



# ENGAGING MEN IN GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



A Guidance Note to Inform the Development of National Policies and Programmes Based on Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa.





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### **The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES MENA)**

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The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continues to witness progress – driven by new Government policies and civil society initiatives – in health and education indicators, and toward greater gender equality, including the advancement of women’s rights. However, as in all regions of the world, there is a long road ahead before women attain true equality with men.

This guidance note draws data and recommendations from *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa*<sup>1</sup> on the topic of ending violence against women<sup>2</sup> for the well-being of women, men, children and societies. It provides broad guidance on how civil society partners and United Nations key players in the region can design and adapt programming and influence a policy environment that promotes non-violence at home, at work and in public spaces, all with a view to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The recommendations put forward in this note are intended to serve as top-level, regional guidance, and should be further contextualized and adapted for use at the national level. This guidance note was produced in combination with three other guidance notes on the topics of gender socialization, young men and fatherhood and caregiving. When adapting the content and recommendations of this guidance note, both women and girls and men and boys should be understood as a diverse group of individuals with different experiences and varying needs, based on their gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation and ability.

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey – Middle East and North Africa (IMAGES MENA) is designed to take a holistic look at the lives of men and women in the region. The nearly 10,000-person (men and women) study undertaken by UN Women,

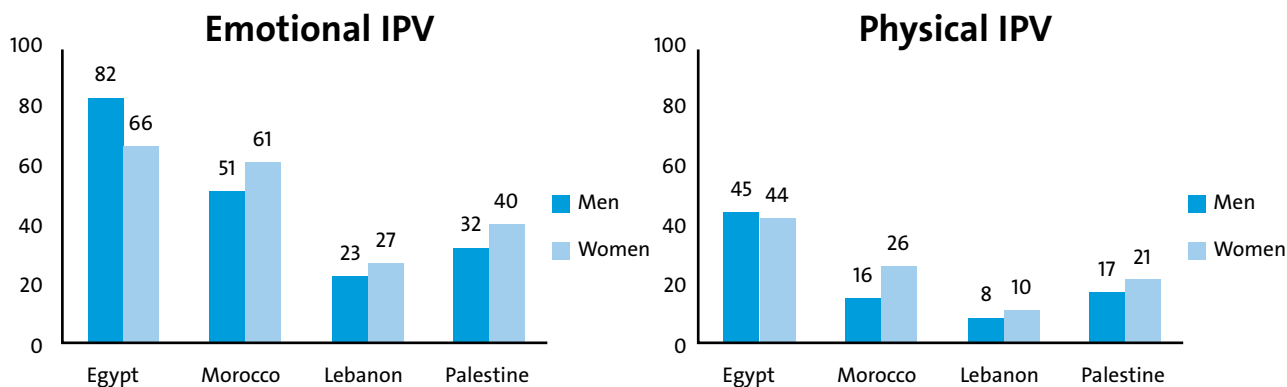
Promundo and local research partners in Egypt, Lebanon (including Syrian refugees), Morocco and Palestine investigates many of the stereotypes commonly associated with men and women in these countries, and highlights pathways to equality.

## THE STATE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA<sup>3</sup>

Men’s use of violence against women is widespread in the region, both at home and in public spaces, and it takes all forms: physical, sexual, emotional and economic. While many men describe spousal violence as a past phenomenon, pointing to women’s improved status as proof that violence being common and less acceptable, the data show otherwise. Research by the World Health Organization (WHO) has uncovered a global lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence at 30 per cent. IMAGES MENA data finds that in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine,<sup>4</sup> approximately 10 per cent to 45 per cent of ever married men reported having used physical violence against a female partner, with approximately equal numbers of women affirming they had experienced such violence. The high rates of emotional violence (for example, insults, humiliation, intimidation, threats) also adversely impact women’s lives. Between 20 per cent and 80 per cent of men reported having perpetrated some form of emotional violence against their wives. Tolerance of men’s use of intimate partner violence is widespread: for example, in Egypt, 90 per cent of men and 70 per cent of women said they believe that wives should tolerate violence to keep the family together. Across research regions, the reported rates of perpetration of intimate partner violence among ever married men age 18-59 and the number of ever married women in the age group 18-59, who report experiencing intimate partner violence, are significant, a situation reflected in Figure 1.<sup>5</sup>

## FIGURE 1: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES AND MEN'S PERPETRATION OF EMOTIONAL IPV AND PHYSICAL IPV

Percentage of ever married men reporting ever perpetrating IPV and ever married women reporting ever experiencing intimate partner violence, IMAGES MENA 2016



