



Gender-transformative approaches to achieve gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights

TECHNICAL NOTE



Introduction

Gender equality is the equal distribution of power, resources and opportunities among genders.

It entails all human beings having the freedom to develop their personal abilities, express their voice and make choices without limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles or prejudices. Inequalities attributable to gender disproportionately disadvantage women and girls. They permeate various parts of life and society, such as political participation, education and the economy, health, unpaid care work and reproductive labour, hindering social and economic development.¹ Recent years have witnessed a backlash against women's rights; the COVID-19 pandemic has caused additional setbacks.

Gender equality is intrinsically linked to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Discriminatory systems and norms deny women and girls access to life-saving SRHR information and services. UNFPA data show that only 55 per cent of women can make their own decisions on these issues.² The *State of World Population 2021*, UNFPA's annual flagship report, highlighted such disparities, becoming the first UN report focusing on bodily autonomy.³ Gender inequalities and harmful masculinities also contribute to high rates of gender-based violence; about 30 per cent of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.⁴ For men and boys, gender inequalities also impose costs. Discriminatory gender norms and harmful masculinities have been linked with their poorer physical and mental health.⁵ Accordingly, gender equality benefits men and boys, as well as women and girls.



Gender influences people and societies formally and informally, from individual and interpersonal levels to systemic and structural ones. Efforts to improve gender equality are therefore needed at all levels. Large-scale transformation of patriarchal and discriminatory structures and systems is crucial to improve gender equality on a broad scale and in a sustainable manner. Traditionally gender equality has been perceived as a woman's issue with a focus on inequalities and discrimination between men and women. But growing recognition of gender as a relational concept that is relevant for all leads to an understanding that gender equality relies on the consideration and engagement of men and women, and boys and girls. A shifting world and the diversity among people also mean that sex and gender extend beyond a binary classification of male and female. Approaches to advance gender equality need to consider diversity in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

Gender equality is fundamental for delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for the full enjoyment of human rights for all, leaving no one behind.⁶ Gender equality and women's rights are also key to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).⁷ Advancements benefit the full scope of UNFPA's mandate as the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, ensuring rights and choices for all. The UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 sets out a strategic direction that includes the adoption of gender transformative approaches that explicitly address the underlying causes of gender inequalities [REF].

THIS NOTE SUPPORTS THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND SRHR IN IMPLEMENTING THE UNFPA STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025 AND DELIVERING ON THE ICPD PROGRAMME OF ACTION AND THE SDGS IN THE DECADE OF ACTION TOWARDS 2030.

The note offers an easily accessible orientation and initial point of reference for guidance and examples of such approaches. The intention is not to provide an exhaustive account of the literature or detailed tools for programming that are available elsewhere.



The target audience is UNFPA staff and partners, including other UN agencies, civil society and government at different levels.

Gender-transformative approaches address underlying causes of gender inequality

Gender-transformative approaches support gender equality by explicitly addressing the underlying causes of gender inequality.

These include discriminatory legislation, policies, institutions, norms and stereotypes about what it means to be a man or a woman, harmful masculinities, and insufficient support for women's agency and rights. Such approaches typically either focus on challenging negative forces or supporting positive ones. By addressing root causes of gender inequalities, gender-transformative approaches ultimately contribute to the equal distribution of power, resources and opportunities between men and women. In doing so, they go further than activities that only address gender inequalities resulting from discriminatory root causes.



GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES – Technical note

A gender-transformative approach is a way of working that should be considered for any intervention or programme. Even where gender does not appear to be an issue, it has the potential to be. Accordingly, development efforts should generally consider applying gender-transformative approaches even when improving gender equality is not the main objective of a programme. Gender-transformative approaches are especially pertinent for SRHR interventions given close links between the two issues.

SRHR is important throughout people's lives and presents entry points that can be ideal opportunities for transforming gender relations. For example, when the main objective of a programme is to improve women's access to SRHR information and services, gender-transformative approaches may in parallel help communities recognize and challenge norms and stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequalities and limit access to services in the first place. Gender-transformative approaches are relevant for UNFPA's three transformative results by 2030: an end to preventable maternal deaths, an end to the unmet need for family planning, and an end to gender-based violence and all harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage. Moreover, applying gender-transformative approaches when working on specific programmatic issues can have a broader positive impact since improved gender equality contributes to SRHR and sustainable development overall.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to gender transformation. Programming can take many forms. A typical feature of such approaches in SRHR programming is the provision of single-sex or mixed-sex safe spaces where participants critically reflect on gender, norms, stereotypes, equality, discrimination, respectful relationships, etc. Gender-specific groups may provide scope to discuss sensitive topics, while mixed-gender groups may support mutual understanding of problems and solutions in gender relations. Common features and principles should be considered for effective programming. For example, ideally, both men and women should be engaged, interventions should start at an early age, and multilevel and multistakeholder involvement should be pursued. Furthermore, the usual considerations of sound programming apply. This includes using evidence-based and human rights-based approaches, adaptation to the local context, and involvement of beneficiaries throughout



A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH IS A WAY OF WORKING THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR ANY INTERVENTION OR PROGRAMME

the programming cycle. Key aspects and guiding principles for gender-transformative approaches, including programmatic examples, are outlined in the following sections.

