

A Journey to Manhood: A Regional Strategy for Engaging Men and Boys in Ending VAWG in Central Asia

A regional strategy prepared for the UNFPA Country Office in the Republic of Kazakhstan under the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
INTRODUCTION	3
About the Regional Strategy	4
Key Principles that Guide Men's Engagement Work	5
Designing Initiatives Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality	7
A Journey to Manhood: The Men's Engagement Strategy for Central Asia	8
BOYHOOD	8
YOUNG MANHOOD	12
ADULT MANHOOD / FATHERHOOD	15
OLDER MANHOOD	20
OTHER CRITICAL STRATEGIES	21

Acknowledgements

The conclusions and recommendations presented in this publication are the author's opinions and do not necessarily represent the views of UNFPA.

This strategy was prepared by Lead Expert Jane Kato-Wallace, in partnership with National Experts Bahar Agayeva (Turkmenistan), Gulnoza Ahmedova (Uzbekistan), Arailym Ashirbekova (Kazakhstan), Tynchtykbek Bakytov (Kyrgyzstan), and Shamima Oshurbekova (Tajikistan).

The authors of this publication are grateful to the United Nations Population Fund staff for their research assistance and the materials provided.

The UNFPA Country Office in Kazakhstan and UNFPA office in Almaty led the coordination, review, and validation of this strategy: Azhar Bergeneva, Yuliya Lyssenkova, and Meder Omurzakov.

Introduction

Engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a critical priority of the Spotlight Initiative.¹ The Spotlight Initiative is a global initiative of the United Nations which has received generous support from the European Union. It aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. One of the six key pillars of the Spotlight Initiative is 'Prevention,' which involves engaging men and boys in the 'promotion of gender-equitable norms, attitudes, and behaviors.' *A Journey to Manhood: A Regional Strategy for Engaging Men and Boys in Ending VAWG in Central Asia* provides guidance on the key entry points to engaging men and boys throughout the life course.

The regional strategy is informed by the UNFPA *Situational Analysis of Men and Gender Equality in Central Asia* developed for five Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – who are beneficiaries of the Spotlight Initiative Regional Program for Central Asia and Afghanistan. The *Situational Analysis* synthesized and summarized the evidence on how governments currently address men's engagement in laws, policies, and national action plans; analyzed prevalent gender-related attitudes, perceptions, and practices of men and women in the region; and summarized the best and most promising practices on engaging men and boys.

The main findings from the *Situational Analysis* included:

- In most countries, laws on violence are gender-neutral and do not specifically define violence against women and girls. Gender-neutral language can undermine or hide violence's gendered and structural dimensions of violence (i.e., most people who commit violent acts against women and girls are men).
- National strategic plans, action plans, and other policy documents in most countries outline specific plans to address and challenge harmful gender stereotypes, increase accountability, services, and support for women who experience violence, and empower women economically and in political decision-making. These plans are specific and even aspirational.
- However, men and boys are rarely specifically addressed in strategic and action plans either as allies and individuals capable of challenging harmful gender norms, as individuals who require rehabilitation, or in other capacities. Fatherhood is one of the few areas where men's roles are explicitly referenced.
- With regard to harmful practices, none of these policy or strategy documents outline the opportunities nor obligations to engage men and boys in the prevention of these practices.

¹ Spotlight Initiative Official Website: <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/what-we-do>.





- There are high acceptability rates of violence against women in most countries where data is available.
- There is no country in the Central Asian region where men and women spend an equal amount of time on unpaid care work where data is available. In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, women spend more than twice as much of their day on unpaid work than men, with the most considerable gender disparity in Uzbekistan.
- The unpaid care gap between men and women is significant. In Kyrgyzstan, of those men and women who work over 40 hours a week, women were twice as likely as men to work over 61 hours per week. Employed women were also less likely to have time off or, if they had days off, were offered fewer days than employed men.
- Conditions that limit women's participation in the workforce and access to productive resources are connected with a higher prevalence of violence against women.
- Promisingly, studies show that a substantial proportion of men in all five Central Asian countries already engage in activities supporting early childhood development, such as reading and playing with children.
- Most countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan) have already launched men's engagement initiatives such as campaigns, father's groups, and other types of activities to raise awareness on fatherhood involvement, healthy boyhood, and have worked with decision-makers and influencers such as male religious leaders on issues of equality.

