



BRIEF 3. **Parenting Programmes to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children.**  
How to adapt programmes to address both types of violence.

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# Introduction



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There is growing interest in how parenting and caregiver support programmes can be adapted or strengthened to reduce violence against both children and women, given the consequences such violence has for children’s physical and mental health, development, and well-being. Parenting programmes that have successfully reduced both types of violence often take a gender-transformative approach — working with women and men to challenge unequal gender norms and power dynamics and to build relationships and parenting skills that support more equitable, caring, and nonviolent family dynamics.<sup>1,2</sup> Such programmes provide key lessons for strengthening existing parenting programmes to work at the intersections of violence against children and violence against women.

This brief is designed for parenting practitioners implementing parenting programmes who wish to adapt their programmes to integrate violence prevention and gender equality. The brief is organised around five stages of adaptation, with each stage broken down into specific steps and actions for practitioners to take when adapting their programme. The brief is the third in a series designed to support practitioners in integrating the prevention of violence against children and violence against women, as well as the promotion of gender equality, into existing parenting programmes.

## Box 1. The Focus of This Series: Parenting Programmes to Reduce Violence against Children and Women

While reducing children’s exposure to violence in the family requires working with individuals and families, communities, services, and systems to change attitudes, behaviours, and norms, this series intentionally highlights parenting programmes. In many communities, parenting programmes are already reaching parents and caregivers. Evidence suggests these programmes can be strengthened to reduce violence against both children and women and to promote gender equality, in addition to improving parenting and child outcomes.

The series focuses on:

- The most common forms of violence against children (VAC) and violence against women (VAW): violent discipline by parents and intimate partner violence (IPV), respectively. These types of violence often co-occur in families and there is evidence to suggest parenting programmes can reduce them.
- Parenting programmes for parents of young children, given the benefits of intervening early, and the greater availability of evidence from these programmes, with regard to reducing VAC and IPV. However, some information is applicable to programmes for parents of older children and adolescents.
- Parents in heterosexual relationships, since gendered, unequal relationship dynamics between men and women are a risk factor for intimate partner violence and men are its primary perpetrators. While violence in non-heterosexual relationships — also driven by power and control dynamics — is outside the scope of this series, all parents and caregivers, regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation, can benefit from parenting programmes designed to prevent violence and promote nurturing environments for children.

We use the terms parents and caregivers interchangeably throughout the series to refer to individuals with a primary role in providing care to children, whether they are biological, adoptive, or foster parents, grandparents, other relatives, or guardians.

## Box 2. Gender-Transformative Parenting Programmes to Reduce Family Violence

Gender-transformative parenting programmes intentionally seek to address the root causes of gender-based inequalities and to challenge or transform harmful gender roles, norms, and power imbalances between women and men, girls and boys.<sup>3</sup> They work with both female and male parents and caregivers to promote caring, equitable relationships and nonviolent interactions for the whole family.

These programmes aim to transform parents' own gender attitudes and behaviours to improve couple relations and change the way parents raise their children. To do so, they promote critical reflection and discussion of unequal gender attitudes, norms, and power dynamics, as well as support parents in identifying the benefits of more equitable ways of being. They build or strengthen relationship and parenting skills to improve the quality of co-parent and parent-child relationships (e.g., communication, emotional self-regulation, conflict resolution, stress management, and nonviolent discipline).

Alongside improved parenting practices, programmes often seek multiple changes that can benefit children's physical and mental health, development, and well-being, such as:

- Caring, supportive, and nonviolent parent-child and partner relations
- Equitable relationships where partners share responsibility for caregiving and power in making decisions about their relationship, household, and children's lives
- Parent/caregiver capacity to raise children with equal care and opportunities for play, learning, and education, free from gender stereotypes

For a fuller definition of gender-transformative parenting programmes — including their common principles, delivery characteristics, and content of these programmes — see [Brief #2](#) in this series.

# Embarking on Adapting Your Existing Parenting Programme

Adapting your parenting programme to reduce VAC and VAW and promote gender equality requires time and investment. Some programmes may need to significantly rethink how they currently do things — particularly if it is the first time to intentionally address IPV or gender norms or to work with fathers. Other programmes may only require small changes. Regardless, the process can be challenging and uncomfortable. Yet adapting your programme in this way can help to unlock parents' potential to provide care and connection and raise their children in more equitable, loving, and nonviolent families, free from gender stereotypes.

This brief proposes an iterative and participatory approach, engaging programme staff, facilitators, participants, and key stakeholders in identifying and validating potential programme changes. It builds upon Brief #2, [Parenting Programmes to Reduce Family Violence. What gender-transformative programmes look like](#), which you may wish to refer to when adapting your programme.<sup>4</sup> The remainder of the brief is organised around five stages, which are divided into key steps and actions. Depending on where you are starting from, some steps may not apply or are better implemented in a different order.