Existing tools can aid assessment of whether and to what extent a programme may be considered gender transformative. Figure 1 illustrates key concepts of the so-called gender equality continuum. This can be used as a diagnostic tool or a planning framework for programmes⁸ There are different versions of this tool but the overall aim and structure are similar. The tool is based on two fundamental principles:

- Programmes/policies must not perpetuate gender inequalities since a fundamental principle of development is to do no harm.
- The overall goal is to move towards gender-transformative approaches, thus gradually challenging gender inequalities and related root causes.

The GTA Quickscan tool can assess whether an intervention or programme considers key aspects of gender-transformative programming.⁹

Gender-transformative approaches support gender equality by explicitly addressing the underlying causes of gender inequality. In doing so, they go further than activities that only address gender inequalities resulting from discriminatory root causes. A gender-transformative approach is a way of working that should be considered for any intervention or programme. The overall goal is to move towards gender-transformative approaches.



FIGURE 1. GENDER INTEGRATION CONTINUUM



Agency and rights of women and girls should be at the centre

Gender-transformative approaches place women and girls at the centre of policies and programming.

Collaboration with women, girls and their organizations, and accountability to them, are critical to fully uphold the rights and needs of women and girls.

Women's rights are human rights and underpin sustainable development, as recognized in key international policy and political frameworks.¹⁰ These rights include, but are not limited to, the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the right to non-discrimination and equal treatment. The ability of women and girls to exercise their rights depends on their agency. Agency means the capacity to act independently and make their own choices, free from violence, coercion and retribution. Agency is intertwined with empowerment, bodily autonomy and decision-making.



The agency and rights of women and girls are key to SRHR. Many women are not free to make their own choices over health care, contraception and the ability to say “yes” or “no” to sex. Inadequate agency and ability to exercise rights further manifests in gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and child marriage. Agency and rights are also linked to how much control and influence women and girls have in other spheres of life and society, e.g., employment and political participation. For example, the power to choose the number, timing and spacing of children supports women and girls in obtaining an education and contributes to social and economic development.

Women and girls can gain empowerment to shape their own lives through tailored approaches that adequately address distinct vulnerabilities and needs. These should accommodate diversity within and between groups, since gender intersects with other factors associated with discrimination and vulnerability, such as income, education, disability, race and religion. This intersectionality means that a person may face discrimination and vulnerability on several grounds, which increases the risk of marginalization.



Positive masculinities support gender equality

Gender-transformative approaches commonly call for promoting positive masculinities as an essential component.

Masculinities refer to qualities or attributes regarded as characteristic of men. Positive masculinities, in contrast to harmful masculinities, support healthy and non-discriminatory behaviours and societies that advance gender equality, and the agency and rights of women and girls. Fostering positive masculinities requires partnering with men and boys. Gender-transformative efforts that reach both men and women, and boys and girls, are sometimes referred to as gender synchronized approaches.¹¹

The importance of partnering with men and boys to achieve gender equality and SRHR has long been recognized.¹² Nevertheless, there is untapped potential when it comes to working with men and boys in gender transformation. A systematic review of programmes targeting gender inequality and restrictive gender norms in relation to health and well-being showed that 56 per cent engaged men or boys.¹³ Another review found that only 8 per cent of current literature indicates the use of gender-transformative approaches when engaging men and boys in SRHR programming.¹⁴



Male engagement does not automatically mean that men and boys are engaged as agents of change to improve gender equality. A common conceptual framework for male engagement includes three components: men as agents of change for gender equality, men as partners of women and men as recipients of services to address their own needs.¹⁵ Each component is important; all three should ideally be implemented jointly. Accordingly, when engaging men as partners or recipients of services, consideration should be given to involving men as agents of change by incorporating gender-transformative approaches as part of the work. Moreover, the conceptual framework for male engagement underscores that the needs of men and boys should be considered in a comprehensive package of male engagement efforts.¹⁶

Male engagement calls for a positive approach. Men and boys may not have critically reflected about gender inequality and may not know what to do but in the end want to be part of the solution. They should be approached as potential allies and not as adversaries, as the latter approach may generate resistance. Although men who engage in harmful behaviours should be held accountable, focusing on the problematic aspects of individual male beliefs and behaviours may pose a risk of a narrow emphasis on individual men and not on relational and structural aspects.

Gender inequality typically involves men having more access to power and resources as heads of households and leaders in the political, religious or traditional realms. Some may already understand that patriarchal structures have negative impacts on the lives of others and can be encouraged to advocate different norms and behaviours. Other men may be educated and engaged to instill positive change.

