



A2 ACTIVITIES TO REVEAL HIDDEN ISSUES

Exploring gender roles and power



Why use this activity?

To help a group to see that communities often value men more than women, and that such attitudes harm both men and women. The activity uses the Bible to show that men and women are equal before God, and helps a group to imagine what family and community life based on this truth might look like.

This activity is intended to be used as part of a wider process or project, and not as a stand-alone tool without any follow-up. VAWG is a deeply sensitive and difficult area to work on, where harm can easily be caused if approached without care and wisdom. We strongly recommend that you receive training in facilitating and working on this issue, and that you work with, or are supported or mentored by, others with experience of working in this area. We also recommend you consider carry out more general gender awareness-raising activities before engaging in work on VAWG.

Along with other *Reveal* tools (please see the box at the end of this document), it will hopefully inspire communities to act to challenge and change the injustice of gender inequality. If you are specifically hoping to address violence against women and girls, we recommend that you use **Tool A2 – Why should we address VAWG? Tool A2 – Men and women: listening to one another** and **Tool A2 – What are the causes and consequences of VAWG?** before using this tool. We also recommend using the **Bible studies** on this topic, found in **Section B**.



A brief description

This activity includes two linked sessions. The first looks at how women and men are currently valued and treated within a community, with women often treated as if they have less value and worth than men. The second looks at Biblical truth about the equality of men and women and encourages a group to imagine what a community based on equality for men and women could look like.



You will need

- Large pieces of paper
- Small pieces of paper
- Pens
- A Bible
- Two facilitators – one man and one woman

Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

Health & HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene



Timeline

This activity is divided into two parts, and each part takes up to 60 minutes. You could do both parts together, with a short break in-between. Or you could arrange to do them on different days.

Preparation: guidance for a facilitator

If you are working with a community where you think violence against women and girls is an important issue to address, please read **Tool A1: Revealing inequality between men and women** and **Tool A1 – Revealing violence against women and girls** before using this activity.

This tool addresses issues of power and control within families and communities. It may challenge deeply held beliefs, and it may arouse feelings of anger, shame, guilt and fear amongst group participants. Women may find this activity painful and difficult as they start to recognise and think about years of oppression and sometimes abuse. Men may find it painful and difficult as they face initial fear or anger at the prospect of change or losing control. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't raise these issues, but that we should do so carefully and as part of a process that will have further follow-up, support and action.

Try not to go through this activity too fast. Allow everyone who wants to speak to do so and prevent one or two people dominating the discussion. You may need to suggest taking a break from the activity at certain times, and try to be aware of how people are feeling and how they are dealing with their emotions. Please see **Introductory tool: Facilitation skills** for more guidance and support on facilitating.

Please also ensure you have read the '**Common resistance reactions**' found at the end of this tool. This is a list of some of the ways that people (often men) sometimes resist acknowledging and dealing with the problem of VAWG. It also suggests ways in which to respond and deal with such resistance.

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What to do

It is very important to have two facilitators - one male and one female - for this activity. They should facilitate this exercise together, completely equal in their leadership role. The woman should carry out leadership activities in order to demonstrate that these are not only for men. The man should also carry out some leadership activities so that the message is not that men should become subservient to women, but that men and women can both be whole and strong when they are equal and share leadership.