While the guidance is designed for adapting programmes that are already working with parents and families, many steps are applicable to the design of new programmes or the adaptation of programmes developed and tested in another context. However, those processes require additional steps, such as planning for scale and sustainability and generating demand, which are not covered in this brief.<sup>5,6</sup>

Resources to support programme adaptation are recommended at the end of the brief.

## Stage 1. Gain organisational and stakeholder buy-in for adaptation.

**X Don't** assume staff (or facilitators) supporting your parenting programme will immediately understand or buy into the idea that the programme should address IPV, consider gender, and/or engage men.

**X Don't** ignore the fact that staff and facilitators may hold similar attitudes as programme participants or be exposed to the same gendered expectations (e.g., believing that men aren't capable of caring for children or that women should accept violence for the sake of the family).

**X Don't** forget that challenging gender norms and violence may carry risks for participants (e.g., increasing violence) or create backlash (e.g., teasing or ostracism by family, friends, or community members); these risks need to be identified, mitigated, and monitored.

### Step 1: Consult staff to gain their buy-in.

- Plan sufficient time for adaptation, beginning with getting your organisation's staff and management on board with working at the intersections of VAC and VAW.
- Understand staff attitudes and perceptions about gender-transformative programming and men's engagement. This can be done through structured conversations with staff or anonymous surveys, including as part of a larger Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey (where resources are available).
- Provide opportunities for staff directly involved in implementing your parenting programme (and other staff, too) to reflect on their own attitudes related to gender roles, parenting, and VAC/VAW through structured activities and conversations. (See Annex 1 for more information.)
- Ensure staff and management understand the rationale for integrating violence prevention and gender equality within your parenting programme and the benefits it can bring for children and their parents.
- Create space for staff with limited experience working with men to understand the value of engaging them and to interrogate their assumptions and concerns about working with fathers and male caregivers.
- Engage staff and programme facilitators in reviewing your existing parenting programme (curriculum, recruitment, and delivery) to identify opportunities and entry points for strengthening the focus on violence and/or gender equality.
- Consider who else your programme should engage as it seeks to promote more caring, equitable and nonviolent family relations, such as marginalised families not yet reached or other influential family members who may deter or dissuade parents from taking on new roles and more equitable relationships (e.g., mothers-in-law in some settings).

## Step 2: Engage key stakeholders in programme adaptation.

- Involve external organisations or actors (e.g., women's organisations, gender experts, or local or national government representatives or institutions) in the adaptation process — to provide technical expertise, support alignment with government policies, and/or gain buy-in for implementation or future scale-up.
- Consult these actors to understand what role they would like to play — for example, in adaptation but also programme implementation, monitoring, or evaluation — and where possible (and appropriate), compensate them for their time.
- Engage women, men, children, and leaders from the communities where your programme operates in the adaptation process to ensure the changes resonate with them and their needs and desires; involve them in formative research and in testing content and recruitment strategies (see more in Stage 2).<sup>7</sup>

## Step 3: Identify potential risks right from the start.

- Identify potential backlash your organisation may face when challenging VAC and VAW or deeply entrenched gender norms, and identify ways to mitigate this (e.g., engaging high-level allies, avoiding contentious language, involving communities in programme adaptation).
- Conduct a risk assessment to identify potential risks and mitigation strategies and inform the development of a safeguarding policy and referral process to appropriate support and response services (this continues in Stage 5).
- Involve facilitators and parents in identifying potential risks related to programme participation, including if parents challenge violence or take on new gender roles (e.g., men caring for children, women making financial decisions), and ways to mitigate them.
- Explore how potential risks differ for women (e.g., reduced agency or autonomy, increased violence, gossip, or ostracism), men (e.g., potential teasing or ostracism), and their children (e.g., increased violence); this can be done during formative research in Stage 2.
- Develop protocols or guidance for facilitators and staff on how to respond to different challenging scenarios that might arise — involve facilitators and staff in identifying potential scenarios and their responses.

## Step 4: Consider whether additional programme components are required or must be adapted.

- Decide whether your programme could be strengthened by additional intervention components or would be unsuccessful without them (for example, to shift norms at the community level, train service providers, advocate for law or policy changes, or create links to services that support parent/caregiver mental health).<sup>8</sup>
- If yes, explore partnerships with organisations that bring the necessary experience or expertise to co-design and implement the additional components (if you do not have the capacity to do so), or consider how you can link to, support, or amplify their existing work.