There may be resistance when challenging gender inequalities.¹⁷ Both men and women may have to give up privileges and benefits from perpetuating harmful norms and behaviours. In this process, men should have a supportive role; their engagement must not occur at the expense of women and girls, such as by compromising their safety or reinforcing norms that women need permission from men to access information and care. These potential risks should be carefully considered and monitored in programme design and implementation.

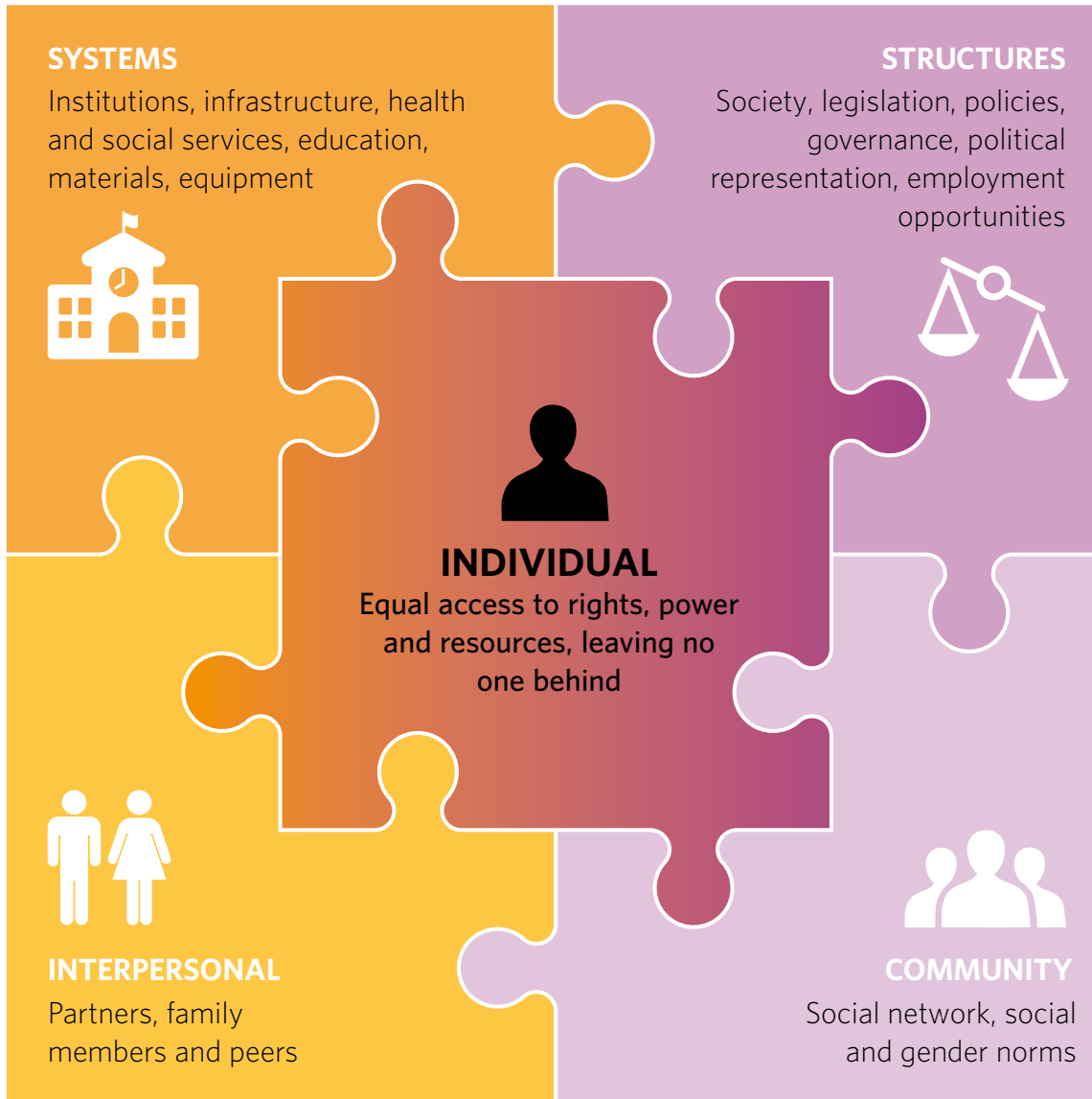
Conceptual frameworks for gender-transformative approaches

Conceptual frameworks can aid the development and implementation of gender-transformative programming.

Figure 2 presents an example based on the socioecological model. It illustrates the different levels of action to influence gender equality and SRHR outcomes: individual, interpersonal, community, systems and structural. A multisectoral approach is often warranted as gender equality and SRHR are influenced by factors in different sectors, such as health, social, education and labour. Furthermore, actions can be taken at the local, regional and international levels. Gender-transformative approaches should in fact be considered at all levels, informal and formal. Actions at different levels and in different sectors have the potential to be mutually reinforcing.