While the vast majority of violence against women in the region and worldwide is committed by male intimate partners, non-partner physical and sexual violence is also a problem. Commonly reported perpetrators of non-partner physical violence include fathers, other family members (male and female), teachers, co-workers and strangers. A majority of men and women in many countries believe that if a woman is raped, she should marry her rapist, although activists in many countries are challenging this belief with public awareness campaigns and legal reforms, such as the recent repeal of such laws in Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco, laws that allowed rapists to evade punishment by marrying their accusers. One of the most significant recent reforms in the region occurred in Tunisia, where the Parliament passed a [legislative package on](#) violence prevention against women in 2017.<sup>6</sup>

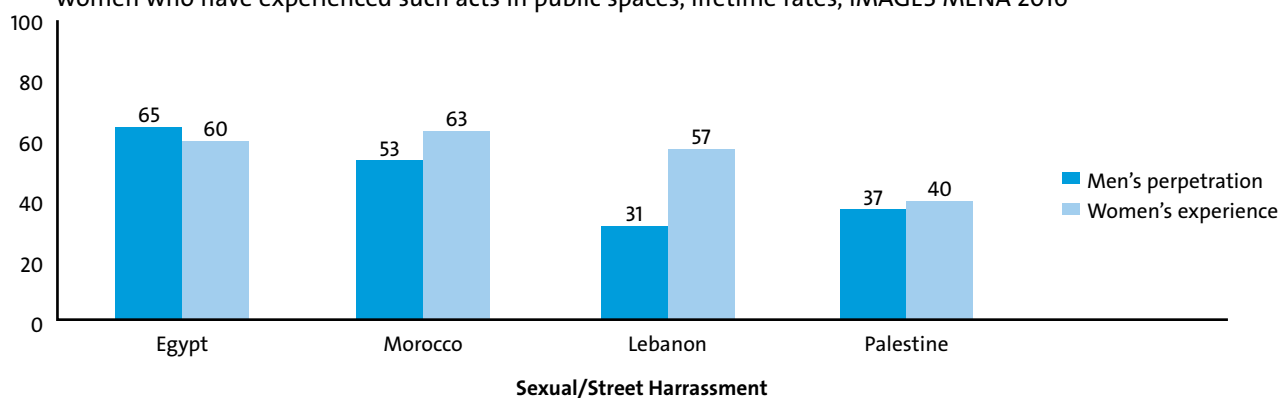
Violence against women takes different forms throughout the region, including in areas involved in IMAGES MENA research. Egypt, for example, has high rates of female genital mutilation/cutting

(FGM/C), with 92 per cent of ever-married women reporting having been circumcised, according to IMAGES MENA, and 70 per cent of men and 56 per cent of women approving of the practice (even as the most recent Demographic and Health Survey in Egypt suggests that the practice has decreased in recent years).<sup>7</sup>

Another notable form of violence against women in the region is street-based sexual harassment, including sexual comments, stalking/following, or staring/ogling. Between 31 per cent and 65 per cent of men in the region report that they have ever carried out such acts, while 40 per cent to 63 per cent of women report they have ever experienced such types of harassment.<sup>8</sup> When asked why they engage in such practices, the vast majority of men – up to 90 per cent in some countries – said they did it for fun, with two thirds to three quarters blaming women for dressing “provocatively.” Interestingly, similar percentages of women in several countries surveyed also share this view.

## FIGURE 2: WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES AND MEN’S PERPETRATION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT

Percentage of men who have committed selected acts of sexual harassment/assault against women, and women who have experienced such acts in public spaces, lifetime rates, IMAGES MENA 2016<sup>9</sup>



Violence by men against women tends to increase in times of humanitarian crises, including in conflict and war.<sup>10</sup> As noted in the Beijing Platform for Action, “While entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex.”<sup>11</sup> As such, programmers and donors must account for the impacts of active conflicts in the region on women’s risk of exposure to multiple forms of violence.

The roots of violence against women in the MENA region, as in other parts of the world, are complex. Notable root causes of violence include women’s limited power and mobility, widely held attitudes that justify violence and exposure to violence in childhood. In all four countries surveyed in IMAGES MENA, half to three quarters of the men reported having experienced physical violence in their homes growing up, and two thirds or more reported having experienced physical violence by teachers or peers in school. In 2015, researchers found that 80 per cent of children in select MENA sites were subject to corporal punishment at home.<sup>12</sup><sup>13</sup> In all four IMAGES MENA countries, as seen in other regions of the world,<sup>14</sup> men who witnessed their fathers using violence against their mothers, and men who experienced some form of violence at home as children, were significantly more likely to report perpetrating intimate partner violence in their adult relationships.