## Stage 2. Consult parents and understand gender and violence in your context.

**X Don't** think that simply inviting men to your existing programme will successfully reach and retain fathers. Changes to recruitment, facilitators, content, timing, and location of sessions may be required.

**X Don't** assume that you must conduct extensive new research on social or gender norms — these norms are often quite similar across contexts and can be identified and validated through conversations with staff, facilitators, and/or participants.

### Step 1: Understand the prevalence and drivers of VAC and VAW in your context, and reflect on local norms on violence and gender and how they influence parents.

- Consult existing research on the prevalence, drivers, and acceptability of VAC and VAW in your context, where it exists (e.g., from [Demographic and Health Surveys](#) [DHS], [Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys](#) [MICS], [Violence against Children Surveys](#) [VACS], or other national surveys collecting data on violence).
- Seek out other available data or research on VAC and/or VAW in your context, including qualitative research, programme evaluations, peer-reviewed research, or shadow reports; this should include research done by and with local communities, youth, or women's organisations.
- Consult existing research on norms about gender, parenting, and VAC/VAW in your context, or from similar settings, to help tailor programme content.
- Where research is limited or unavailable, discuss the list of norms about VAC and VAW in *Annex 2* with staff, facilitators, and parents to identify which norms are common where you work (see Step 2).
- Be strategic when planning your formative research: identify the information you lack that is necessary for programme adaptation. For example, if abundant information exists on gender norms or violence, you may want to focus your formative research on recruitment and retention.

## Step 2: Consult parents and children through formative research to understand their experiences, needs, and desires.

- Consult with parents (women and men), children, and community leaders where your programme operates to ensure adaptation decisions are grounded in their needs, desires, and lived experiences.
- If conducting formal research, follow relevant local laws and international ethical guidelines on conducting research with children<sup>9</sup> and/or researching VAW<sup>10</sup> when planning and conducting your research.
- Ensure that your consultation and/or research is done with individuals who represent the population your programme aims to reach, including those who have thus far not been adequately reached, such as fathers or marginalised groups.
- Ask women and men about their desires and challenges as parents, how gendered expectations shape these experiences, and what information, support, and skills they want as parents.
- Identify and discuss prevailing gender norms with parents, including harmful ones that hinder positive parenting practices or equitable relationships, and positive norms that could be uplifted to promote more caring, equitable, and nonviolent family dynamics.<sup>7</sup>
- Listen to women's and men's perspectives on potential barriers to participation (e.g., timing, length, or location of sessions, loss of income if sessions are held during work hours) and how best to address them to inform recruitment strategies.
- Consult children (where feasible) to understand their experiences, needs, and desires for their parents, if appropriate based on your organisational capacity and context.

## Step 3: Explore opportunities to engage men in your programme.

- Explore men's perceptions of parenting programmes, and ask them what would motivate their joining (e.g., specific skills or content, who facilitates, or who else participates) or discourage it.
- Ask women and children what changes they would like to see in men's roles as parents and partners, including any risks or concerns women have about engaging men in childcare or unpaid care work more broadly and/or talking about violence.
- Ask women and men how comfortable they would feel participating in sessions together, if there are topics they feel are best discussed separately, and if there are any resources that could enable their joint participation (e.g., providing childcare during couples' sessions).

## Stage 3. Adapt your programme recruitment, content, and design.

**X Don't** automatically assume that discussing gender roles or power will be controversial in your setting; staff often find that participants are more open to new ideas than they anticipate.

**X Don't** limit discussion of gender roles or skill-building to a single session or activity; look for opportunities to promote critical reflection and reinforce skills throughout the curriculum.

**X Don't** require parents to participate in public demonstrations (such as men cleaning or cooking) or testimonials as part of your curriculum — unless suggested by the participants themselves — as it may provoke resistance or pushback.

### Step 1: Identify opportunities to integrate reflection on gender and power within your curriculum.

- Add activities, or integrate questions into existing activities, to reflect on participants' attitudes and societal expectations about gender roles, power dynamics, and how these influence relationships, parenting practices, and children's opportunities (see *Annex 1*).
- Prompt discussion about the disadvantages of adhering to rigid divisions of labour and power between women and men, and the benefits that sharing roles and responsibilities may bring to women, men, and their children.
- Consider new activities that unpack concepts of gender and power (where appropriate) to clarify misconceptions about gender roles and norms and to illustrate how they are socially constructed and can, therefore, change (see *Annex 1*).
- Review existing programme materials (illustrations, visual aids, slogans, books, leaflets, posters, video): how do they depict women, men, girls, and boys, and what do they say about their roles, power, and opportunities?
- Revise or replace materials that depict or reinforce harmful gender stereotypes or norms with ones that present more equitable roles and relationships for parents and their children (e.g., men doing household tasks, parents communicating and working together, children playing with toys that upend gender stereotypes).