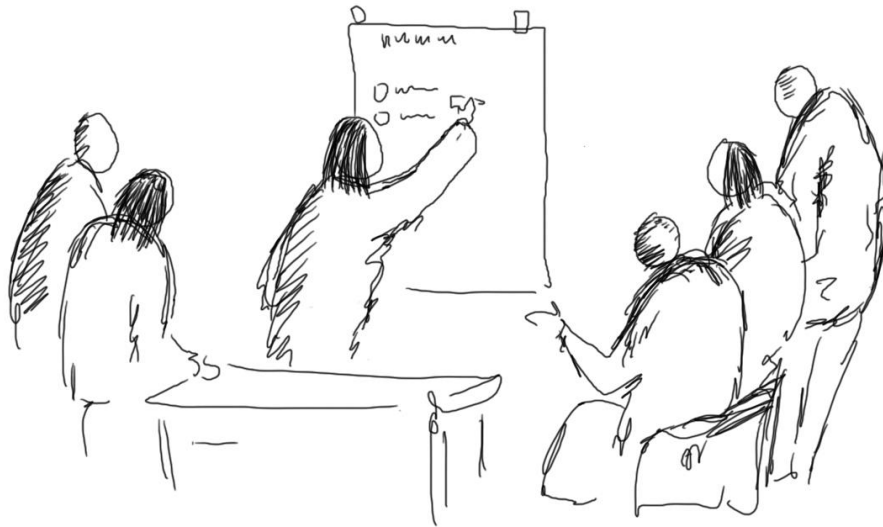
It is important that a woman facilitates the group of women, and a man facilitates the group of men. The woman must be seen to be respected and fully endorsed by the man. We suggest that, after having gained the trust and some level of relationship with the group of women, the female facilitator should invite the man to talk briefly with the women. He then has the opportunity to say that that he fully supports what the female facilitator is saying. Likewise, the male facilitator can invite the woman to say something to the men, and similarly endorse her. These endorsements will send powerful messages of how men and women are equal and can work together and share leadership.

PART 1

- Draw two boxes onto a large piece of paper and label one box 'Act like a man' and label the other, 'Act like a woman'.
- Divide your group into two smaller groups one of men, and one of women.
- Ask the men to discuss what it means to 'act like a man':
 - What types of messages are men and boys given when they are told to 'act like a man'? (*They may use examples such as be tough; don't show emotion; be a protector; be the decision-maker; be the person who disciplines; have multiple partners; don't ask for help; control your wife and children; control the finances.*)
 - From where and whom do these messages come?
- Ask the women to discuss what it means to 'act like a woman'.
 - What types of messages are women and girls given when they are told to 'act like a woman'? (*For example, they might say women cannot lead; you have to give birth to many children, if not, you are not valued; be submissive; do not speak too much; you are unable to make decisions; you are unable to control finances.*)
 - From where and whom do these messages come?
- Then ask the men to think about what it means to 'act like a woman', and ask the women what it means to 'act like a man'. Again, ask about the types of messages women and girls, men and boys are given, and from where and whom the messages come from.
- Once the groups have discussed, ask them to share some of the messages with the whole group and write these into the boxes on the large piece of paper.

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A2 EXPLORING GENDER ROLES AND POWER



- Then ask the groups to discuss the following questions:
 - How are men and boys, women and girls kept within these boxes? What words and actions are used?
 - Do these messages make women and men stronger, or are they harmful in any way?
 - What happens to the men and boys who do not conform to these messages?
 - What happens to the women and girls who do not conform to these messages?
- Ask both groups to reflect on the following questions:
 - How do women and girls feel when they experience these harmful actions and words when they do not conform or when they are forced to conform?
 - How do men and boys feel when they experience harmful actions and words when they do not conform or when they are forced to conform?

Ask the participants to share their thoughts on these questions.
- Conclude by saying this exercise helps us to see how society creates very different rules for how men and women are expected to behave. Explain that these rules are sometimes called 'gender norms' because they define what is 'normal' for men and women to think, feel and act. These rules restrict the lives of both women and men by keeping them in their 'boxes', causing harm to both women and men.