About the Regional Strategy

The Regional Strategy was developed by first conducting an online workshop with national experts who co-authored the *Situational Analysis* on men's engagement for Central Asia. In this online workshop, participants reflected on the main findings from the Situational Analysis and brainstormed key strategies to address the inequalities and challenges identified in the report. Afterward, the inputs from the workshop were used to draft an outline of the Regional Strategy. This outline was presented to UNFPA Gender Focal Points in Central Asia and national consultants for feedback. In this round of feedback, UN staff and national experts provided additional information in the form of reports and other documents to further inform the strategy and provide concrete examples of promising practices. Many of these examples are included in boxes titled "Program Spotlight" throughout the *Regional Strategy*. Following this, a full strategy draft was developed and reviewed by UN staff and national experts for their feedback. Following this round of feedback, the strategy was then finalized.

The purpose of *A Journey to Manhood: A Regional Strategy for Engaging Men and Boys in Ending VAWG in Central Asia* is to provide a clear roadmap on the entry points to engage men and boys throughout the life course – from boyhood to older manhood. Gender socialization

begins early in boys' lives, and it is essential to create gender-equitable environments that promote equality and positive, non-violent versions of manhood as they develop their own unique identities. As boys grow older, they become increasingly independent, may begin romantic relationships for the first time, and dream about who they want to become in the future. This transition period to adulthood is another opportunity to promote gender equality by encouraging their roles as peers, students, and partners. As young men become fathers, leaders, and persons whom communities look to for guidance, there continue to be ways to promote messages of equality. In short, this regional strategy aims to illustrate how men's engagement for gender equality can be done at every life course stage! The expected outcomes of engaging men and boys throughout each life stage are illustrated below:

<u>Expected Outcomes of Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and Ending VAWG At Each Life Stage</u>	
	Boyhood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A more caring, connected, and accepting environment around boys. - Boys are able to challenge and reject all forms of inequality and violence, especially VAWG.
	Young Manhood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The social environment around young men is filled with positive, influential messages about healthy manhood. - Young men are able to form meaningful and loving relationships based on equality and respect. - Young men feel supported by others and know how to reach out when they need help.
	Fatherhood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Men are fully present and gender-equitable role models for their children. - Men share the care work and decision-making power equally with their partners. - The institutions around men are supportive of involved fatherhood.
	Older Manhood: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Older men are able to use their influence and power to promote gender equality within institutions and in their own families and communities.

Key Principles that Guide Men's Engagement Work

While the benefits of engaging men and boys in the prevention of VAWG are clear, there is also a risk of doing harm, such as unintentionally reinforcing men's power and control. For example, well-intentioned fatherhood-focused programming can further strengthen men's control in the home by extending their decision-making power to how children are raised and cared for rather than promoting shared decision-making and open communication with female partners. Therefore, there must be **guiding principles**² on how to work with men and boys that focus on challenging unequal power dynamics, accountability to women's rights organizations and domestic violence survivors, and an understanding of the unique challenges and vulnerabilities men face as gendered beings. *What can this look like?*

- **Promote human rights:** Work with men and boys on gender equality and preventing male violence must not detract from efforts to empower women. It should be framed within a women's rights agenda and promote the human rights of all people.
- **Remain accountable to and ally with women's rights organizations:** This includes promoting women's leadership in activities to engage men, protecting women-only spaces, and monitoring programs to prevent them from becoming male-dominated.
- **Promote positive visions of change by and for men:** This includes making men aware that they are part of the solution to ending violence, have specific skills needed in work, and can act in the best interests of their families and communities.
- **Respond to men and boys' own vulnerabilities:** The many ways in which patriarchal relations of power can damage the lives of men and boys have been well documented, including their own experiences of male violence.
- **Be responsive to survivors:** Prevention activities often lead to an increase in survivors disclosing their experiences of violence. It is essential to ensure that prevention programs are linked to services for survivors, which can respond to their health, welfare, and legal needs.
- **Be inclusive of and responsive to diversities among men:** Factors such as class and caste, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, religion, literacy, and age shape expressions of manhood and produce differing experiences of power and marginalization for different groups of men. Approaches to engaging men in gender equality work must be sensitive to these diversities among men.

How can Central Asian stakeholders adapt these guiding principles?

Central Asian stakeholders leading men's engagement work in their respective countries should create space to define their values regarding gender equality, how they will act accountably, and ensure all initiatives are framed with guiding principles in mind. For example, this may require

² Adapted from "Core Principles to Strengthen Violence Prevention Work With Men And Boys" by the Prevention Collaborative. Available here:

https://prevention-collaborative.org/knowledge_hub/strengthening-prevention-work-with-men-and-boys-in-community-settings/

organizing a workshop session that promotes critical reflection on these principles, as mentioned above, and discussing what they mean to each person and how best to ensure their values are reflected in their programs. There should also be discussions on how stakeholders will hold each other accountable to live up to these values and principles. Such activities should also be inclusive, involving meaningful representation of women, children, human rights organizations, and other key stakeholders. These values should be written up and visible on public documents such as new curricula, technical briefs, and other material. Individuals should ensure that this reflection is also an ongoing process.