## Step 2: Expand or include activities to raise awareness of violence within the curriculum.

- Add new activities or integrate questions within existing activities that explore VAC *and* VAW — what violence is and its presence and impacts in participants' lives and communities.
- Include activities and space where men can discuss the violence in their own lives (e.g., experiencing or witnessing violence as a child), which can be a powerful tool to help them open up to a broader conversation around VAC and VAW (see *Annex 1*).
- Include activities that identify and discuss the factors contributing to violence in the home and how violence undermines family relationships and parents' ability to achieve their goals for their children and themselves.
- Provide information on local laws and policies about VAC/VAW or gender equality (where appropriate) — particularly if awareness is limited or if misconceptions or a lack of clarity contribute to conflict or violence.
- Encourage participants to reflect on the links between VAC and VAW, including shared consequences and intergenerational patterns, but be aware that deep-rooted resistance to ending one form of violence may undermine your efforts to support parents in stopping the other.
- Encourage participants to identify what they can do to prevent violence in their own families and what the community can do to prevent and respond to VAC and VAW.

## Step 3: Add or enhance relationship and parenting skill-building within the curriculum.

- Meet parents where they are and strengthen their existing knowledge; don't presume they lack parenting and relationship skills entirely.
- Be clear about the behavioural shifts you want to achieve, based on known drivers of VAC and VAW in the communities where you work and also the skills and support requested by parents (and children) in your formative research.
- Review your curriculum to identify skill-building activities that could be integrated or strengthened based on the changes you seek (e.g., couple or parent-child communication, conflict resolution, emotional regulation, positive parenting, managing alcohol consumption).
- Use a combination of activities — information and demonstration of skills, practical exercises, and discussion — to help parents learn, internalise, and practise new skills, and reinforce these skills throughout the curriculum.
- Create opportunities for partner communication — a critical skill for conflict resolution and co-parenting — within and between sessions (e.g., activities or homework that asks partners to speak to and listen to each other).
- Encourage participants to identify the benefits and applicability of new skills (e.g., how managing emotions can improve relationships with partners and children) and support them in sharing roles and responsibilities in ways that work for their families.
- Include homework assignments that encourage participants to put new skills into practice at home and encourage volunteers to share their experiences with the group to build confidence and foster peer support.

## Step 4: Decide whether and how to incorporate mixed-sex or couples' sessions.

- Know that parents may benefit from having sessions on their own and together with their partner, and partners can be encouraged to support each other in adopting new behaviour regardless of whether they participate separately or together.
- Use formative research findings to decide how to work with women and men, potentially through sessions separately and/or together, informed by the risks and benefits of each and depending on the topics and cultural context.
- Consider *single-sex sessions* (or separate discussion spaces within a session) for topics like IPV, alcohol abuse, concerns as mothers or fathers, and subjects considered culturally inappropriate for women and men to discuss openly or that may carry risks for participants.
- Consider and/or prioritise *mixed-sex or couples' sessions* for topics like developing shared aspirations for their children; positive parenting; household decisions and budgeting; and reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health or nutrition (if applicable to your programme and appropriate in the cultural context). Different facilitators (usually the same sex as participants) are suggested to lead single-sex sessions and co-facilitate the mixed-sex or couples' sessions.
- Decide on single- or mixed-sex sessions (or a combination) based on your context, potential risks, and women's and men's preferences. For example, in some settings, discussing IPV with men and women together carries risks for women, while in others, separate sessions may carry risks if men suspect their partner of disclosing violence — context is critical.
- Identify potential solutions to the barriers to attending sessions together that men and women identified, such as a lack of childcare or work schedules, and plan and budget for them where feasible.

## Step 5: Revise recruitment to reach and resonate with fathers and couples.

- Decide how you will identify and invite parents (as a couple, via one parent, in person, or other means) and who is best suited to recruit them (e.g., facilitators and/or health workers, social service providers, or local leaders).
- Review your current recruitment messages (how you describe the programme: whom it is for and what benefits it brings) and whether they speak to and resonate with both women and men.
- Revise recruitment accordingly — consider messages that emphasise improvements in family and child well-being or speak to the specific parenting challenges reported by women and men in the formative research — and be clear that the programme is designed for both mothers and fathers or for couples.

## Stage 4. Test and refine your adapted programme.

**X Don't** assume that because something worked (or didn't) in another context, it will work in yours. Rapid testing and piloting of the full curriculum is critical to understanding what may or may not work in your context.

**X Don't** rush to implement or roll out your curriculum without first piloting it with at least a few parents — this step is crucial for ensuring your programme will resonate with participants.