Annex 1 contains a general theory of change for gender-transformative approaches, providing a summary description and illustration of how change is expected to happen. It builds on the theory of change of the UNFPA Gender Equality Strategy and the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025.[REF] It may be used as a basis for developing a theory of change for specific gender-transformative initiatives.

FIGURE 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMMING



Needs assessment and gender analysis aid programme development

Gender-transformative programming should be informed by analysis of local needs and possible programmatic approaches.

Interventions should be adapted with cultural and social contexts in mind and aimed at responding to needs effectively and equitably. Culturally sensitive approaches build on awareness and accommodation of the local context, but keep human right at the core. Humanitarian responses should ideally contribute to meeting long-term development needs, including gender equality, consistent with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach.

GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES – Technical note

A needs assessment may draw on primary data collected during programme development or secondary data already available. Data and information collection methods could include surveys, key informant interviews or focus group discussions. Data and information from different sources should preferably be triangulated and capture the perspectives of men and women, community members and leaders, and relevant institutions and organizations. Guidance and tools to support assessments include Demographic and Health Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, Generations and Gender Surveys and the International Men and Gender Equality Survey.¹⁸

Conducting an in-depth gender analysis is recommended when gender is a key component of a programme as it helps to attain and sustain results. A gender analysis includes applying a gender lens to the organized collection and analysis of quantitative data and qualitative information. It examines the roles, norms, needs, constraints and opportunities of women and girls, and men and boys. The Gender Analysis Toolkit is an example of a practical guide to understanding how gender can impact health outcomes, service delivery and access to information and care.¹⁹



Evidence and guidance point to what works

Gender-transformative approaches, as with all programming, should optimally be proven effective or otherwise linked to operational research efforts to generate evidence.

There is evidence about what works when it comes to gender-transformative approaches. Existing evidence-based approaches should be used when possible. Determinants of effective gender-transformative interventions have been proposed in reviews of peer reviewed and grey literature.²⁰ These may include:

- Multisectoral action, which extends beyond the health sector, for example, including sectors engaged in education and economic empowerment.
- Multilevel and multistakeholder involvement, which considers different levels of the socioecological model and widely mobilizes government, civil society and community stakeholders.
- Diversified programming, including different types of activities and addressing different social and behaviour change mechanisms.
- Social participation and empowerment, which encourages target audiences to become agents of change.



- Inclusion of both women and men, either in mixed-sex groups or separately.
- High-quality facilitation, supported, for example, by investment in training facilitators.
- Longer duration of an intervention of at least three to six months, with a programme design that facilitates regular attendance and addresses barriers to participation.

Available evidence is sometimes scarce, however. It may be inadequate in quality and concentrated in certain areas, such as violence against women and girls.²¹ Rigorous operational research on programmes and interventions is recommended to expand the knowledge base on gender-transformative approaches. Partnering with academia may yield benefits in terms of scientific rigor and compliance with ethics standards.

UNFPA and its partners have published a wealth of guidance that can help advance gender-transformative approaches to achieve gender equality and SRHR. This includes conceptual and programmatic guidance and an overview of knowledge and evidence.²² Rutgers has developed a toolkit on gender-transformative approaches that consists of five modules with facilitator guides for practical group exercises.²³ UNFPA has generated guidance on social norms change to achieve gender equality that provides a theoretical background, programmatic examples and a framework for programmatic approaches.²⁴ UNFPA has also issued guidance on human rights-based approaches that explains underlying principles of equality and non-discrimination, quality and accountability, and outlines key programming steps to advance these.²⁵ Other guidance highlights gender-transformative approaches as important in specific areas of work, such as gender-based violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and gender-biased sex selection.²⁶

Gender equality and SRHR remain important issues throughout people's lives, but certain times are particularly conducive to programmatic interventions.²⁷ Gender socialization begins at a young age, which implies that gender-transformative work should commence early. The start of adolescence is a critical time.²⁸ Comprehensive sexuality education is a key pathway for reaching young people, both in and out of school.²⁹ Work with adults is also necessary, including to support sustainable gender transformation at scale, and at the systemic and structural levels. Parenthood constitutes an opportunity to promote more involved fatherhood with a view to transforming gender relations.³⁰ Another avenue involves engaging men in unpaid care work and reproductive labour.

Box 1 describes guiding principles for the operationalization of gender-transformative approaches, based on this technical note and other guidance and efforts with a related scope.³¹

Examples of gender-transformative programming

Examples 2-7 highlight programmes and interventions that contribute to gender transformation. The bulleted list below describes further examples, with references detailing UNFPA's work in different contexts.