Designing Initiatives Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality

When designing programs and other initiatives for men and boys, it will be necessary to consider the current findings on what works to meaningfully shift power dynamics, practices, attitudes, and gender norms. These findings are summarized in the *Situational Analysis*, and reviewing it to guide design is highly recommended. One key recommendation from the *Situational Analysis* is to develop **comprehensive approaches to working with men and boys**. The Ecological Model emphasizes that to change individual behavior, programs need to not only work with individuals but also address the systems and groups—peers, families, communities, media, and policies—that influence how people internalize, reproduce and reinforce gender inequitable norms. This multi-component approach is beneficial because it increases the chances that individuals will be impacted by the program’s diverse interventions repeated and in different ways. For this reason, the *Regional Strategy* provides recommendations not only for every life stage but also for every level within this conceptual model.

The Ecological Model: Action Levels for Effecting Sustained Social Change	
Strengthen <u>individual knowledge and skills</u>	Help men and women understand how current gender and social norms affect their lives, promote changes in attitudes and beliefs about gender equity, increase skills, and change specific targeted behaviours.
Example Resource:	Curriculum-based education: Young Men’s Initiative’s “Program M: M Manual” (https://youngmeninitiative.net/en/)
Create supportive <u>family relations and peer environment</u>	Help improve the quality of intimate relationships, reduce gender-based violence, and create a supportive peer and family environment for gender-equitable relationships.
Example Resources:	Improving the quality of couple relationships: Promundo’s “Program P” curriculum for fathers and couples. (https://promundoglobal.org/programs/program-p/)
Mobilize <u>communities</u> through a community-centered approach	Create an enabling social environment supportive of gender equity and male involvement by engaging communities through various means, such as joint community planning, media, outreach, mobilization, events, etc.

Example Resource:	<p>Media Campaigns and Events: “The MenCare Georgia Campaign” by UNFPA-Georgia (https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MenCare%20Brochure.pdf)</p> <p>Community dialogues: “Stepping Stones” in English (http://www.mrc.ac.za/gender/stepping.htm)</p>
Influence policy and legislation reform at the <u>societal</u> level	Develop strategies for reforming and implementing national, regional and district laws and policies that positively transform the social environment
Example Resource:	<p>Advocacy: Many resources related to advocacy and male involvement available on the MenEngage Alliance website: http://www.menengage.org/</p>

A Journey to Manhood: The Men's Engagement Strategy for Central Asia

BOYHOOD

Expected Outcomes

- A more caring, connected, and accepting environment around boys.
- Boys are able to challenge and reject all forms of violence, especially VAWG.



Boyhood is a unique period where children begin to understand the basics of being human - how to walk, crawl, run, and relate to the world around them. This is also a time when children undergo gender socialization – they learn how to be a girl and a boy. To do so, children will imitate the adult role models in their lives, such as parents, friends, and what they see in the media. Promoting gender equality at this early stage is critical to creating the foundation for a happy, healthy, and gender-equitable life.

In Legislation and National Action Plans

- ✓ **Advocate with policymakers to include clear language on gender equality in boyhood in national action plans and other strategy documents.** This may include actions such as requiring gender equality education as part of standard curricula in primary schools, in early childhood education, and as part of teacher training. This education should aim to challenge harmful gender inequalities by promoting spaces for critical reflection and emotional connectedness, challenging all forms of bullying and harassment, and creating safe environments for children to learn.

Within Schools and Communities

- ✓ **Train teachers on how to create more gender-equitable environments for children free from violence.** In classrooms, teachers have the potential to create spaces that challenge harmful inequitable norms that children face on a daily basis and give them the skills to reimagine who they want to be.

Program Spotlight

In Kyrgyzstan, as part of the Positive Fatherhood Campaign, teachers from vocational schools were sensitized on gender, existing gender stereotypes, how men and boys can be involved in achieving gender equality, prevention of GBV, and the role of vocational schools in educating the younger generation on living gender-equitable lives. As part of this component, boys were taught about their responsibilities to communicate non-violently with peers, both boys and girls in their communities

- ✓ **Advocate for more men to enter teaching and caregiving professions.** While there is nothing inherently unique about the teaching styles of male teachers versus female teachers, what is clear is that children need more positive male role models in classrooms. According to UNESCO, the diversity of teaching needs to reflect the diversity of the classroom.³
- ✓ **Conduct a review of academic curricula for gender-inequitable stereotypes.** This may include revising and reforming curricula to include a wider diversity of representation in history. This can include having stories that illustrate boys and girls playing different roles (e.g., girls playing sports and boys being caring and showing emotions towards others).