### Step 1: Test adapted recruitment strategies, messaging, and content as you go.

- Test your revised recruitment strategies and messages with small groups of parents as you develop them; the feedback allows you to know whether you are on the right track and make improvements as needed.
- Test adapted or new content (activities, sessions, or homework assignments) as you develop it; gather feedback from staff, facilitators, or existing/potential participants; and adjust as needed (e.g., changes to instructions, language, content, timing, or delivery modality).
- Gather feedback from facilitators and participants on the language used (e.g., related to gender and violence) to ensure meanings are clear and accurate (particularly if translated) and to identify whether certain terms are more readily accepted by participants.
- Develop a user-friendly curriculum that outlines the purpose, content, and structure of sessions/meetings, including required materials and preparation; include tips to help facilitators respond to common questions or navigate potential challenges.

### Step 2: Pilot and refine your adapted curriculum before rolling it out.

- Pilot the full curriculum within a condensed time frame (e.g., over several days rather than weeks) with a few parents to see how it works as a whole and whether it resonates with them.
- Consider piloting the curriculum with existing or potential facilitators — who can benefit both as participants and as facilitators (by seeing it implemented and being able to speak to its benefits before recruiting and facilitating it with others).
- Gather feedback from participants, facilitators, and staff to assess flow, whether the content is clear and well-understood, participant comfort and group dynamics, and whether any topic or skill requires more emphasis or is not well-understood.
- Finalise the curriculum based on the feedback — revise, remove, or add content where relevant, and then obtain approval (where required) from relevant government institutions (government involvement in adaptation may aid this process).

## Stage 5. Train and adequately support facilitators to successfully implement.

**X Don't** let staff or facilitators' schedules determine implementation; recruiting and retaining parents (particularly men) often requires meeting them near where they live (or work) and at times that work for them.

**X Don't** prioritise men's schedules and time over women's; seek to identify times when both parents can participate and provide support to enable this, and/or explore separate sessions.

**X Don't** let facilitators refer a woman experiencing violence to services without her consent or report her partner to leaders or law enforcement unless she is in imminent danger.

### Step 1: Review the profile and capacities required of facilitators.

- Assess existing facilitators' capacity and openness to conducting participatory and interactive sessions that aim to challenge gender attitudes and norms — this may require a mindset shift for facilitators more familiar with didactic teaching methods.
- Consider whether to include (more) male facilitators, whom men may feel more comfortable with, to facilitate single-sex sessions with men and/or co-facilitate with female facilitators, particularly if you have never worked with fathers before.
- Decide whether additional service providers or experts are needed to co-lead specific skill-building or information sessions (e.g., health workers to provide health or nutrition content, social workers knowledgeable of local laws and services).
- Recruit new facilitators as needed based on your formative research (e.g., whom parents feel comfortable with or seek advice on parenting from) and based on how many facilitators are needed for the number of single- and/or mixed-sex sessions in your adapted curriculum.
- Consider whether the facilitator profile selected and the conditions of their engagement with the programme are sustainable beyond the time frame of the specific project funding.

## Step 2: Design clear referral processes and equip staff and facilitators to implement them.

- Map existing services in the communities where your programme operates, including services for children and women experiencing violence or other forms of neglect/abuse.
- Where they are not already in place, establish relationships and clear agreements (formal or informal) with these services to enable referral (e.g., clear expectations on whether and how the service will accept a referral).
- Verify if mandatory reporting laws exist and what this implies for the programme; where they exist, explore how to report safely and in the best interests of children and women. Be explicit about your obligations when presenting the programme to participants.
- Design clear referral processes based on available services and mandatory reporting laws, and monitor their implementation to address challenges and identify any unintended programme consequences.
- Develop clear guidance for facilitators on how to handle disclosures of violence, particularly if the facilitator is interacting with both partners as part of couples' sessions.
- Remind facilitators that they can use these services as well, and consider the well-being of facilitators, who must listen to or respond to violence in their communities; plan regular opportunities for them to process or obtain support.

## Step 3: Invest in adequate facilitator training.

- Support facilitators in understanding the programme rationale, including how VAC and VAW intersect and why a gender-transformative approach is needed.
- Provide facilitators with sufficient training (often 10 days) using participatory methods to build their skills and confidence to implement, ensuring sufficient time to see the curriculum facilitated, practise it themselves, and receive constructive feedback from peers and trainers (e.g., through teach-backs).
- Create space within training for facilitators to reflect on their own attitudes regarding gender roles, VAC, VAW, and men's engagement (see Annex 1).
- Consider splitting the training into multiple, shorter trainings if facilitators have limited time and/or to allow sufficient time between trainings for facilitators to read, digest, and practise conducting the activities.
- Provide facilitators with clear expectations, information, and tools to do their work, and organise refresher training to address challenges and reinforce skills (this can be early on or midway through implementation or before the next programme cycle).
- Ensure staff and facilitators know the potential risks of working with parents to change relationship dynamics, and train them on relevant safety protocols and referral pathways to support and response services (i.e., who, why, when, and how).
- Provide time and space for staff and facilitators to consider their own needs and self-care as they interact with parents and identify what the programme can do to support facilitators' own mental health and well-being.