- **Interventions with individuals and peers**, such as information and discussion sessions with young people to promote learning and critical reflection on health, non-violence, relationships and empowerment.³²
- **Interventions with couples and families**, such as engagement of men in so-called husband schools as a basis for community outreach to achieve greater consideration of women's opinions and needs.³³
- **Community mobilization**, such as engagement of religious and traditional leaders to end harmful practices, and the use of drama and media to challenge gender roles within families and reframe the concept of fatherhood.³⁴
- **Strengthening services**, such as working with mothers and teachers to keep girls in school, providing comprehensive sexuality education that emphasizes gender equality and human rights, and conducting outreach among and training of health professionals to increase uptake of male contraceptive methods.³⁵
- **Policy and legal reforms to change broader social and economic structures**, such as the removal of third-party authorization for access to SRHR services, inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education in national curricula, and creation of an environment enabling more equal distribution of unpaid care work and reproductive labour, including more equitable parental leave and affordable childcare.³⁶



Monitoring and evaluation support accountability, scale-up and sustainability

Monitoring and evaluation help assess programme performance and improve programme management and results now and in the future.

They are necessary for accountability to programme stakeholders, communities and donors. Results of interventions should ideally be monitored beyond the duration of the programme to assess sustainability. Publication and dissemination of results are important to scaling up successful programmes.

Gender transformation often involves social and gender norms change that ultimately leads to behaviour change. Changing norms is typically iterative and non-linear. It can take time and require significant resources. Shifts in attitudes and knowledge usually occur before behaviour change can be measured. Population-level data and proxy measures may not adequately capture community-level changes attributable to social and behaviour change interventions.

Approaches proposed for monitoring and evaluating social norms change and gender transformation can help manage measurement challenges.³⁷ Examples include outcome mapping, outcome harvesting and most significant change.³⁸ These can be useful to move away from one-sided assessment of the outputs of a programme. They increase the focus on contributions of programme outputs to observed changes.

Guiding principles for the operationalization of gender-transformative approaches

- **1 Integrate gender-transformative approaches into different activities.**

A gender-transformative approach should be considered for all interventions or programmes. Gender equality and SRHR are intrinsically linked. SRHR presents entry points to transform gender discriminatory structures, systems, norms and stereotypes. This applies, for example, to programmes with primary objectives related to family planning, maternal health or gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and child marriage.

- **2 Apply a human rights-based approach.**

International human rights standards support gender equality and SRHR. The rights of women and girls include, but are not limited to, the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the right to non-discrimination and equal treatment. A human rights-based approach to sustainable development can be used to promote gender equality and SRHR. Human rights-based approaches are grounded in the principles of equality and non-discrimination, quality and accountability. UNFPA has guidance explaining the principles, how they relate to the organizational mandate and key programming steps to advance them.³⁹

- **3 Women and girls should be in the centre.**

Women and girls are disproportionately disadvantaged by gender inequalities. Their agency and rights should be at the centre of gender-transformative policies and



programming. Collaboration with women, girls and their organizations, and accountability to them, is critical to ensure that their rights and needs are adequately considered. Agency and rights in terms of SRHR are also linked to how much control and influence women and girls have in other spheres of life and society, e.g., employment and political participation.

- **4 Engage both women and men, in joint activities or separately.**

Gender equality concerns everyone. And everyone can do something about it. Transforming unjust structures, systems and norms requires broad engagement throughout programme inception, implementation and evaluation. In SRHR programming, for example, gender-specific groups may provide safe spaces to discuss sensitive topics, while mixed-gender groups may support mutual understanding of problems and solutions regarding gender relations. Men should have a supportive role. Male engagement must not occur at the expense of women and girls, such as by compromising their safety and decision-making.

- **5 Take a positive approach to male engagement.**

Men and boys often want to be part of the solution and should be approached as potential allies, not adversaries. Taking the latter approach may generate resistance. Although men who engage in harmful behaviours must be held accountable, focusing on the problematic aspects of individual male beliefs and behaviours may introduce the risk of a narrow emphasis on individual men that obscures relational and structural aspects. Leveraging positive forces and human rights can be a useful strategy in male engagement. While challenging gender inequalities may generate resistance, there are approaches to manage this.⁴⁰

- **6 Acknowledge diversity and intersectionality.**

Tailored approaches are required to adequately address distinct vulnerabilities and needs and accommodate diversity within and between groups, leaving no one behind. Gender intersects with other factors associated with discrimination and vulnerability, such as income, education, disability, race and religion. This intersectionality means that a person may face discrimination and vulnerability on several grounds, which leads to an increased risk of marginalization. Moreover, sex and gender extend beyond a binary classification into male and female. This means that measures to advance gender equality need to consider diversity in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

- **7 Start at an early age and consider intervention throughout the life course.**

Gender equality and SRHR remain important issues throughout people's lives but certain time points are particularly conducive to programmatic interventions.⁴¹ Gender socialization begins at a young age, which implies that gender-transformative work should start early. Early adolescence is a particularly critical time.⁴² In general, comprehensive sexuality education is key to reaching young people, both in and out of school.⁴³ Work with adults is also necessary, not least to support sustainable gender transformation at broader systemic and structural levels. Parenthood constitutes an opportunity to promote more involved fatherhood with a view to transforming gender relations.⁴⁴ Engaging men in unpaid care work and reproductive labour can be a useful strategy to move in this direction.