Women's Courageous Roles Throughout History

Throughout history, there are many excellent examples of women and men who challenged gender stereotypes. Including these figures in history lessons can be an excellent way to facilitate critical thinking skills among young people (*"How does this make you think differently about women's roles in society today?"*), and advance understanding of the correlation between the advancement of society and women's equality. Some examples are below:

- The book "Shohnoma. (Shahnameh)" by Persian writer Firdavsi, (Ferdowsi) contains stories of women warriors. Teachers could read books like this to highlight the role of courageous women.
- In the history of the Turkmen, Queen Tomiris (Tumar), the legendary queen of the ancestors of the Turkmen - the Massagets - who lived in the 5th century B.C. on the right bank of the River Uzboy, displayed masterful military and diplomatic skill. Her victory over the Persian king Cyrus II the Great, after his attempt to seize the kingdom of the Massagetae, is cited by Herodotus.
- Another key figure is the legend of the feat of Rodoguna - the daughter of the Parthian king Mithridates I – and her women's battalions in Nisa.
- The national leader, Guljemal Khan, is a Merv khansha who succeeded her husband Nurberdy Khan in 1880 and played a major political role among the Tekins of Merv. During military battles in 1855 in Ganly-depe (Serakhs) and 1881 in Geokdepe, Turkmen women fought equally with men, defending their native land.
- There are many other examples of powerful women leaders, women who contributed to science (Nodira), politics, warfare (Tomaris), the arts (Uvaysi), and more.
- There are examples of respectful relationships between men and women in Islam, as illustrated by how leaders in history like Tamerlan, Ulugbek, Bobur, and others treated their daughters and wives.
- The decay in sociocultural life characterized the 19th-century epoch (right before the Russian invasion). Women in Central Asia were not allowed to receive education. The situation then was similar to present-day Afghanistan.

³ UNESCO. 2020. Gender in Teaching: A Key Dimension of Inclusion. Accessible here: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374448>

With Individual Boys

- ✓ **Implement gender-transformative programming in schools by working directly with teachers and students.** Gender-transformative programming seeks to challenge gender inequality by challenging harmful gender norms, roles, and relations and promoting progressive changes in power relationships between women and men.⁴ This can include reflecting and learning about topics such as gender equality, mental and physical health, sharing the care work at home, promoting positive relationships, and developing leadership skills.
- ✓ **Conduct research to understand better how boys internalize gender inequitable stereotypes from their family, friends, school, and popular social media.** Use the research as a way to promote positive messages about boyhood.

Program Spotlight: Global Boyhood Initiative (<https://boyhoodinitiative.org/>)

Launched by Promundo and The Kering Foundation, the goal of the Global Boyhood Initiative and the campaign is to shift the social narrative around boyhood in the US (where it was first launched) and globally to increase commitments to raising gender equitable, healthy and connected boys. This will be done by developing and implementing a research-informed global platform and campaign focused on boys ages 4-13, those who care for them (teachers, coaches, parents, and others), and those who shape the media messages they receive.

- ✓ **Have mentorship programs for vulnerable boys.** Engage youth programs to see where spaces can be created to have boys reflect on harmful gender norms and integrate these approaches into existing programming for vulnerable boys.

Program Spotlight: Youth Radicalization Prevention in Tajikistan

According to a recent multi-country study on resilience and radicalization by the World Bank, youth were the group most commonly identified as being vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment. As a result, a program was developed for vulnerable youth in Tajikistan to prevent radicalization, strengthen gender equality, and challenge harmful gender norms.

For more information:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/strengthening-youth-resilience-to-radicalization-evidence-from-tajikistan>

Program Spotlight: SOS Children's Villages in Uzbekistan

⁴ World Health Organization. Gender mainstreaming for health managers: a practical approach [Internet]. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2011. http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789241501064_eng.pdf?ua=1.

The SOS Children's Villages in Uzbekistan focuses on children and young people left without the custody of their parents or at risk of social orphanhood, as well as families in difficult situations. Within the framework of the Association's programs, children and families receive comprehensive, consistent, and continuous services aimed at creating a family environment for children and young people left without parental care and strengthening families in difficult life situations to reduce the risk of social orphanhood.

YOUNG MANHOOD

Expected Outcomes

- The social environment around young men is filled with positive, influential messages about healthy manhood.
- Young men are able to form meaningful and loving relationships based on equality and respect.
- Young men feel supported by others and know how to reach out when they need help.