## Step 4: Provide facilitators with supportive supervision.

- Plan and budget time and resources (human, financial) to adequately support facilitators in implementing the programme with quality and fidelity, based on their needs and your organisational capacity and budget.
- Organise regular group meetings with facilitators to plan sessions, explore what is working and not, jointly identify possible solutions, encourage learning among the group, and ask if they need additional skills or information to successfully recruit or implement.
- Regularly check in with facilitators regarding their well-being and provide opportunities for self-care; implementing programmes that touch on violence and sensitive issues can be challenging for facilitators.
- Observe sessions and share constructive feedback with facilitators — those who need additional support can be paired with strong co-facilitators or provided one-on-one mentoring.
- Develop simple reporting tools that can help identify challenges early on — consider phone calls and/or individual or group messaging (e.g., SMS, WhatsApp, Telegram) to gather data, connect facilitators, and provide support.

## Step 5: Ensure session timing and locations are accessible for participants and feasible for facilitators.

- Understand that sessions may need to take place outside of regular working hours — e.g., on weekends, nights, or early mornings — and consider this when selecting facilitators and planning session implementation and monitoring.
- Conduct sessions in locations that are accessible (and acceptable) to participants and on days and at times that work for them — where feasible, let individual facilitators and participants decide together the timing of sessions.
- Ensure session locations provide privacy and allow for the creation of a safe space for participants and facilitators alike.
- Engage community leaders (as appropriate) so they are aware of the programme and its implementation in the community and support (rather than hinder) recruitment and implementation.

# Conclusion

Programme adaptation is an intensive process, but one that can unlock your programme's potential to improve parent-child interactions and family dynamics, reduce violence and its immediate and long-term impacts, and ensure children are raised free from gender stereotypes and with equal opportunities regardless of their sex or gender identity. Once your programme is adapted, it is important to consider how you will monitor it to understand what is working (and not) and evaluate its impact.

The next brief in this series ([Brief #4](#)) outlines key considerations for monitoring and evaluating your adapted parenting programme. It is designed to support parenting programme practitioners in making key decisions about monitoring and evaluation that are realistic and feasible depending on organisational capacity, time, and budget. It includes links to key resources that can support your monitoring and evaluation efforts.

We invite you to explore all four briefs in our series:

**BRIEF #1**

**Parenting programmes to reduce violence against children and women: Why it is important.**

**BRIEF #2**

**Parenting programmes to reduce violence against children and women: What gender-transformative programmes look like.**

**BRIEF #3**

**Parenting programmes to reduce violence against children and women: How to adapt programmes to address both types of violence.**

**BRIEF #4**

**Parenting programmes to reduce violence against children and women: How to measure change.**

# Recommended resources



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## Designing and Adapting Violence Prevention Programmes

[Designing Parenting Programmes for Violence Prevention: A Guidance Note](#), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2020

[Guidance Note for Adapting Curriculum-Based Violence Prevention Programmes](#), Prevention Collaborative, 2022

[Supporting Parents and Caregivers: Prevention Strategies Deep Dive](#) (online course), Prevention Collaborative, 2023

[How to Effectively Partner with Community Leaders in Gender Transformative Programming](#), US Agency for International Development (USAID) Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG), 2022

## Engaging Fathers and Male Caregivers

[Do's and Don'ts for Engaging Men and Boys](#), USAID IGWG Male Engagement Taskforce, 2020

[Promoting Men's Engagement in Early Childhood Development: A Programming and Influencing Package](#), Plan International and Equimundo, 2021

[Core Elements of Gender-Transformative Fatherhood Programs to Promote Care Equality and Prevent Violence: Results from a Comparative Study of Program P Adaptations in Diverse Settings around the World](#). Equimundo, 2023.