## PROGRAMMATIC GUIDANCE: PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Realizing a meaningful reduction in the prevalence and harmful effects of violence against women is an urgent global and regional priority that can only be addressed using a broad, multilevel framework<sup>15</sup> for understanding violence against women. Programming must consider factors that contribute to violence against women at the individual, relationship, community and societal levels, and the interrelationships among these levels.<sup>16</sup> Violence against women in the MENA region and around the world can only be reduced with comprehensive and multilevel efforts in many sectors. This includes legal advocacy both to advance comprehensive legislation criminalizing all forms of violence and to assist survivors of violence in seeking some amount of justice if they choose; health and social support services to assist survivors of violence in healing after their traumatic experiences; community-based conversations and campaigns to shift attitudes that accept this violence as natural or normal; among many others. IMAGES MENA data give us new insights into women’s experiences of partner and non-partner violence in the MENA region and underscore the need for increased investment in programming across all the aforementioned levels.



## HOW CAN WE PROMOTE PROGRAMMES TO ENGAGE MEN IN PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE MENA REGION?

In recent decades, there has been undeniable progress in advancing women's political, social and economic rights in the MENA region, including with new legislation criminalizing various forms of violence against women. By and large, constitutions and legislative frameworks across the region call for equality between women and men and aim to protect women's rights so that they can live a life free of violence. Such legislative protections are a necessary but insufficient step to eliminating violence against women in the region, and significant other gaps remain. Even in the current legal context, restrictions remain, as reflected in certain countries' reservations to CEDAW based on conservative interpretations of shari'a.<sup>17</sup> In addition to improved implementation of laws that guarantee women's right to live free from violence, the best programmes to prevent and respond to violence against women in the MENA region should consider the following guidelines:

- **One-off campaign, short-term initiatives and limited reach programmes are likely not enough to fundamentally address such a pervasive problem; instead, develop mutually reinforcing programme components at the individual, institutional and community levels.** The roots of violence against women are as complex as its harmful effects. This is not a problem that can be addressed by simple solutions, yet many programmes globally are designed and implemented as if this were the case. International evidence shows that a simple one-off community campaign or other short-term, isolated programme approach to address the issue of violence against women is insufficient.<sup>18</sup> Programmes should employ multiple methods, work with multiple stakeholder groups, address as many of the underlying risk factors for violence as possible and do so across localities. A group education programme, for instance, should provide referral services to counselling and psychosocial support services, and if possibly create or collaborate with public campaigns against violence. This kind of approach addresses the individual, relationship and social levels simultaneously. The costs of such an approach are significant, urging programmers and

donors alike to work in coordinated ways, seeing their individual organization's work as part of a larger, aligned movement to address violence. When it is impossible to lead multiple programme components as one single organization, it is important to assess and understand which contributions to the field are most needed in a given location. For example, the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence -- a partnership with UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund, WHO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime -- identifies the essential services to be provided by the health, social services, police and justice sectors, and the guidelines for the coordination of essential services and the governance of coordination processes and mechanisms. Service delivery guidelines for the core elements of each essential service are identified to ensure the execution of high-quality services and the effectiveness of a comprehensive and multisectoral approach.

### BOX 1

#### A "SELF-ASSESSMENT" TOOL FOR PROGRAMMES ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Often, practitioners are caught up in the urgency of action to address violence against women. Opportunities to reflect on the design of their projects, to learn from the experiences of other innovators, or to set goals for growth and evolution are rare. At times, even the best intentioned efforts, when undertaken with this urgency and little reflection, can end up being ineffective or, worse, causing harm to the very women who are most in need of support. To meet this challenge, the International Centre for Research on Women released a web-based self-assessment tool for organizations working to address violence against women. The tool aims to facilitate reflection within grassroots violence-prevention organizations, helping them identify programme strengths, opportunities for improvement and priorities for capacity-building. The tool provides a simple four-point scale rating process, using several dozen indicators drawn from

international literature on the most ethical, effective practices in addressing violence against women, with questions tailored to community mobilization, health and social support services, legal aid, advocacy, media and communications, capacity-building and partnerships. Begin your organization's self-assessment process now by visiting: <http://vaw.icrw.org>

*The self-assessment tool is not yet available in Arabic.*

- **Go beyond simply recognizing inequalities. Instead, work to directly challenge and change the harmful norms that perpetuate inequality and justify men's use of violence in the first place.** Transforming gender norms in this way can help avoid negative unintended consequences. For example, women who gain economic status may be at greater risk of intimate partner violence if underlying ideas about masculinity and income earning are not addressed with their male partners. One such gender-transformative approach, the Gender Equity Model Project in Egypt, brings together the Government, NGOs and private firms in an innovative intervention that seeks to prevent and reduce violence against women in combination with women's economic empowerment initiatives. The Project does this by understanding how men and women in the targeted communities construct gender roles and relationships, with a focus on religious and social misconceptions that promote the justification of inter-spousal violence.<sup>19</sup>
- **Programmes must keep women's rights and women's safety at the centre of their work and maintain movement solidarity and accountability when engaging men.** Activists, practitioners and policymakers around the world recognize the importance of engaging men and boys in efforts to prevent violence against women, and to promote broader gender equality. To leave men out of this equation can be tantamount to burdening women and girls with the task of ending global epidemics that occur on a wide scale in the form of men's actions. Leaving men out of the violence prevention movement also underutilizes the positive potential influence of the many men – the majority, in most cases – who reject violence against women. However,

