V4C Strategy for Engaging Boys and men

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AGW</td>
<td>Gender Equality and Women Empowerment</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<td>GEWE</td>
<td>Gender Equality and Women Empowerment</td>
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<td>VAPP</td>
<td>Violence Against Persons Bill (VAPP Bill)</td>
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<td>V4C</td>
<td>Voices for change</td>
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Section 1: Background

What is the V4C approach to engaging boys and men, and why is this important?

Voices for Change (V4C) sees working with key influencers including boys and men as an essential part of social transformation. Boys and men are crucial allies to have at every level; as fathers, husbands and brothers promoting GEWE within the household; as religious, traditional and political leaders within the community; as the majority of decision-makers in formal institutions; and as friends, peers and partners at school, in university, in the workplace, and in AGW’s social circles. Working with boys and men is important for at least 3 key reasons;

- Men are the primary gatekeepers, whether in the legal framework; religious institutions; decision making on national, state and local resource allocation on health and education; policies and practice concerning crimes against women; deciding what makes the news and how news stories are written; writing advertisements; and writing and directing films; men have disproportionate power to either block or encourage change.

- Inequality in the household means that the power and potential of girls and women is constantly limited. It means that violence against women remains widely practiced and accepted; educational, health and work choices can be limited by their husband, brother or father.

- Gender inequality in educational and work environment means that girls and women not only face huge barriers for advancement but often multiple forms of sexual harassment. Engaging teachers, students, managers, co-workers, increase our chances these inequalities will be addressed.

Thus, V4C’s approach to engaging boys and men targets a range of actors, including opinion leaders and gatekeepers (e.g. religious, traditional and political leaders), but also younger boys and men, in tertiary institutions, in existing networks and peer groups, and through media campaigns. This outreach will bear in mind that in every community there are different, nuanced understandings of masculinity and femininity, gender roles, and the desired balance of power between men and women. Thus, these national campaigns will need to be grounded in a range of local realities.

V4C will capitalise upon the powerful influence of group identity and human desire to conform to standards of a peer group as a strategy to motivate positive outcomes. The social change approach will transform existing negative and discriminatory social norms amongst men, boys and other key influencers by creating a perception of gender equality and women's empowerment as the ‘new norm’.

A critical mass of supporters will be generated through a combination of web based dialogue, peer to peer support groups, networks of boys and men campaigning for change and individual champions publicly committing to and promoting the perception of the new norm. Online and face-to-face peer support groups will facilitate the development of a ‘community’ of boys and men sharing similar positive beliefs towards women and girls, their experiences of personal transformation informing targeted macro level mass communication messaging through the V4C brand platform.

The Strategy for working with men and boys forms part of Output 3 in the V4C programme – working with key influencers, including men and boys, and Religious and Traditional Leaders. Our understanding of the role of this work in contributing to results is as follows:
Voices for Change Programme

- If work is carried out to change the attitudes of young men and boys;
- And influential leaders and media personalities speak out on gender issues;
- And men’s networks are supported to challenge gender-based discrimination

This will result in:

- An acceleration of attitude and behaviour change among Nigerian citizens on issues of violence against women, decision-making and leadership;
- The removal of cultural and attitudinal barriers which exclude and marginalise women and girls;
- And a strengthened enabling environment for women’s empowerment.

Key risks which may affect this strategy include:

- Work with boys and men may create a backlash against AGW;
- Targeted influencers may lose relevance among men and boys;
- Media personalities selected to promote V4C messages may engage in behaviour which calls into question their commitment to gender equality.

V4C will monitor these risks and act quickly to mitigate them if there is evidence that they are affecting the project.

Section 2: Contribution of Working with Men and Boys to Social Norm and Behavioural Change