PART 2

- Have your 'gender boxes' on display so that everyone can see them.
- Remind the group about what is written in the gender boxes. Read them aloud so that everyone can hear.
- Then, ask people to form small groups of 3 or 4 people to discuss the following questions:
 - Are the things written in the boxes based on equality?
 - Do they reflect the equal value of men and women?
 - Do they show men and women as having an equal status in society?
- After a few minutes, bring discussions to a close, and explain that what is written in the boxes, and our own experience shows that men and women are often not considered equal; men are often thought to be superior to women.
- **Read Genesis 1:26 - 28**

"Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"
- Ask the small groups to discuss the following questions:
 - If God created men and women in his image, in the image of the trinity, are they equal?
 - Did God create men to be superior to women? Where did this inequality come from? (*People may misquote other verses of scripture here to try to argue that men are superior to women. It is important that such arguments are shown to be false. See **Tool A1: Revealing inequality between men and women** for more information.*)
 - Is the intention of God in creation (men and women created equally and instructed to rule over creation together) reflected in the gender roles we have been discussing?

Key messages: men and women were created in the image of the trinity, equal in power and value, different in our skills and talents. We were created for companionship with God and one another.

The Bible tells us that sin separated us from God and one another. However, Jesus came to bring reconciliation and restoration to our relationship with God, and the relationship between men and women.

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- **Read Galatians 3:28:** “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
- Take a second large piece of paper and draw two boxes on it. But instead of writing ‘Act like a man’ and ‘Act like a woman’, write ‘Transformed men’ and ‘Transformed women’.
- Divide your group into two groups with a mixture of both men and women in each group.
- Ask the group to think of words and phrases we could write on the paper that would reflect the equality of men and women, as God intended.

Examples of what could be written in the ‘Transformed men’ box include: *loving their wives; treating women with love and respect; servant leadership, making decisions together with women; income generation; never forcing their wife to have sex.*

- Examples of what could be written in the ‘Transformed women’ box include: *loving their husbands; treating men with love and respect; servant leadership; making decisions together with men; income generation; able to lead, make decisions and control finances; able to choose whether they want to have children or not, and consent to sexual relations within their marriage without being forced or coerced to have sex.*
- Ask the group to reflect on what is written on the paper. Read out the following question and have a time of quiet for people to think personally about their response.
- How can we, in the way we think and act, challenge some of the unfair ways that men and women are expected to act?
- Close the session by explaining a community with transformed men and women will be a happier, more successful community, because both men and women will be given the opportunity to reach their full potential and there will a reduction of violence in the community and in homes. Communities where women have equal value and status will benefit from the wisdom, ideas, perspective and leadership of women as well as the wisdom, ideas, perspective and leadership of men.



A2 EXPLORING GENDER ROLES AND POWER

- Encourage people to continue to reflect on what they have been challenged by.
 - Let us reflect personally on our attitudes, words and actions: can we commit to change practices that are harmful?
 - Let us reflect together with our families and our church groups on the different practices that stem from gender inequality: what needs to change? How will these things change?
 - When can we take opportunities to speak out against harmful gender practices in our homes and communities?
 - How can we teach our children, young people and communities about gender equality from the creation story in Genesis?
- Explain any next steps you have planned in terms of other activities or Bible studies.



Notes

This tool is adapted from an activity written by Prabu Deepan and first published in Tearfund (2015) *Transforming Masculinities: a training manual for gender champions (draft)*



Finding out more

- *Restored*, an international Christian alliance to transform relationships and end violence against women – www.restoredrelationships.org
- *We will speak out (WWSO)*, a global coalition of Christian-based NGOs, churches and organizations, supported by an alliance of technical partners and individuals who together commit themselves to see the end of sexual violence across communities around the world <http://www.wewillspeakout.org/>
- Tearfund (2015) *Hand in hand: Bible studies to transform our response to sexual violence* http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/sexual_violence/resources_and_publications/
- Tearfund (2007) *Footsteps: Family life* http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_71-80/footsteps_72/

Related tools:

- A1 – Revealing violence against women and girls – information for facilitators [A1: Gender & sexual violence-1]
- A1 – Revealing female genital mutilation – information for facilitators [A1: Gender & sexual violence-2]
- A1 – Revealing inequality between men and women – information for facilitators [A1: Gender & sexual violence-3]
- A2 – Why should we address VAWG? [A2: Gender & sexual violence-3]
- A2 – What are the root causes of VAWG? [A2: Gender & sexual violence-4]
- A2 – Men and women: listening to one another [A2: Gender & sexual violence-6]
- B – Gender and restoring relationships (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-1]
- B – Wonderfully made (FGM/C) [B: Gender & sexual violence-2]
- B – God’s view of women (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-3]
- B – God’s view of men (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-4]
- B – Men, women and God (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-5]
- B – Men, women, love and submission (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-6]
- B – Protecting those vulnerable to sexual violence (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-7]
- B – Sexual violence in the Bible – the story of Tamar (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-8]

Common resistance reactions, and how to respond

Denial: saying that something is not true or not the problem

- “That is not an issue”
- “Violence is a normal part of any relationship”
- “This is a western cultural perception, women are OK with this”

Minimising: making something smaller or less serious than it is

- “I don’t know why women make such a big deal”
- “As a man we face violence all the time”
- Making jokes about VAWG

Justification: stating something is right or reasonable

- “The Bible says women should respect men, so when they don’t respect, it’s natural to be disciplined with violence”
- “Women need to know their place and listen to their husbands. If they don’t, you can’t blame him”
- “You can’t blame the animal for acting like one, she should have been careful.”

Victim blaming: implying that the victim is at fault for the violence that she experience.

- “Well if she had listened to her husband, this wouldn’t have happened.”
- “She asked for it by her behaviour or dress”
- “She shouldn’t have provoked him. He didn’t have a choice”

Comparing victimhood: changing the focus of the discussion by stating another group also experiences the same problem

- “Men experience violence too”
- “Both men and women are victims of violence.”
- “Women can be abusive too”

These statements are of course all true, but they should not be used to move the focus away from the problem you are discussing which is violence by men against women and girls.

Remaining silent: choosing to keep quiet in the face of an injustice or problematic act

- Not speaking up when violence occurs
- Ignoring something or pretending it didn’t happen
- Staying silent about harmful behaviour and comments by peers

Colluding: supporting harmful behaviours and attitudes

- Agreeing with any of the above responses by verbal expression or silence
- Believing or supporting excuses and justification of violence
- Laughing at harmful comments that others make

These are some of the most common forms of resistance you will witness or experience. Here are some ways you can address them.

1. Ask for clarifications

Summarise the statement or comments and identify to yourself which common

resistance reaction is being expressed. You can ask questions such as “So it sounds as if you’re saying Is that correct?” or “Thank you for sharing your opinion. Can you tell us why you feel that way?”

2. Seek an alternative opinion

Repeat the question or comment back to the group as an open question: “What do you all think about this comment or attitude?” or “To me this statement seems like ... (one of the common resistance reactions) what do you all think?”

If nobody has an alternative opinion, provide one yourself. Ensure you do so without being angry or lashing out, and emphasise the key messages that refute such behaviour or comments.

3. Connect back to the activity or process you are engaged in (if appropriate)

Remind the group of the learning so far. You could ask “How do you think people started thinking such things? Who taught us these messages? How does this idea reinforce some of the harmful behaviours we have discussed here?”

4. Offer facts that support a different point of view and emphasise a helpful perspective.

You can refer to statistics or laws to help you make your point.

5. You could offer to discuss the issue separately (one-to-one) if helpful.

Alternatively, if the participant is unwilling to acknowledge a different point of view, you can inform them that you are willing to make time to meet with them separately to discuss this, and for the sake of others you need to move on.

Please note that it is very unlikely that the participant will openly change his or her opinion after all of these steps, but by challenging their comments or behaviour, you have provided an alternative point of view. You have not only demonstrated your commitment to creating a safe space for learning, but also your accountability to women and girls by not tolerating harmful comments or behaviours.

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