“engaging men and boys” must never be an end unto itself. Any thoughtful approaches for bringing more men and boys into gender equality work are nullified when such programmes begin to replicate the very gender injustices they need to be reversing, for instance, giving disproportionate space to men's voices, opinions and leadership while side-lining women's. This is still too often the case. A recent literature review reported that two thirds of global programmes working with men and boys on gender-related objectives made no outreach or effort to prioritize their activities based on needs expressed by women or girls.<sup>20</sup> Programmes that work with men and boys to prevent and address violence against women must align themselves with women's priorities and leadership, and never falter in their accountability to the women's movement.

## BOX 2

### THE MENENGAGE ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLKIT

The MenEngage Alliance, a global network of 700 civil society organizations working with men and boys to advance gender justice, has released a toolkit to support member organizations in ensuring that at every stage, every component of their work is aligned with principles of solidarity with and accountability to women's rights organizations and movements in their localities. The MenEngage Accountability guidelines and toolkit can help any programme with men and boys in the MENA region to ensure that their work supports local women-led efforts.

Accountability Standards and Guidelines:  
[http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/MenEngage\\_Accountability-Standards-and-Guidelines.pdf](http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/MenEngage_Accountability-Standards-and-Guidelines.pdf)

Accountability Training Toolkit:  
<http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/MenEngage-Accountability-Toolkit.pdf>

The accountability guidelines and toolkits are not yet available in Arabic.

- **Focus on the community to help avoid counterproductive notions of men versus women.** Even in highly restrictive and patriarchal settings, men and women do not live in isolation from one another, although programme and policy documents can sometimes imply as much. Rather, men and women live in community with one another, with their roles and responsibilities defined in relation to one another, not in isolation. As such, some violence prevention programme models have found effectiveness by engaging whole communities and using messages about community well-being as opposed to gender-specific target groups and messages.
- **Take an empowering, aspirational approach.** Men's violence against women is a violation of human rights, and it is tempting – and sometimes necessary – to take a programme approach that emphasizes the harms of this violence, or that “names and shames” high-profile perpetrators. But lessons from community work to address violence show that programme participants have a limited interest in engaging in programmes that take only a negative tone in their overall framing and messaging. The most effective programmes are ones in which participants are not seen as “beneficiaries,” but rather as fully empowered agents of their lives and futures. Posters, images and messages showing a thriving family free of violence, or a vibrant city street free from sexual harassment, are likely to be more effective, empowering and engaging than images of violence, injury and abuse intended to provoke the audience. These images can feature the voices of the many men in the MENA region who proudly shape their identity based on a rejection of all forms of violence against women.

#### BOX 3

The Cairo Safe City Programme is part of UN Women's Safe Cities Global Initiative, covering more than 20 cities. The Cairo Safe City Programme aims to prevent and reduce sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces, and has a component of male engagement.

Mohamed Nimr, a tuk-tuk driver who participated in the Safe City programme, lives

in his family home with his four sisters and his mother. “At first, I treated my mother violently in an agitated and cruel manner. However, after joining the project, I learned how to deal with women, especially my sisters and my mother. I am a tuk-tuk driver and, on the road, I now respect women who ride with me. Before, I used the street as if it belonged only to me while women did not have the right to even walk along the street. Even at home, I used to hit my younger sister and shout at her. I used to insist that my demands are met straight away, and if not, I shouted and quarrelled which created problems. Since I joined the “Safe Cities” programme, I realized that I was the cause of the problem. I was the one who didn't know how to treat others, so I mended my relations with them.”

The Programme (2011-2018) was launched with the support of the USAID, the European Union and Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, in a strong partnership with the Government of Egypt, grassroots women, NGOs, UN Women, the United Nations Human Settlement Programme, other United Nations agencies, the private sector and other partners.

#### BOX 4

#### EMPOWERING CAMPAIGN IMAGES

In line with the ABAAD – Resource Centre for Gender Equality's strategy of engaging men and boys – along with women and girls – in combatting violence against women, on 12 November 2017, ABAAD organized a march of 350 activists in Beirut to call on the authorities to increase the sentence for rape within the family. Participants wore signs reading “#WithTheIncrease,” referring to the five-year jail sentence faced by perpetrators of rape against members of their family, as per article 506 of the Lebanese Penal Code. In addition, another group of men were dressed in jail uniforms with their hands tied with a chain, symbolizing the need to expose the crime of rape against members of the family and to buttress the existing sentence.