Young manhood is a time when youth experience enormous physical, psychological, emotional, and social changes. They are in an “in-between” period where they are transitioning from being a child to an adult. They are growing taller, feeling more intense emotions, and questioning long-held values and beliefs. Young men seek to create an identity separate from their mothers and fathers and are influenced more than ever by their friends and what they see in the world around them. The expectations of those around them also begin to change. Parents and other adults expect them to take on more responsibility and start thinking of their future roles as leaders and caregivers. While this is an exciting period for young men, it is also a delicate time where they are more at risk than ever before of perpetuating the inequitable stereotypes they learned in childhood. It is also a time when they may feel lonely and isolated. For this reason, working with young men alongside young women is necessary to enable them to lead a more gender-equitable future.

In Legislation and National Action Plans

- ✓ **Advocate for clear language that includes specific ways to engage young men in gender equality and the prevention of VAWG.** It should consist of ways young men in and out of school can be included in gender equality initiatives, such as community programs, classrooms, and advocacy initiatives.

In the Media

- ✓ **Engage young men in social media campaigns to promote positive messages of manhood.** Reach young men where they are, and that includes online. This can include social behavior change campaigns that directly engage young men in challenging harmful traditional practices such as bride kidnapping, child marriage, and sexual exploitation.

Within Schools and Communities

- ✓ **Implement gender-transformative education in secondary schools that challenge harmful masculine norms and promote respectful, non-violent relationships.** This could include

teacher-led group education programs, initiatives run by local civil society organizations, or peer-to-peer education with young men. This gender-transformative education could include promoting gender equality, equal rights, equitable distribution of unpaid care, non-violent relationships, SRHR, mental and physical health, positive communication, bullying, and peer pressure.

Program Spotlight

Young Men's Initiative (<https://youngmeninitiative.net/en/>) – Originally developed for young men in the Balkans affected by regional conflict. The Young Men's Initiative (YMI) uses a positive youth development and youth work framework to promote positive outcomes in young men's lives. The website includes curricula and other supporting material for engaging young men in gender equality.

Program Spotlight

Y-Peer - Originally launched in 2002, Y-Peer is a comprehensive network of organizations and institutions working to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights by working with young people.

Program Spotlight

Engaging young men in Kyrgyzstan - As part of a program in Kyrgyzstan, students at vocational schools – boys and girls aged 14 to 16 in two districts – participated in a workshop on gender, gender stereotypes, harmful practices towards girls such as bride kidnapping, violence among peers, and family relationships, focused in particular on fathers. As a result of this workshop, the students agreed to organize peer-group discussions on topics related to violence among peers, bride kidnapping, and domestic violence. A “Boys’ Club” was also created in Kemin Region to educate a critical group of young boys on positive masculinity and non-violent communications with peers, both boys and girls, in their communities.

With Individual Young Men

- ✓ **Mental health counseling and crisis hotlines for youth.** The COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in social media usage have put a magnifying glass on how youth engage socially, both offline and online. The pressure to live up to societal expectations of manhood is heavier than ever before, challenging men's mental health. Evidence also shows that the more young men believe in harmful norms of masculinity, the less likely they are to seek help when they feel sad or depressed. For this reason, more resources should be available for youth experiencing mental health issues.
- ✓ **Implement life skills and leadership education for young men outside the education system and other vulnerable young men.** Young people's community engagement and life skills through a community-based service-learning program, especially for vulnerable youth (youth not in education, employment or training, and working poor), could be promoted in

these programs. By creating a supportive environment where youth can thrive and contribute to the development of their communities, a more gender-equitable transition from childhood to adulthood is likely to occur. In Uzbekistan, if young men are out of school, it may mean they are either engaged in low-skilled labor or migrated to other countries, such as Russia, to find jobs in construction, agriculture, or other industries. Orientation programs in migration centers that incorporate sessions that promote critical reflection on gender equality before they migrate could be an entry point. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) also have excellent potential to increase the access of vulnerable youth groups (persons with disabilities, migrants) to various learning opportunities that promote gender equity and inclusion.

Program Spotlight:

The University of Central Asia's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) has courses starting from Accounting and ending with Mountain Guiding that is being taught to youth (both out and in school) in Central Asian countries (Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) including Afghanistan. More info links are below:

For more information:

<https://ucentralasia.org/schools/school-of-professional-and-continuing-education/continuing-education-programme>

- ✓ **Pre-Marital counseling before marriage.** Another entry point to engage men is reaching them before they potentially commit to a long-term relationship. Promoting gender-equality messages and discussions in premarital counseling creates new opportunities to build more equal and peaceful households.