Voices for Change is geared towards social norm and behaviour change related to discriminatory gender norms influencing violence against women and girls and their role in leadership and decision-making. Success factors for changing these norms and behaviours have been identified and programmatic measures to cultivate these have been identified. The following table indicates what these are for working with men and boys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Awareness factors [note that community is not necessarily geographical; it could be a workplace, educational institution, or a virtual community]</th>
<th>Success Factor</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
<th>Measures</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Individual attitudes need to change; new information can help drive this</td>
<td>This a necessary but not sufficient factor to shift social norms</td>
<td>V4C will identify new information to present to men, to support gender equality. This will serve to change their attitudes, and support them in influencing others and campaigning for social change.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Individuals need to know that others in the community are ready to change</td>
<td>Social norms concern beliefs about what other people do and expect</td>
<td>The work among men, boys and influencers will be co-ordinated with the work among women and girls. This is so the girls know that the men’s attitudes have changed so they don’t limit themselves based on negative expectations/ social norms which may have changed. Public commitment of influential figures (Religious, Traditional and Political Leaders) will help reach a tipping point more quickly. V4C will develop a publicity campaign to promote awareness of men who are already living the new norms.</td>
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<td>3. Public debate and deliberation are needed</td>
<td>Social norms need public</td>
<td>Relationships with existing men’s networks and groups will offer these public forums.</td>
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required
debate, so everyone can agree to change together
Public commitment from the influencers will help to raise the profile of gender equality and prompt discussion.

4. Communities need to change together
Shifts in social norms are harder for individuals than for groups
V4C will explore the possibility of public commitments via men’s groups, networks and online communities.

**Publicising the change**

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<tr>
<td>5. Positive deviants/role models need to be publicised</td>
<td>Examples of communities which have changed can promote new norms</td>
<td>V4C will identify positive role models, as these may have more influence than direct messaging. We will be able to work through these individuals and also learn from them regarding the drivers of change.</td>
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<td>6. The benefits of the new behaviour should be demonstrated</td>
<td>People need to feel they will gain something from shifting to the new norm</td>
<td>V4C will identify compelling positive messages to prompt men to re-consider their views and support gender equality. Messages which are supported by religious/cultural traditions may be more effective.</td>
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<td>7. Influential people/early adopters can spread the new norm through organised diffusion</td>
<td>Behaviour change can occur quickly when a critical mass/tipping point is reached</td>
<td>V4C will identify early adopters of the new behaviours from existing men’s networks. Opportunities will be created for these opinion leaders to gain profile and promote new norms. Brand ambassadors will fulfil this function within educational institutions where the Safe Spaces are taking place. V4C will develop a strategy to encourage the boys and men we work with, to influence their families and real-world and online communities – “organised diffusion.”</td>
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**Reinforcing new behaviours and norms**

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<tr>
<td>8. Opportunities to behaviour in line with the new norm should be highlighted</td>
<td>New behaviours need to be practiced to become normal</td>
<td>V4C needs to develop an approach to signposting men to opportunities to behave in line with the new norms. This may involve other organisations or programmes.</td>
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<td>9. A new set of sanctions and rewards needs to be created to reinforce the new norm</td>
<td>People may slip back to old behaviours without rewards and sanctions</td>
<td>We will create support for new behaviours from influential and respected community figures. This will create social approval for those who behave in line with the new norms, and disapproval for those who continue with old, harmful practices.</td>
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Section 3: Guiding principles of the boys and men strategy

The guiding principle for work with boys and men is working to challenge gender inequality and violence against women and girls while at the same time help boys and men find personal and society wide ways to support gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. To do so requires reaching out to men with a combination of clear challenges to harmful behaviour, but with positive messages that, where possible, draw on traditional and religious beliefs.

Work with boys and men must reinforce the overall goal of creating the enabling environment for empowering women and girls. That is, the primary purpose of engaging boys and men is to mainstream support for gender equality among men and male dominated institutions.

Programme initiatives should be at the fulcrum of men's inequitable relationships with women and men's self-definition of manhood:

- and where we think men will be most open to engagement;
- and have a high potential for sustainability and control;
- and can be entered in diverse and culturally sensitive ways;
- and that do not stand alone but reinforce one another;

Relevance and Local ownership

For this work with boys and men in postsecondary and tertiary institutions to have any traction, V4C will need to find the soft spots, the areas which pull a diverse range of men, which make feel compelled to act. This might mean engaging boys and men as brand ambassadors within the institutions, as fathers or as brothers, linking the messaging into religious teachings, or using locally-relevant gatekeepers. This will require V4C to be able to act locally, with a diverse range of approaches, language and messaging, while also linking this all into national campaigns and macro-level issues that can be accessed by wider audiences. This local ownership, paired with national visibility, is the key to sustainability (see next section, below, for the wider view on sustainability).