- **Use the evidence base.** With leadership by international<sup>21</sup> and regional institutions alike, including the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), ABAAD, IMAGES research partners and others, there is a better understanding of which programme approaches and methodologies for addressing violence against women have proven most effective. Resources available on the website “What Works” (<http://www.whatworks.co.za/>) are particularly valuable in this regard.

#### BOX 5

*Leveraging media channels to address gender inequality*

**Palestine:** UN Women Palestine partnered with the NISAA Network for Media Training and Coaching to produce and broadcast seven radio drama series addressing the issue of violence against women, and how men and boys can step up to prevent violence and change social norms. Specific topics of broadcasts on NISAA FM radio included early marriage, sexual harassment, societal violence, economic challenges and masculinity. Local university students wrote the scripts with the support of UN Women and recorded the radio drama with supervision from NISAA. NISAA broadcast the series twice on their radio channels. This type of approach was novel in Palestine, and may be the first experience where radio drama series were used to address men’s use of violence against women, involving the voices of local youth in the script development and recording.

## ADVOCACY FOR ACTION: CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Supportive laws, policies and practices within schools, the health sector and the justice system are an essential component of preventing violence against women, for holding perpetrators accountable and obtaining justice and support for victims of violence. National policies in place on these

topics throughout the region should be considered when adapting the recommendations of this guidance note at the national level.

Countries across the region can rightly celebrate the triumphs of local women’s movements in obtaining ratification of domestic violence legislation in recent years. Global demographic and health surveys data show that women who live in countries with domestic violence legislation are seven per cent less likely to experience violence compared with women in countries without such laws. Furthermore, each additional year that a country has had domestic violence legislation in place is associated with a reduced prevalence of violence of about two per cent.<sup>22</sup> These reductions are meaningful and inspiring, but certainly do not represent a complete solution to the issue of violence against women in the MENA region and around the world. Regional activists must continue the effort to stop violence all the more intensely with laws on the books.

Civil society and United Nations key players can – and have – played a role in influencing policy-makers, key stakeholders and relevant audiences to advocate for policy change.<sup>23</sup> Advocacy can be conducted in many ways: through written statements, meetings, or briefings with policy-makers and decision-making bodies; by building and taking collective action with partnerships, coalitions, and alliances; or by leading targeted communications campaigns or media engagement efforts. National strategies or “plans of action” can sometimes be useful mechanisms for engendering cooperation among civil society and Government actors, and for allowing both groups to hold the other(s) accountable. As a recent CAWTAR-co-authored literature review imparts, however, “few countries [in the MENA region] have developed national policies, strategies, or plans explicitly focused on gender-based violence in all its forms, and even fewer have invested efforts to translate existing strategies into improved legislation or better programmes and services on the ground.”<sup>24</sup> Some notable exceptions cited in the same review include new laws to address FGM/C and sexual harassment in public spaces (Egypt); policies establishing centres for protection of survivors (in Palestinian Territories); and new policies in Egypt, Jordan and Morocco addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.

It is important to advocate for **gender-transformative policies**. These policies are ones which explicitly identify and address the unequal power dynamics and root causes of violence against women, actively seeking to challenge and transform existing, harmful gendered dynamics and power imbalances (see examples in the table below).

## LEVERAGING INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS: THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

There are many international mechanisms (goals, resolutions, platforms for action, among others) designed to hold National Governments accountable for advancing gender equality and preventing violence against Women globally.<sup>25</sup> Notably, all Arab countries, except Somalia and Sudan, have ratified CEDAW, adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Although the majority initially expressed reservations to some of its main provisions, upon ratification, some countries, such as Morocco, withdrew their reservations in recent years, which is an encouraging sign of progress.<sup>26,27</sup>

The SDGs<sup>28</sup> of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>29</sup> provide the opportunity for global attention to the issue of violence against women. SDG Goal 5 in particular aims to achieve gender equality by 2030. It also includes a specific target to “eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual, and other types of exploitation.”

Civil society and United Nations partners can support Governments<sup>30</sup> in reaching this goal in many ways, including by undertaking the following actions:

- Building their capacity to understand how gendered power inequalities of men and women lead to violence against women;
- Providing evidence-based best practices in programmatic approaches and policies to promote non-violent, healthy relationships, to hold perpetrators accountable and to provide justice for survivors;
- Collecting disaggregated data on both male and female attitudes and behaviours in relation to violence; and
- Building civil society partnerships to effectively implement policies, protocols and programmes to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

## POSSIBLE ENTRY POINTS AND TARGETS FOR ADVOCACY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Many examples of national policies (listed in the table below) can be advocated for, implemented and enforced to prevent violence against women. At the same time, efforts can be made to hold perpetrators accountable and provide justice and support systems for victims of violence. These examples should be adjusted thoughtfully for each particular country context.