ADULT MANHOOD / FATHERHOOD

Expected Outcomes

- Men are fully present, gender-equitable role models for their children.
- Men share the care work and decision-making power equally with their partners.
- The institutions around men are supportive of involved fatherhood.



Adult men are falling in love, maybe getting married, having children, and trying to achieve their professional dreams for the future. In many ways, the lessons they learned in their childhood and adolescence have prepared them for this new stage of life where they care for the next generation. Fatherhood, in particular, is a promising entry point to promote more equal household relationships and early childhood development and prevent intimate partner violence.

In Legislation and National Action Plans

- ✓ **Transform legislation and national action plans to promote the equal distribution of unpaid care work, paid paternity leave, and promoting women's equality in paid work.**
- ✓ **Advocate with the private sector to promote existing entitlements (e.g., parental leave) for fathers to take leave and showcase company benefits when they are “family friendly.”**
Investing in family-friendly policies is beneficial not only for families but also for attracting and retaining a talented workforce and strengthening a country's social and economic development. “Family-friendly policies” are defined by UNICEF as “policies that help to balance and benefit both work and family life, and that typically provide essential resources needed by parents and caregivers of young children.”⁵ Such policies also aim to promote gender equality in the workforce. Research shows that countries whose governments invested in family-friendly and gender-equality policies have boosted growth in GDP per capita by between 10% and 20%.⁶ For businesses competing for talent, offering better work-life balance and family-friendly policies can enhance competitiveness to attract labor.⁷

Program Spotlight

The UNFPA Georgia Country Office, in cooperation with international partners, developed a compendium that served as a basis for developing a workshop on Family-Friendly Workplaces: Policies and Practices. The release of the compendium was accompanied by an in-person workshop held in the Kakheti region on December 6-8, 2021, featuring the best

⁵ Business and Family Friendly Policies – An Evidence Brief. UNICEF. (2019)

⁶Family-friendly policies a key driver of economic growth. OECD. (2018).

<https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/family-friendly-policies-a-key-driver-of-economic-growth.htm>

⁷ Business and Family Friendly Policies – An Evidence Brief. UNICEF. (2019)

practices to understand better and demonstrate the experience from EU countries on applying family-supporting policies, including paternity leave in public and private organization settings.

In the Media

- ✓ **Engage men as fathers through the global MenCare Campaign.** Coordinated by two international NGOs, Equimundo (formerly Promundo-US) and Sonke Gender Justice, the MenCare Campaign is a global fatherhood campaign active in more than 50 countries on five continents, with a mission to promote men's involvement as equitable, nonviolent fathers and caregivers to achieve family well-being, gender equality, and better health for mothers, fathers, and children. Through media campaigns, program development, and advocacy, MenCare works with partners across the globe to engage men as caregivers and fathers.

Program Spotlight

Launched in 2019 in Kazakhstan, the MenCare Campaign aims to involve husbands and fathers in family life, sharing household responsibilities, raising children, and caring for them to strengthen the institution of the family, promote gender equality and end domestic violence. Successful activities under this campaign included:

- “Guidelines for Men: How to be a responsible father and husband”
- A package of materials for conducting training on responsible fatherhood. This includes guidelines for trainers, participant materials, videos, and more.
- Eight workshops for trainers were held, with over 150 people participating. In addition, a group of trained trainers and opinion leaders was formed.
- Several media campaigns to promote the concept of men's involvement were launched, including a campaign during the COVID-19 lockdown, a podcast for men, and engagement in several talk shows about the role of the father in the family.
- The 6th Republican Forum of Fathers was conducted in Shymkent. More than 60 participants representing Parliament, Ministries, NGOs representing the interests of men, fathers, mothers, and children, including fathers raising children with disabilities, and faith-based organizations.

- ✓ **Engage male celebrities and everyday fathers who can speak about the importance of fatherhood involvement, ending VAWG.** Though it is essential to be careful about putting specific men on public platforms, given how much scrutiny is placed on public figures, putting a personal face on a fatherhood campaign is a good practice to promote positive messages of manhood and caregiving.

Program Spotlight

In 2017, UNICEF in Kyrgyzstan launched a new campaign to celebrate fatherhood and highlight the importance of love, play, protection, and good nutrition for the healthy development of young children's brains. Famous fathers in Kyrgyzstan joined the initiative

#SuperDads #EarlyMomentsMatter. The main goal of this campaign was to remind everyone that one does not need to have a superpower to be a “super dad” – all you need to do is play with your child, hug, love, protect and spend more time with them.

