

Theory of Change

The intervention is based on Theory of Change (ToC) that presents the causal links between the intervention and its anticipated outcomes. The outcomes are divided between three pillars: knowledge, awareness, and actions. It also includes risks and accountability measures that the implementers have to be aware of.

The ToC starts with *Reflective and knowledge-based discussion groups engage men in conversations about risk reduction and supporting survivors*. The guided discussions are based on the curriculum content and cover constructions of masculinity; root cause of violence, understanding of violence as a choice, various stressors as contributing factors in the emergency setting; power relations and the benefits of their transformation; and three forms of VAWG: CEFM, intimate partner violence, and rape. Links between these three forms of violence are also explored and examined.

As a result of the curriculum delivery, several **knowledge, awareness, and action** outcomes are anticipated, as in the chart above. Through these expected changes, the ToC leads to the effect of: *The risk of male violence against women and girls is reduced and men's support for survivors is increased*. It is anticipated that the participants, following the completion of the curriculum, will hold themselves accountable and choose not to use violence against women and girls. It is also anticipated that they will be able to identify such acts; and will become equipped with skills to speak up against others' acts of violence. Thus the intervention can contribute to reduction in violence risk not only in the participants' lives, but also in their communities.

The ToC lists a number of **risks** that the intervention faces. The specific risks will depend on the context, but they need to be taken into consideration and mitigated. One risk that comes with gender transformative programming that works on sensitive issues of gender equality, is resistance or backlash from the community. The issues discussed throughout the curriculum are considered traditional by some, and the intervention can be perceived as challenging or questioning them. To mitigate this risk, it is necessary to conduct thorough consultations prior to the intervention roll out. It can help to speak with the community and religious leaders and clarify that the curriculum does not aim to undermine given culture or tradition, but is instead focused on making all the community members safe from harm. Framing the intervention as such is likely to gain support and prevent potential backlash. These consultations also mitigate another risk: lack of support of religious / community leaders. If they are consulted and involved, it is less likely that they will undermine the intervention.

Another risk that, being external, is harder to mitigate, is a possibility of instability in the region, forcing the participants to relocate and unable to complete it. The curriculum builds from a foundation based on the discussions of power and privilege and constructions of masculinity, and in its second module it starts discussing the specific forms of VAWG. Further down the line the participants explore the notions of accountability. The country programs monitor the security situation in their areas as a part of security monitoring so they can identify such risk, but it can be difficult or impossible to mitigate.

Another risk is insufficient time of the intervention to significantly change social norms related to VAWG. Evidence suggests that one year long or longer timeframes are required for a sustained norms change. The curriculum is 10 weeks long. It can be thus seen as a step in a longer and non linear process of norms shift and as a contributing factor to reducing the risk of violence.

Additional risk is that changes in individual participants do not translate to sustainable wider social change. The curriculum addresses this risk by equipping the participants with skills and tools to hold violence perpetrators to account and promote more gender equitable attitudes. The actual wider social change will also depend though on external factors, such as: the presence and quality of the complementary women empowerment programs in the area; the baseline presence of harmful social norms; the prevalence of VAWG in the community and its acceptance; the support of the community gatekeepers of the violence prevention efforts.

Another risk has to do with a causal assumption in the structure of the ToC. The assumption is that changes in knowledge and awareness will lead to actions. The risk is that that shift will not necessarily translate to behavior change. While the curriculum equips the participants in tools for behavior change, such as communication skills, substantial attitude change depends on a number of factors, e.g. social norms, support in the community, and others.

As the package is a global tool, it needs to be adapted to local contexts, and these will vary greatly. There is a risk of insufficient adaptation which would result in content that is not relatable for the participants to engage with. This, in turn, would mean that the effectiveness of the intervention would be compromised and the changes in awareness, beliefs and attitudes, and actions, would not necessarily occur as anticipated.

There is also a risk that men do not participate or do not complete the curriculum. This could be a result of e.g. poor content, insufficient engagement, personal resistance, high attachment to patriarchal norms and values.

Lastly, there is a risk that the intervention is used as a “stand-alone” intervention and not part of a multi-sectoral response that included services and support for survivors. The package, which is about **reducing risk and supporting survivors**, is intended to be a part of a wider multi-sectoral GBV program that includes working with women and girls, and other community members.

The last section of the ToC lists **accountability measures** that the country programs should adopt prior and during the intervention. First, it is necessary to conduct consultations with women and girls before the curriculum delivery, to identify their contextual needs and priorities in the area of violence prevention and male engagement. These dialogues should inform the curriculum, and ensure that it reflects women’s and girls’ voices and perspectives.

To identify unintended consequences, the country programs should have established and accessible communication channels for women and girls to provide feedback. It is important that women and girls in the community are made aware of these channels, that they allow confidentiality, and that information gathered through them is analyzed and used to strengthen the intervention and mitigate risks for women and girls.

If in a given context there are existing or emerging VAWG response and women’s empowerment programs, the intervention team should establish links with them. This will be an additional measure to ensure that their perspectives are prioritized and the intervention remains accountable to them. These links should serve as a platform for dialogues and consultations on the intervention approach, its effectiveness, and can inform how allyship is defined by women and girls in a given context.

Another important accountability measure is that the participants commit to not using violence over the course of the intervention. This will be communicated to the group members during recruitment and included in participants’ agreements. Should a participant disclose the use of violence, or information of a violent act by a participant is received by the program team, the facilitators should

Speak with such person, remind them of the focus of the intervention and of their commitment not to use violence. They can also provide referral to the person who experienced violence, if it is safe and feasible to do so. If the incident is repeated by the same participant, his breach of his commitment leads to his expulsion from the group.