### Areas for advocacy in the MENA region to prevent and address violence against women

Policy	Status	Recommendation
Domestic Violence Legislation	As of 2016, legislation on domestic violence is less prevalent in the Middle East and North Africa than in other regions around the world: only 4 out of 19 economies covered have enacted such laws. <sup>31</sup>  In economies which have not enacted legislation (and have not increased penalties for intra-family violence), domestic violence can still be prosecuted under general criminal laws, such as assault. However, specific domestic violence legislation addresses the unique elements of intra-family violence and incorporates mechanisms to protect and support women seeking assistance. <sup>32</sup>	Domestic violence legislation should include significant training for law enforcement personnel, contain well-enforced measures such as orders for protection, and specialized courts with the sensitivity and training to handle domestic violence cases. <sup>33</sup>

Sexual Harassment	<p>In the region, few countries have laws on sexual harassment in the workplace, and even fewer on sexual harassment in schools. In the Middle East and North Africa, 21 per cent of the economies<sup>34</sup> in the region have a law on sexual harassment in employment, 11 per cent on sexual harassment in education and 21 per cent on sexual harassment in public spaces.<sup>35</sup></p> <p>MENA is one of the top regions to have laws preventing sexual harassment in public spaces, even though, according to one report, only 1 in 5 MENA countries have such laws.<sup>36</sup> Egypt, among other countries, has recently adopted a law that criminalizes sexual harassment in employment, education and public spaces, which is a positive step.<sup>37</sup></p>	<p>Legislation should exist to hold perpetrators of sexual harassment accountable in the workplace, in schools and in public spaces, and should be implemented alongside efforts to eradicate the societal norms and messages that make this kind of behaviour seem “normal” in public and private life.</p> <p>Men hold many influential roles in the implementation of these laws and must be held accountable for their effectiveness.</p>
Rape	<p>Although rape is a crime punished by law in the region (with the exception of marital rape, which is only explicitly criminalized in one of the MENA economies – Malta – in the Women, Business and the Law data set),<sup>38</sup> there are many laws in the region that exonerate the rapist if the perpetrator is willing to marry the victim, even if the survivor is a minor. In Lebanon, advocacy recently led to the repeal of Article 522 of the Penal Code, which had allowed rapists to avoid prison by marrying their victims.</p> <p>In Egypt and Morocco, marital rape is not specifically criminalized, although IMAGES data show support from both women and men for doing so. (Women are more likely to support such a law, although the majority of men support such a law, but numerically fewer than women.)</p>	<p>Legislation should criminalize rape, including the act of marital rape, by providing that rape or sexual assault provisions apply “irrespective of the nature of the relationship” between the perpetrator and complainant, or by stating that “no marriage or other relationship shall constitute a defence to a charge of rape.”<sup>39</sup> This should be accompanied by awareness-raising campaigns and policies that provide services and protections for survivors of sexual violence.</p>
Female genital mutilation/ cutting (FGM/C),	<p>In a 2013 report by UNICEF, 8 per cent of women ages 15-49 in Iraq, 23 per cent in Yemen and 91 per cent in Egypt had undergone FGM/C.<sup>40</sup> Results from IMAGES in Egypt found that men were significantly more supportive of FGM/C than women were. Around 70 per cent of men approved of the practice, as opposed to 56 per cent of women, and men were more supportive than women of continuing the practice because of tradition, due to its status as a perceived religious obligation.<sup>41</sup> Egypt criminalized FGM/C in 2008 and revised the law in 2016, raising it from a misdemeanour with a maximum sentence of three years in prison to a felony with a penalty of 5 to 15 years in prison. Judges, doctors and officials are receiving training on how to identify, investigate and report the crime, although implementation remains difficult and inconsistent.</p>	<p>The Penal Code amendment should be accompanied by broader reforms to give legal force to elements of Egypt’s 2015 national strategy to end FGM/C. Egypt should enact legislation to guarantee funding and other resources for a comprehensive response, including prevention programmes aimed at changing societal attitudes that condone the practice. Men’s support for the continuation of FGM/C, and their involvement in the decision-making process,<sup>42</sup> points to the need for FGM/C campaigns to engage men and boys, who are frequently the decision-makers and practitioners of FGM, more effectively.</p>

Conducting successful policy advocacy means not only the adoption of gender-transformative policies to condemn violence against women and address its root

causes, but also removing the barriers to implementation and holding Governments accountable to their commitments and plans of action.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE POLICY CHANGE

Advocacy efforts that are conducted to prevent violence against women, hold perpetrators accountable and provide access to justice should be gender-transformative, while building on and being accountable to the women's rights movement. Below are some guiding principles for this work, which are intended to serve as top-level, regional guidance to be further contextualized and adapted for use at the national level.