Within Institutions

- ✓ **Engage men as fathers in prenatal and postnatal consultations by promoting more “father-friendly spaces.”** Men’s accompaniment of pregnant partners in the prenatal period has many benefits not only for women and their future children but also as an entry point for men to engage with the health care system for their own health. Men’s roles in labor, delivery, and the post-natal period are critical to promoting non-violent fatherhood involvement, preparing them to be gender-equitable role models for their families. One key tool that provides guidance on this is Program P (also in *Program Spotlight* below), a curriculum that also includes health provider checklists on creating more father-friendly spaces.

Program Spotlight

Positive Fatherhood Campaign in Kyrgyzstan - As part of the Positive Fatherhood Campaign, healthcare providers from the Childbirth Preparation Schools within the Centres for Family Medicine were trained on a gender-sensitive approach in working with pregnant women and on male involvement in sessions preparing parents for delivery. An additional session on male involvement in the process of childbirth preparation was added to the schools’ training manual.

Program Spotlight

Program P – Program P (“P” for “padre” in Spanish and “pai” in Portuguese, meaning “father”) provides concrete strategies for engaging men in active caregiving from their partner’s pregnancy through their child’s early years. It identifies best practices for engaging men in maternal and child health, caregiving, and preventing violence against women and children. More specifically, the Program P manual contains: (1) background research on the latest data on why engaging men as caregivers is an essential part of maternal health and gender equality; (2) a guide for health professionals on how to engage men in the prenatal consultation space and primary health clinics; (3) a series of interactive modules for gender-transformative group education with men, and in some instances their female partners; and (4) a step-by-step guide to create and launch a MenCare community campaign.

- ✓ **Engage men as fathers in early childhood development education, such as preschool, to encourage reading, playing together, and problem-solving.** Community activities can include fun events such as a father and daughter hair braiding class or a fathers’ cooking competition that includes their sons and daughters. Such events can further help to promote men’s positive (and non-stereotypical) roles in families.

Program Spotlight

Coordinated by UNFPA in Ukraine and local partner Mystetskyi Arsenal, a program was developed to focus on the importance of equal sharing of family responsibilities, as well as the role of fathers in children's development. The project focused on launching public book readings, to which famous fathers were invited to read books to children. Fathers were also invited to share personal stories of their experiences of fatherhood to show the people of Ukraine that men and women can and should play equally active roles in raising children.

Within Families

- ✓ **Engage men in gender-transformative education, such as fathers groups, to promote gender equality in families.** This could include providing group education for newly pregnant women and their male partners on the importance of equality at home.

Program Spotlight

In UNFPA Georgia, a day-long module was developed called "Men Talking to Men" (MTM) interactive meeting/training sessions. The module includes specific activities to help participants rethink the stereotypes related to masculinity, explain the importance of sharing household responsibilities, and promote respect and support for reproductive health and the rights of partners/spouses, etc. The overall aim of the MTM meeting/training is to expand the circle of like-minded men and to foster social support for the idea of men's role and place in advancing gender equality.

- ✓ **Engage men's female partners since women also harbor gender-inequitable beliefs.** In some settings, mothers-in-law play a particularly influential role in household dynamics.

For Men Who Use Violence

- ✓ **For men who use violence, develop and test rehabilitation programs to promote healing and prevent the re-occurrence of violent behavior.** As the essential work to provide direct services to survivors of VAWG has grown, there have also always been questions about how to work with the men who have used IPV. Most actions to engage men have been punitive and focus less on rehabilitation and reintegration. While the evidence is still unclear on the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs for men, what is clear is that alternatives to incarceration and other forms of punishment are needed to address the root causes of men's violent behavior.

See Publication: *Programs for Men Who Have Used Violence Against Women: Recommendations for Action and Caution*

<https://promundoglobal.org/resources/programs-for-men-who-have-used-violence-against-women-recommendations-for-action-and-caution/?lang=english>

Program Spotlight

Based in the UK, Respect (<https://www.respect.uk.net/pages/about-us>) has been leading work with perpetrators of domestic abuse for over 20 years, aiming to keep survivors safe and hold perpetrators accountable - while offering them meaningful opportunities to change. Respect's interventions support perpetrators in the early stages of abuse and those using high-harm behaviours. They work across three key thematic areas:

- Perpetrators of domestic abuse are held accountable, offered the chance to change, and stopped from causing further harm.
- Young people who cause harm to family members or carers or in their intimate relationships are offered responses that recognise both their vulnerability and the risk they pose.
- Male victims of domestic abuse are supported to escape and recover from the abuse they have experienced through a range of responses designed to meet their needs.

They do this work by conducting research, engaging in practice and piloting new interventions, accrediting services, and influencing policy.

