned from the field, IAMANEH is today convinced that gender equality work, promotion of SRHR and countering gender-based violence must happen through engaging men and boys in gender-transformative work. While IAMANEH and its partner organisations have developed important skills and contextually adapted approaches for gender-transformative work on an individual and community level that have already shown relevant results and created an impact for men and for women in the targeted communities, upscaling these approaches and bringing them to an institutional and policy level still remains a challenge to be addressed in the future. Perpetrating organisational cultures are not only an issue for governmental institutions and political structures, but should also be tackled with regard to the proper identities and manner of functioning of IAMANEH as a development organisation and of its partners in the field. Finally, thoroughly balancing engagement for men's and for women's issues as well as for further social categories beyond the traditional gender binary, will continue to be a serious concern with regard to strategic repartitioning of working fields and fund allocation, if gender-transformative work is to be understood as an important strategy to foster equality for all genders.

A social justice framework that highlights the links between gender inequalities and other kinds of inequality and that values diversity and opposes discrimination against specific groups of men and women is indispensable to protecting progressive men and women from marginalisation and further discrimination, and that creates a basis for broad societal changes with regards to gender.



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