For example, we envisage that a locally-relevant way to engage boys and men will be through discussions and dialogues within the virtual web-based platforms and physical peer to peer discussions on their roles/identities as older boys and men as this is an effective and positive way to draw men into a discussion about gender norms and their roles as men, to shift these norms and gender relations in the household, and to impact on how the next generation of boys and girls are raised (see, for example, positive media campaigns like You Are My Father).

Moreover, V4C is aware that in order for boys and men to become properly engaged, these areas of engagement (i.e. networks, peer groups, virtual discussion spaces) will need to be inclusive and respectful. Most issues discussed will be highly-sensitive, as men explore issues facing the AGW in their lives, as well as their own masculinity and gendered identity. It is likely that in these discussions men will have to confront and come to terms with their own actions, the actions of other men they know, and experiences of AGW they know. This can be difficult and even traumatic, so these will need to be safe, open, non-judgemental environments, with the necessary support mechanisms in place.
**Sustainability / working with a 20-year vision**

Working with boys and men is a good example of V4C's 'twenty-year vision' approach to social transformation. While V4C does hope that we will see changes in key influencers' attitudes towards AGW during the life of the programme, some of the fruits of these labours are longer-term and will not be reaped until these adolescent boys and younger men grow into positions of leadership and influence—both within and outside of the household.

Most importantly, sustainability hinges on V4C's ability to work with boys and men at three levels: at the micro level to ground its wider societal change strategies by supporting 12,000 boys and men in virtual and physical spaces to explore their own perceptions of masculinity and at the meso level to build and grow networks of boys and men fighting for GEWE; and at the macro level, where we can make progress towards structural and institutional changes in laws, regulations, customs, and the organisations dominated by men. Such progress ranges from changes in health-care providers’ attitudes to the role of fathers, to ideas about women within different religious traditions, to the national legal framework. Five years of a V4C programme will not change all these things, but the interventions aimed at boys and men should have an impact in creating conversation and movement in all these areas and beyond.

**Section 4: Opportunities and challenges**

**Opportunities**

There is the opportunity to work with existing men's peer groups, networks, and GEWE champions, who are already active players in advocacy for GEWE legislation. Some of these activists and CSOs have already been identified during V4C inception research, but further mapping and relationship building will be necessary prior to implementation.

Moreover, V4C can also learn from successful national and international campaigns to engage boys and men around GEWE elsewhere. These international players include the Sonke Gender Justice Network (see their One Man Can programme); Instituto Promundo's Program M and the White Ribbon Campaign. V4C has already begun to build relationships with these actors, for example commissioning technical assistance from the Sonke Gender Justice Network and the White Ribbon Campaign to inform programme design.

**Challenges**

One of the key challenges will be to convince boys and men that this is an agenda with which they should want to engage. V4C will need to both find the right issues, with local traction, that will pull these men in, whilst helping them learn to challenge abuse, sexism, violence, helping them to become good fathers.

It will also be challenging, though it is important, to convince boys and men that GEWE is not just a women’s issue, but is a society-wide issue, that these efforts will not only benefit women, but that everyone benefits from a more equitable society. If successful, this should motivate more boys and men to engage.

Moreover, it will be challenging to find common ground and establish partnerships with diverse—and often conservative—institutional. As above, to engage religious and traditional leaders, and other institutions, V4C will need to make sure campaigns are around approachable issues, and that these men are engaged in ways that make sense to them, and draw on their identities as fathers, etc.
Section 5: Main stakeholders and potential partners

Main stakeholders:
- The key stakeholders are: boys and men in tertiary education, and the AGW with which they will engage (see Output 1 Plan and the Virtual and physical Safe Spaces and Building networks and campaigning to promote 'new norms' around GEWE); existing Nigerian and international men's networks; existing CSOs and male gender advocates working on GEWE issues in Nigeria; and male religious, traditional and other leaders, including both those who are already GEWE champions, and those who can be become champions.

Potential Partners
As noted in the Safe Spaces, V4C will need to engage with partners to deliver its virtual safe spaces and peer group work in the physical space. Here, V4C will need to, prior to implementation, map the landscape of work with boys and men on GEWE, to know the full range of organisations doing this work, at all levels. This will include looking at expected organisations, but also at local religious networks and institutions, among professional men, within universities, etc. Regarding shared infrastructure, V4C will want to make the most of existing platforms and networks, where they exist. So, as outlined in the Safe Spaces strategy, V4C will, prior to implementation, engage with existing virtual platforms to see which will be most appropriate as virtual discussion platforms, and as campaigning media. However, this will certainly need to be gender-sensitive. For example, we already know that the majority of Every1 Mobile's discussion participants are female, so will need to investigate whether a different platform might be more suitable for boys and men.