- ✓ **Strengthen accountability by training police and other first responders on VAWG.** As part of police training, Integrate gender-transformative approaches to shift gendered and stereotypical attitudes among police officers, particularly regarding GBV victim blaming.

OLDER MANHOOD

Expected Outcomes

- Older men are able to use their influence and power to promote gender equality within institutions and in their own families and communities.



As men grow older, they often become important, influential members of their families and in wider society. They are often seen as an important source of cultural and historical identity. They also become gatekeepers, important decision-makers, and influencers of social behavior. In other words, they have a lot of potential to influence gender-equitable societal changes!

Within Institutions

- ✓ **Conduct events such as learning workshops with policymakers to feature compelling “success stories” on the benefits of involved, gender-equitable fatherhood and how this benefits broader society.** Start by engaging policymakers who have a clear gender equality mandate, such as the Committee on Women and Family Affairs in the Republic of Tajikistan, for example. Policymakers are also interested in issues that help them to achieve specific policy objectives. Highlight how men’s involvement in preventing VAWG may alleviate the burden on law enforcement and potential incarceration. Above all, creating a personal connection (their own experiences as fathers, for example) with these issues is particularly effective.
- ✓ **Engage religious and other traditional leaders to promote involved fatherhood and prevent VAWG.** Religious and other traditional leaders are well-respected members of society who have a high degree of influence over the social and gender norms of their communities. There are many examples of working with leaders to challenge the acceptance of gender-based violence and promote equality at home.

Program Spotlight

Working with religious leaders in Tajikistan - During its years-long partnership with the Committee on Religious Affairs and Regulation of National Traditions, Celebrations, and Ceremonies (CoRA), UNFPA successfully enabled Muslim religious leaders (MRL) to communicate important information on HIV, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) to their constituents. Further, the inclusion of SRH-related themes into Friday prayers (which are attended by men only) throughout the country as well

as the broadcasting of radio and TV programs, strengthened the awareness of most conservative groups in Tajikistan as to the prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI).

Program Spotlight

Working with religious leaders in Kazakhstan - Recognizing the capacity of religious organizations in identifying and supporting health and other needs of people as well as faith-based organizations' role in influencing cultural and ethical norms, UNFPA Kazakhstan has been collaborating closely with the two main religious communities of Kazakhstan since 2012, namely Sunni Islam and Orthodox Christianity (Russian Orthodox Church).

Strategically UNFPA focused on capacity building of religious leaders on how to interpret and apply data on women's health, sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence, and ways to disseminate accurate religious messages to their followers regarding both clinical evidence and religious doctrine. To enhance the scale of awareness raising and counselling services of faith leaders UNFPA also worked closely with the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (or 'DUMK' in Russian) and the Russian Orthodox Church in Kazakhstan on development informational materials on issues of maternal and reproductive health protection, including family planning, prevention of STI and HIV transmission, combating gender-based violence and harmful practices; dissemination of informative materials on the above issues; development of specific sermon messages to be read during Friday prayers or Sunday liturgies on GBV and child marriage prevention (delivered throughout Kazakhstan during the 16 days of activism against GBV); as well as organization a series of events – including workshops, seminars and press conferences to address specific topics and reach an agreement on ways to continue strengthening the partnership and addressing emerging issues for the promotion of health and wellbeing of their followers and congregations.

- ✓ **Conduct learning exchange visits among policymakers in the Central Asia region to acquire new ideas on engaging men and boys.** Such events can spark new ideas and innovations in replicating best practices in one's own setting.

As Individuals

- ✓ **Engage grandfathers and other family elders in inter-generational gender-transformative approaches such as community-based group education.** As grandparents, older generations have the potential to shift mindsets and promote equality at home. For example, conducting group education with fathers and couples would also be an opportunity to invite other influential family members to engage in dialogue.

OTHER CRITICAL STRATEGIES

- ✓ **Work in partnership with civil society and social entrepreneurs to build their capacity on tools and resources for men and masculinities.** Movements to engage men and boys always work best when they are as inclusive as possible. This includes supporting local civil society organizations by building their men's engagement capacities, connecting them with more well-experienced organizations in other settings, and providing ongoing opportunities for learning and development.
- ✓ **Get connected with regional and global networks on engaging men, such as the MenEngage Alliance.** The MenEngage Alliance comprises hundreds of civil society and institutions working to engage men in gender equality worldwide. Learning from this long-standing network and supporting organizations to develop specific regionally-focused networks will be important.
- ✓ **Across all new interventions engaging men and boys, conduct monitoring and evaluation to document program implementation and outcome experience.** This is both a gap and an avenue of great potential for Spotlight countries to test innovative approaches, informed by evidence, in their diverse contexts and share what they learn with other countries in the region.