- Complement legislative reforms on women's rights – particularly those related to violence against women – with public discussions and awareness campaigns to help men understand why such change is necessary, to actively seek to transform underlying gendered expectations and power imbalances, and to see the broad benefits of such changes.<sup>43</sup> This may include implementing and expanding campaigns inspired by UN Women's HeForShe campaign, UN Women's "Because I Am a Man" campaign, school or community-based campaigns and interventions, and by working with the media through longer-term programmes that engage social media, mobile applications, thematic television series, or posters, together with interpersonal communication activities.<sup>44</sup>
- Advocacy to engage men as partners in preventing violence against women should be conducted within a broader movement for equal rights. Engaging men in preventing this violence, holding perpetrators accountable and providing justice for survivors is not an endpoint, but an essential part of achieving greater gender equality, justice and choice for all.
- Build alliances between local women's rights NGOs already working to tackle violence against women, and those working with youth, to identify common goals and map out potential unintended consequences. This effort will add strength to advocacy efforts and will ensure the goals of the policy advocacy are shared, inclusive and accountable to the needs of key stakeholders.
- Identify, support, and hold accountable key male political leaders, both in the public sector and in civil society, and religious leaders as visible allies working together with female leaders to guide policy change and show personal leadership in setting a zero-tolerance standard for violence against women in all of its forms.
- Complement policies to prevent violence against women with provision of services for those who have experienced violence, including medical care, mental health care, legal aid and economic support, such as micro-finance, vocational training, job placement, or cash or asset transfers, such as land reform, in addition to gender equality training.<sup>45,46</sup>
- Engage men in programmes and platforms that are informed and driven by the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5 to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," and contribute towards the holistic implementation of a gender-responsive 2030 Agenda.
- Recognize the diversity of men and women (including sexual diversity, race, class, religious affiliation, employment status, among others) and address the structural barriers that have the greatest impact on certain identities. That includes those that are associated with increased risk of experiencing violence against women, such as women with disabilities, women from ethnic or racial minorities or indigenous groups.
- While using a rights-based approach, highlight the economic, social and health-related costs of violence against women, and the positive impacts of creating societies that are free from this violence, including narrating stories and presenting examples of men who have changed and highlighting voices of gender equality.
- Carry out gender-transformative awareness trainings for the largely male law enforcement personnel – police, lawyers, judges,<sup>47</sup> among others – to encourage their active implementation of laws criminalizing violence against women and their support for bringing more women into these traditionally male professions.

## CONCLUSION

Full gender equality will not be achieved in the Middle East and North Africa, nor in the world at large, until violence against women is eradicated. IMAGES MENA provides powerful evidence for action around gender-transformative programming and evidence-based advocacy to prevent violence against women. The challenge ahead lies in identifying and supporting those women and men who are active on two fronts: they are leading the way towards peaceful homes and societies, while also changing the underlying social norms that perpetuate this violence through gender-transformative policies and practices.