- **8 Act at different levels.**

Gender-transformative approaches should include actions at different levels in accordance with a socioecological framework. Often mutually reinforcing, these levels include the individual, interpersonal, community, systems and structural; different sectors; and the local, regional and international realms. UNFPA has published a compendium on social norms change that underlines the key role of the community as a change agent for transforming social norms to achieve SRHR and gender equality, while also emphasizing synergistic actions at different levels.⁴⁵

- **9 Consider the local context.**

Gender-transformative programming should be informed by analysis of local needs and possible programmatic approaches. Interventions should be adapted to cultural and social contexts and respond to needs in an effective and equitable manner. Culturally sensitive approaches rely on awareness and accommodation of the local context. For example, working in partnership with established religious and traditional leaders may lend credibility and familiarity to new initiatives, and reduce the perception of changes being imposed by external actors.

- **10 Collect and use data and information.**

Gender-transformative approaches should ideally be underpinned by needs assessment and gender analysis supported by relevant evidence. This includes quantitative or qualitative data and information about needs and determinants related to gender disparities. Work to collect data and information may encourage the active involvement of beneficiaries. Data and information are also fundamental for monitoring and evaluation, which are key for reporting and communicating results to uphold accountability and share experiences.

- **11 Use evidence-based approaches and rigorous operational research.**

Gender-transformative approaches, as in all programming, should optimally be proven effective or otherwise linked to rigorous operational research to generate evidence. Existing evidence-based approaches should be used when possible. Evidence of effective gender-transformative approaches exists but is often sparse and of poor quality. When conducting research, partnership with academic institutions may help ensure a high level of scientific quality and compliance with ethics standards.

- **12 Consider scale and sustainability for impact.**

Massive changes are usually needed to transform gender inequalities at large. The potential for scaling up effective interventions should be factored in early in the programmatic process. Changes at different levels, and in particular the systems and structural levels, are necessary to promote scale and sustainability. Involvement of government stakeholders can be useful to support institutionalization. Typically, reaching a “critical mass” or “tipping point” requires getting enough people to coordinate around making a change.

Programmes H and M as examples of targeting young men and women

Program H primarily targets young men, ages 15 to 24, to encourage critical reflection on rigid norms related to manhood.⁴⁶ Launched in 2002 by Promundo, the programme has since been adapted and/or implemented with partners in more than 32 countries around the world. The methodology promotes group education sessions combined with youth-led campaigns and activism to transform stereotypical roles associated with gender, such as around contraceptive use or the distribution of household responsibilities. Organizers can choose from some 70 validated Program H activities to customize the programme to their communities. Partners usually implement 10 to 16 activities, once a week, over several months in conjunction with community awareness campaigns created by youth themselves.

Program M, designed for young women aged 15 to 24, focuses on equitable gender roles, empowerment in interpersonal relationships and SRHR.⁴⁷ It was launched in 2006, building on the experiences of Program H, and seeks to promote similar critical reflections about gender, rights and health. Program M has been developed and adapted in more than 20 countries based on local research findings. The methodology combines educational workshops with youth-led community campaigns that promote gender-equitable attitudes among young women and improve their agency in interpersonal relationships. Organizers can choose from some 33 validated Program M activities to customize the programme to their communities.

Both Program H and M have been evaluated in different settings. Although they have been adapted across many contexts, schools have long been central to implementation, providing supportive structural environments through which the approach can be scaled up institutionally. Promundo and partners recommend using the Program H and M approaches together and including specific discussions on sexual diversity and homophobia.



1

Example

SASA!, an example of a community mobilization intervention

SASA! is a community mobilization intervention to change community attitudes, norms and behaviours that result in gender inequality, violence and increased HIV vulnerability for women.⁴⁸ SASA! was designed by Raising Voice in Uganda and has since been adapted and used in Africa and elsewhere.

The intervention is designed based on an ecological model and uses multiple strategies to reach diverse people and groups in a variety of ways. These strategies include local activism, media and advocacy, communications materials and training. The approach fosters the engagement of men, women, youth and institutional representatives. The central focus is to promote a critical analysis and discussion of power and power inequalities, and how people can use their power positively to affect and sustain change at an individual and community level. The intervention has also been adapted for religious communities. Monitoring and assessment are key components.

SASA! was recently revised, resulting in the launch of SASA! Together.⁴⁹ The new intervention has a stronger emphasis on intimate partner violence and sexual decision-making. The activities and training materials have also been diversified and the approaches to learning and assessment developed. SASA! Together is based on three strategies: local activism, community leadership and institutional strengthening.