## Promoting Gender-Transformative Parenting

[Tip Sheet: Gender-Responsive Parenting](#), UNICEF, 2019

[Technical Note: Gender-Responsive Parenting](#), UNICEF, 2021

[Resource Package and Training Modules for Promoting Gender-Transformative Parenting](#), UNICEF and International Step by Step Association, 2023

[Caring for the Caregiver](#) (training modules), UNICEF, 2019

## Providing Training and Supportive Supervision to Facilitators

[Facilitating Gender Transformation](#) (online course), Prevention Collaborative

[EQUIP: Ensuring Quality in Psychological Support](#) (online platform), UNICEF and World Health Organization

[Dare to Care: Wellness, Self and Collective Care for Those Working in the VAW and VAC Fields](#) (online course), Sexual Violence Research Initiative, 2023

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## Annex 1. Resources to Promote Reflection on Gender Norms and Violence

A key component of gender-transformative programming is having activities to promote critical reflection and discussion on gender norms and roles. These activities are designed to support participants in questioning or challenging gender norms and transforming their own gender attitudes. Activities that promote critical reflection on violence — what it is, how it is present in our lives, and the impact it has on individuals, families, and communities — are also key to raising awareness on and reducing acceptance of VAC and VAW. This process of critical reflection is important for parenting programme participants and also for staff, facilitators, and other key stakeholders supporting programme implementation. Below are several resources you may wish to consult when adapting your parenting programme or designing training for staff and facilitators:

- **Starting with Ourselves: Reflecting on Power, Gender, and Violence** (Prevention Collaborative Learning Lab): This online course supports reflection on our personal experiences with and beliefs about power and gender, as well as considers how they affect our work preventing or responding to violence.
- **Interagency Gender Working Group trainings** (IGWG): The resource library includes materials and activities for promoting critical reflection on gender norms, as well as training guidance.
- **Violence Prevention Curriculum Library** (Prevention Collaborative): The library offers a range of violence prevention curricula that include specific activities to challenge harmful gender norms and violence, which could be adapted for your programme or training.
- **What Works Prevention Curricula Library** (What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls): The library includes several prevention curricula developed or supported by the What Works programme.



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- **[Gender-transformative parenting resource package](#)** (UNICEF, International Step by Step Association): The package includes resources, training modules, and slide decks for supporting service providers working with children and families to promote gender-transformative parenting practices, particularly positive gender socialisation.
- Activities from the curricula of existing programmes that take a gender-transformative approach and have evidence of reducing both VAC and VAW (and which are available online) can be important resources for inspiration or adaptation. See, for example:
  - **[Bandeberaho couples' curriculum](#)**
  - **[Indashyikirwa couples' curriculum](#)**
  - **[Responsible, Engaged, and Loving \(REAL\) Fathers mentor training curriculum](#)**
  - **[Safe at Home women's, men's, and family curricula and training guide](#)**

## Annex 2. Common Social Norms Sustaining Violence against Children and against Women

VAC and VAW are underpinned by common social norms — the unwritten rules, values, and expectations within a community, which are often socially enforced. They define what is considered normal and appropriate behaviour for members of the community (or a society or group).<sup>11</sup>

Both types of violence are often sustained by similar (or even the same) social norms that: a) increase acceptance of violence; b) increase the use of violence; c) limit reporting of violence; and d) limit intervention to stop violence. These include norms that:<sup>12,13</sup>

- Support gender inequality and tolerate violence
- Promote harmful masculinities based on violence and control
- Condone violent discipline of children and women
- Legitimise the use of violence to resolve conflicts
- Blame victims and encourage issues to be kept within families, which discourages help-seeking
- Prioritise the reputations of perpetrators

In some contexts, research on social norms about violence may be available. Where it is not available, you can review the following list of common social norms with staff, programme participants, and facilitators to identify or verify which norms are common (i.e., many people in the community believe or support them) in your context:<sup>11</sup>

- Violence is an acceptable and even necessary form of discipline to correct the behaviour of children and women.
- Women should not challenge their husbands' decisions.
- Children should not challenge their parents' decisions.
- Women are responsible for their children's behaviour.
- Violence is a manifestation of love.
- Men should not share their emotions or show weakness.



- Children need to be physically punished in order to learn how to behave.
- Women should obey and not contradict their husbands.
- Family matters are private, and family members should not disclose them.
- Community matters are private, and community members should not disclose them.
- People experiencing violence usually did something to deserve it.
- It is shameful to talk about violence, particularly sexual violence.
- Violence is very common, and nobody ever intervenes to stop it.

For more information on social norms underpinning VAC and VAW, see [Addressing Social Norms at the VAW/VAC Intersection: Challenges and Opportunities](#).

A useful resource for research on social and gender norms is the [ALIGN \(Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms\) Platform](#).