## END NOTES

- 1 Read the full IMAGES MENA report here: [www.imagesmena.org](http://www.imagesmena.org) In Lebanon and Palestine, samples are nationally representative. In Egypt and Morocco, specific regions of the country were selected; the samples are broadly representative of those regions.
- 2 Violence against women was defined by the United Nations as, “any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life.”
- 3 The Middle East and North Africa is a diverse region. The UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States, for example, covers 17 countries in the region. While this brief alludes to the state of violence against women more broadly in the region, many data and examples focus on Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, and Palestine.
- 4 IMAGES MENA Morocco sample is not nationally representative.
- 5 In accordance with World Health Organization ethical and safety recommendations for research on intimate partner violence, the IMAGES Lebanon research team took specific steps after finding that respondents’ reported rates of violence were lower than the evidence and expert observation suggested should be the case. IMAGES Lebanon research teams fielded a second, wholly new nationwide study, which more squarely focused on intimate partner violence and married life. Where the initial IMAGES sample produced somewhat fewer ever-married participants than expected (thus limiting the number who could speak to experiences of intimate partner violence), the second study sampled only ever-married men and women. The length of the questionnaire was significantly reduced to avoid causing fatigue among respondents; a team of experienced data collectors was given extra training on the nature and dynamics of intimate partner violence, as well as best practices for ensuring comfortable, ethical, and accurate data collection. Initial data from this second sample show much higher rates of women’s reported experiences of intimate partner violence and slightly higher rates of men’s reported perpetration. This finding suggests that the additional steps taken in the second study may have reduced some women’s reluctance to disclose violence.
- 6 UN Women (2017). Tunisia passes historic law to end violence against women and girls. Available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/8/news-tunisia-law-on-ending-violence-against-women>
- 7 Ministry of Health and Population (MoPH), El-Zanaty and Associates and ICF International. (2014). Egypt Demographic and Health Survey (Cairo and Rockville: MoHP, El-Zanaty and Associates and ICF International).
- 8 El Feki, S., Heilman, B. and Barker, G. (2017). Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa (Cairo and Washington, D.C.: UN Women and Promundo-US).
- 9 *ibid*
- 10 United Nations. (2015). A Framework To Underpin Action To Prevent Violence Against Women
- 11 United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995.
- 12 See the IMAGES MENA policy and program brief on gender socialization for more information on the effects of violence in childhood.
- 13 Know Violence in Childhood. (2017). Ending Violence in Childhood. Global Report (New Delhi)
- 14 Fleming, P. and others (2013). Engaging Men and Boys in Advancing Women’s Agency: Where We Stand and New Directions. Women’s Voice, Agency and Participation. Research series no. 1 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank).
- 15 According to the World Health Organization, “The ecological framework is based on evidence that no single factor can explain why some people or groups are at higher risk of interpersonal violence, while others are more protected from it. This framework views interpersonal violence as the outcome of interaction among many factors at four levels—the individual, the relationship, the community, and the societal.” See more here: <http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/ecology/en/>
- 16 UN Women. (2015). Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women (New York: UN Women).
- 17 A number of Arab states maintain reservations to several CEDAW provisions, among them Article 2 (on discrimination against women); Article 9 (nationality rights); Article 15 (equality in law); and Article 16 (equality in marriage and family relations).
- 18 Heise, L. (2017). What works to prevent partner violence? An evidence overview (London: Strive Research Consortium London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine).
- 19 Mohamed, R. (2017). Working with the government and private sector to promote gender equity and prevent gender-based violence (GBV) in Egypt (Cairo: Sexual Violence Research Initiative).
- 20 *Ibid*.
- 21 The Sexual Violence Research Initiative and London School of

- Hygiene and Tropical Medicine have been spearheading such efforts internationally, a point cited elsewhere in this report.
- 22** Klugman, J. and others (2014). *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank).
- 23** UNICEF defines advocacy as, "... the deliberate process, based on demonstrated evidence, to directly and indirectly influence decision-makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement actions that contribute to the fulfilment of children's and women's rights." In UNICEF (2010). *Advocacy Toolkit*. New York. Retrieved from: [https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf)
- 24** Banyan Global, International Cent for Research on Women and the Centre for Arab Women Training and Research. (2016). *Gender-Based Violence in the MENA Region: Context Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Banyan Global, ICRW CAWTAR).
- 25** These include CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), among others.
- 26** United Nations Treaty Collection. (n.d.). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (New York: United Nations Treaty Collection). Available from [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en)
- 27** Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Centre for Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR). (2014). *Women in Public Life: Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa* (Tunis: OECD and CAWTAR).
- 28** The SDG strategy is informed and guided by international standards and mechanisms, including CEDAW, which all Arab countries, except Somalia and Sudan, have ratified, although the majority have reservations to some of its main provisions; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the ICPD Programme of Action; relevant UN Security Council resolutions; the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) agreed conclusions, etc.
- 29** United Nations Sustainable Development Goals UN SDG. (n.d.). *The Sustainable Development Agenda* (World: UN SDG). Available from <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>
- 30** The High-Level Political Forum carries out regular voluntary reviews of the 2030 Agenda.
- 31** International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank. (2016). *Women, Business and the Law 2016: Getting to Equal* (Washington, D.C.).
- 32** Ibid.
- 33** Ibid.
- 34** Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, the West Bank and Gaza and Yemen.
- 35** Ibid.
- 36** Ibid.
- 37** Ibid.
- 38** Ibid.
- 39** Ibid.
- 40** United Nations Children's Fund, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change* (UNICEF, New York, 2013).
- 41** *Understanding Masculinities*.
- 42** In Egypt, IMAGES MENA found that more than 80 per cent of women and 90 per cent of men agreed that men are involved in deciding whether a daughter is circumcised.
- 43** Ibid.
- 44** United Nations. (2015). *A Framework To Underpin Action To Prevent Violence Against Women*.
- 45** Ibid.
- 46** For further details see J. Klugman, L. Hanmer, S. Twigg, T. Hasan, J. McCleary-Sills and J. Santamaria, *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2014).
- 47** In Palestine, for example, UN Women and its partners worked with judges to discuss methods, challenges and opportunities for the specialization of services, restorative justice and re-integration for survivors of violence as a way to improve women's access to justice and deter violence against women in society.



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UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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