2

Example

Stepping Stones, an example of a workshop series addressing gender relations

Stepping Stones is a workshop series to build stronger, more equitable, non-violent relationships through participatory learning and critical reflection.⁵⁰ The workshops address questions of gender, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, violence, communications and relationship skills. The intervention recognizes that sexuality is embedded in a broader context of relationships with partners, families and the community or society. Originally designed for Uganda, Stepping Stones has been adapted and used in South Africa, and adapted to additional contexts and target audiences. The intervention consists of 10 sessions per group, involving men and women of different ages.



3

Example

MenCare, an example of a fatherhood campaign

MenCare is a global fatherhood campaign active in more than 50 countries on five continents, coordinated by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice.⁵¹ MenCare promotes men's involvement as equitable, non-violent fathers and caregivers to achieve family well-being, gender equality and better health for mothers, fathers and children. Men learn to become allies in supporting women's social and economic equality, in part by taking on more responsibility for childcare and domestic work.

Men's positive involvement in the lives of their partners and children creates opportunities for equality, and it benefits women, children and men themselves. Engaging men as involved fathers can lead to improved maternal and child health, stronger and more equitable partner relations, a reduction in violence against women and children, and lifelong benefits for daughters and sons. Research has shown that men's involvement as caregivers also has benefits for them, making them better fathers, improving their intimate relationships and enhancing their quality of life.

MenCare works with partner organizations at multiple levels to engage individuals, communities, institutions and policymakers. A suite of media resources, educational programming and advocacy initiatives can be customized to different countries, languages and cultural contexts.

A MenCare+ initiative is a targeted effort to bring men into the health-care system as active and positive participants in their own health and that of their partners and children. MenCare also builds on Promundo's Program P, which provides strategies and activities to engage men globally in active fatherhood from their partner's pregnancies through their children's early years.⁵² UNFPA has partnered with MenCare in Georgia, where an award-winning national campaign was implemented in partnership with the civil society organization We Care.⁵³



4

Example

Joint global programmes, examples of UNFPA activities in different areas

The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage promotes the rights of adolescent girls to avert marriage and pregnancy and achieve their aspirations through education and alternative pathways. The programme was launched in 2016 to tackle child marriage in 12 of the most high-prevalence countries. A review of work from 2016 through 2019 found that the programme had empowered 7.2 million adolescent girls and reached 4.2 million individuals with community dialogues.

A multisectoral approach extends beyond ending child marriage to promoting gender equitable institutions and norms that influence child marriage at all levels. For example, with programme support, Mozambique has scaled up a mentorship approach to reach 221,234 adolescent girls with life skills education. In Nepal, a social and financial skills training package for adolescents called Rupantaran (“transformation”) is widely implemented. In India, the programme supports Partners for Law in Development, a legal resource group pursuing social justice and equality for women. The collaboration has supported over 100 civil society organizations working with adolescents across the domains of health, education, sexuality and child protection.



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The Spotlight Initiative is a global partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030. It began in 2019, assisting 26 countries now at different stages of implementing interventions under six mutually reinforcing programming pillars. These comprise laws and policies, institutions, prevention, services, data and women's movements. The programming includes interventions that challenge gender inequitable norms and structures that underpin gender-based violence. For example, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics has conducted research to inform policy and advocacy, and the findings point to the relevance of SDG targets on gender equality to inform evidence-based decision-making. In El Salvador, an interactive tool (chatbot) launched through Facebook to engage with young men in dialogue on gender and masculinities was visited 489,954 times in 2020. In Nigeria, 2,420 women and girls, including persons living with disability, have been reached with integrated services and information through safe spaces and empowerment initiatives.

The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation started in 2008 and works across 17 countries. More than 3.2 million girls and women have benefited from related prevention, protection and care services. Since 2018, Phase III of the programme includes a more explicit focus on gender transformation, with eliminating female genital mutilation strategically placed within a gender equality framework. In 2019, 3,362 communities made public declarations to abandon female genital mutilation, a powerful public demonstration of the transformation of power structures and relations. That same year, 109,951 girls graduated from capacity development programmes that equipped them with information, skills and support networks to become change agents, individually and collectively. In Burkina Faso, community surveillance committees prevented 175,724 girls from undergoing female genital mutilation. They also supported positive parenting, working with community and religious leaders to foster social norms change, and facilitated adolescent clubs.



Organizations that work on issues related to gender-transformative approaches and SRHR

Many organizations work on gender-transformative approaches in SRHR programming. These actors may provide resources and support to strengthen gender-transformative approaches. Some examples are shared below, although the list is not exhaustive and does not encompass relevant United Nations and government entities.