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## Annex 3. Strategies to Promote More Equitable Gender Attitudes, Roles, and Norms

Gender-transformative parenting programmes challenge harmful gender norms and uplift norms that promote caring, nonviolent, and equitable family relationships. To do so, programmes often use one or more of the following strategies to challenge unequal gender norms:

- **Strategy 1: Promote discussion and reflection on gender roles, norms, and power dynamics.** Participants reflect on societal expectations for men and women, and how this shows up in their experiences and aspirations as parents. Such reflection and discussion are often integrated across multiple topics or sessions and may or may not use the terms gender or norms. This may include discussions on who does what and who decides within the home. It can include exploring participants' attitudes about gender roles and violence (e.g., 'agree or disagree' activities) and discussions on how parents' expectations and behaviour towards their children differ depending on the child's sex. Activities encourage parents to identify the disadvantages of adhering to rigid divisions in men's and women's roles (for themselves and their children) and the benefits of living outside of them.
- **Strategy 2: Depict equitable gender roles in programme materials and visual aids.** Programmes ensure their materials do not rely on gender stereotypes or reinforce unequal gender norms (e.g., showing only mothers caring for children and only fathers doing paid work or showing girls playing with dolls and boys playing with trucks). This applies to their manuals, flipcharts, audio-visual materials, posters, slogans, and messages used within the sessions, as well as to any books or leaflets given to participants to take home. Instead, programmes seek to uplift existing — or promote new — more equitable norms by depicting caring, nonviolent, and equitable family dynamics (e.g., where fathers and mothers share caregiving and decision-making and where children are given equal opportunities regardless of sex or gender identity). Programme participants are usually involved in the design of these messages and materials.



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- **Strategy 3: Design specific activities to unpack gender and power concepts.** Some programmes include specific activities to discuss gender terms, such as the difference between gender and sex. These activities can be helpful to illustrate how gender roles are socially constructed and to dispel misconceptions (e.g., that gender only applies to women and girls). Where appropriate, such activities can allow for broader discussions of gender equality and the benefits it can bring to all. However, in some settings with strong misconceptions or backlash against gender equality efforts, specific activities on gender can be more challenging to implement. Programmes also often include activities designed to explore power and unpack the different types of power (power over, power to, power within, power with) and how power is used and experienced in daily life. In some contexts, programmes such as [SASA!](#) have found that participants are less resistant to discussing power than gender.

## Annex 4. Promoting Couple Communication

Couple communication is an important skill for reducing conflict and violence. Facilitating better couple communication can also enable parents to work together as a team in parenting and to make better parenting and household decisions. There are multiple ways that programmes can build communication skills and promote partner communication, which can be combined for maximum impact. Practical examples include:

- **Create space and opportunities for partners to talk to each other.** Activities within parenting sessions can ask couples to sit and talk to each other. For example, you can ask couples to discuss aspirations for their children and families; preparations for the birth of a child; managing their child's behaviour; making financial decisions that benefit their children; or family planning. For many couples, this may be the first time discussing such topics together. Facilitators can encourage partners to each share their experiences, desires, and ideas with each other — and work to ensure men do not dominate such discussions. Homework assignments can also encourage couple communication on particular topics between sessions.
- **Support couples in developing shared goals for their children and family.** Many programmes include an activity for partners to discuss their goals for their children (e.g., in two, five, or even 20 years). This type of activity promotes couple communication and can also provide an overarching framework (i.e., a set of shared goals) that facilitators can refer to in future sessions. Programmes can routinely refer to these shared goals when addressing new topics (e.g., household decision-making, positive parenting) and encourage couples to reflect on how working together can help them to achieve these goals. This shared framework can also help parents to identify and prioritise the changes or actions they want to take.
- **Build couple communication skills.** Practical exercises and role-play can help participants to learn and practise new communication skills. Exercises can focus on active listening skills, developing empathy, and different ways to communicate their feelings or ideas. These activities can help participants to identify existing challenges in how couples communicate and opportunities to improve communication between partners, particularly to help avoid or resolve conflict.

## About us

**UNICEF** works in the world's toughest places to reach the most disadvantaged children and adolescents — and to protect the rights of every child, everywhere. Across 190 countries and territories, we do whatever it takes to help children survive, thrive and fulfill their potential, from early childhood through adolescence. And we never give up.

**UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight** tackles the questions of greatest importance for children, both current and emerging. It drives change through research and foresight on a wide range of child rights issues, sparking global discourse and actively engaging young people in its work.

**The Prevention Collaborative** works to reduce violence against women and their children by strengthening capacity of key actors to deliver effective prevention programmes, based on feminist principles and evidence-and practice-based learning. We serve the specific needs of practitioners and implementing partners by curating evidence, mentoring organisations, and ensuring that donor funding is channelled wisely.

**Equimundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice** has worked internationally and in the US since 2011 to engage men and boys as allies in gender equality, promote healthy manhood, and prevent violence. Equimundo works to achieve gender equality and social justice by transforming intergenerational patterns of harm and promoting patterns of care, empathy, and accountability among boys and men throughout their lives.

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