- **CARE International** is a global confederation that works around the globe to save lives, defeat poverty and achieve social justice, while putting women and girls at the centre. Website: <https://www.care-international.org/>.
- **CREA** is a feminist international human rights organization based in and led by women from the Global South. CREA's work draws upon the inherent value of a rights-based approach to sexuality and gender equality. Website: <https://creaworld.org/>.
- **Engender Health** works in more than 20 countries to implement high-quality, gender-equitable programmes that advance SRHR. Website: <https://www.engenderhealth.org/>.
- The **International Center for Research on Women** is a global research institute that aims to advance gender equity, social inclusion and shared prosperity, anchored in the principle of human dignity. Website: <https://www.icrw.org/>.



- The **MenEngage Alliance** links dozens of country networks spread across the world, including hundreds of non-governmental organizations. MenEngage members work collectively and individually on advancing gender justice, human rights and social justice. Website: <http://menengage.org/>.
- **Promundo** is a global consortium to advance gender equality and create a world free from violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women, girls and individuals of all gender identities. Website: <https://promundoglobal.org/>.
- **Rutgers** is a Dutch centre of expertise on SRHR, working in several countries to improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all by focusing on young people. Website: <https://rutgers.international/>
- **Sonke Gender Justice** is a South African-based non-profit organization working throughout Africa. Sonke strengthens the capacities of governments, civil society and citizens to advance gender justice and women's rights, prevent gender-based violence and reduce the spread of HIV and the impact of AIDS – towards the broader goals of social justice and the elimination of poverty. Website: <https://genderjustice.org.za/>.
- **The African Women's Development and Communications Network** is a pan-African feminist and membership-based network. FEMNET aims to ensure that the voices of African women are amplified, and that their needs and aspirations are prioritized in key policy dialogues and outcomes. Website: <https://femnet.org/>.
- **The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women** is a regional non-profit women's organization based in Malaysia. It strives to enable women to become equal citizens in all respects by ensuring they achieve their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Website: <https://www.arrow.org.my/>.
- **The Association for Women's Rights in Development** is a global, feminist, membership, movement-support organization mobilizing to achieve gender justice and women's human rights worldwide. Website: <https://www.awid.org/>.
- **The European Women's Lobby** brings together women's movement in Europe to influence the public and European institutions in support of women's human rights and equality between women and men. Website: <https://womenlobby.org/>.
- **The Foundation for Studies and Research on Women** is an Argentinean non-governmental, not-for-profit organization to improve the social, working, legal, political, economic and health conditions of women, girls, teenagers and young adults. Website: <http://feim.org.ar/english/>.
- **The Global Fund for Women** is a public foundation that funds bold, ambitious and expansive gender justice movements to create meaningful change. Website: <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/>.

- **The Global Women's Institute** at George Washington University advances gender equality through research, education and action to bring about change.
Website: <https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/>.
- **The Interagency Gender Working Group** is a network of non-governmental organizations, the United States Agency for International Development and its Bureau for Global Health and cooperating agencies. It focuses on promoting gender equality, eliminating gender-based violence, fostering male engagement and examining youth and gender norms.
Website: www.igwg.org.
- **The Young Feminist Fund** provides young feminist organizers with resources to amplify their voices and bring attention to social justice issues they care about. FRIDA enables support, flexibility and networks to sustain young feminist visions.
Website: <https://youngfeministfund.org/>.



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ANNEX

EXAMPLE OF A GENERAL THEORY OF CHANGE FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND SRHR

IMPACT	Contributions to the achievement of the SDGs SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, and SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls							
	Universal access to SRHR and accelerated implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action							
OUTCOMES	Accelerated reduction of preventable maternal deaths			Accelerated reduction of unmet need for family planning			Accelerated reduction of gender-based violence and harmful practices	
	Improved availability, acceptability accessibility and quality of SRHR services				Advanced gender equality, including agency and rights of women and girls, positive masculinities, and empowerment of young people			
OUTPUTS	Support for development and implementation of gender-transformative laws and policies, in all contexts	Support for strengthened accountability mechanisms, including justice and redress for violations of human rights, in particular the rights of women and girls, in all contexts	Support for gender mainstreaming at systemic and structural levels, including institutions, laws and policies, in all contexts	Support for transformation of gender discriminatory norms, stereotypes, attitudes and practices, including service demand generation, in all contexts	Support for provision of gender-transformative services and information, e.g., in health and education sectors, in all contexts	Support for generation, dissemination and utilization of data, knowledge, evidence and innovation to support gender-transformative approaches, in all contexts	Support for strengthened social movements, including feminist and women’s organizations, human rights defenders and young people, in all contexts	
	PROBLEM							
Gender inequality is perpetuated, by discriminatory norms, stereotypes, attitudes, practices, institutions, laws and policies, at individual, interpersonal, community, systemic and structural levels, leading to poorer SRHR and development outcomes, particularly for marginalized women and girls and people in humanitarian and crisis contexts, including climate change								

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