Section 6: Expected V4C results in this area
V4C aims to reach 12,000 boys and men and 4,000 leaders, resulting in key influencers' improved attitudes to AGW. However, this is not the end goal. These boys and men (brand ambassadors) will influence their peers, professional networks, local communities, and families as well, resulting in long-term, sustainable transformative change.

Moreover, working with boys and men, while situated under Output 3, is a cross-cutting strategy. The work with young men in tertiary institutions will happen in parallel to, with some interaction with, Output 1, and provides a space for both genders to come together to discuss key issues in virtually and in physical safe spaces. Moreover, this work will be well integrated into the Output 2 Communications, making sure that ambassadors, allies recruited through Output 3 feature in Output 2 campaigns, for example; male champions will be specifically sought out as mentors, champions and role models within tertiary institutions, political institutions within Output 4; and there will likely be research work on boys and men' engagement under Output 5, as they are a crucial, yet under-researched, component of the enabling environment.

Preferred target groups and approaches to deliver results
Target groups
V4C will seek to work with a range of boys and men 16-25 within tertiary institutions. V4C recognises that gatekeepers, opinion leaders and decision-makers are overwhelmingly male, so will seek to bring on board existing and new GEWE champions from within these ranks.
In addition to these leaders, V4C will work with boys and men in tertiary institutions (as tomorrow’s leaders, and tomorrow’s fathers).

**Preferred Approaches**

In accordance with the above principles, the V4C work with boys and men will stand upon three pillars

1. Changing attitudes and perceptions of 12,000 men and boys through virtual and physical spaces
2. Recruitment of 4,000 key influencers, to publicly commit to support selected GEWE issues
3. Building networks and campaigning with men and boys to promote the 'new norms' around GEWE.

(1) Changing attitudes and perceptions of 12,000 men and boys through virtual and physical spaces

One of the key areas of V4C’s work with boys and men is with adolescent boys and young men through virtual and physical spaces as this will allow us to engage with the next generation of Nigerian adult men—not only the leaders of tomorrow, but also the fathers and husbands of tomorrow. Focusing on adolescent boys and young men allows V4C to reach men when conscious masculine identities have been partially formed, but are still malleable, and when they are first developing relationships with young women. This work will take place primarily via young men in tertiary institutions, bringing them together into peer groups both on- and off-line, and bringing them together with their female peers to discuss these issues. Through media campaigns, younger boys, and young men not in tertiary education can be targeted. This work would likely include bringing in technical assistance from international men’s networks, like the Sonke Gender Justice Network, Promundo and others as outlined above. This will be achieved through:

- Creating physical safe spaces and dialogue through flexible, but ideally, multi week activity programmes for adolescent boys and men, initially within tertiary institutions but with the opportunity to expand to secondary schools. This education and action will be broadly focused covering; what is a man, healthy relationships, violence against women and girls, HIV/AIDS, drinking, good communication and conflict resolution (both conflict with women in relationships and conflict among men)
- Through branded virtual platform; complementing the physical safe spaces will be a virtual platform with a look and feel that appeals to young men in tertiary institutions. The platform will host discussion groups, forums and other interactive activities such as fun quizzes and polls promoting self-reflection.
- Recruiting brand ambassadors to promote the agenda being discussed on the physical and virtual platforms. They will be inspiring, credible, principled and courageous students who exemplify the values promoted by V4C. Young men who already have the ability to influence their peers, and networks. They will act as catalysts, triggering and intensifying change, both on and off campus. Adopting a phased approach, these ambassadors can work as mentors with adolescent boys in secondary schools near to campus, promoting similar change.
- Young men outside of the education system will be reached through the V4C brand platform; radio show; visible campaigns within the state targeting popular areas and pastimes of young men; football etc.
(2) Recruitment of 4,000 key influencers, to publicly commit to support selected GEWE issues

Develop a model for both physical and virtual peer groups for adolescent men and boys (16-25) in post-secondary and tertiary education to discuss on a range of parenting, relationships and sexual health issues is the single most effective and positive way to draw adult men into a discussion about their roles as men and their relationships with women, and how the next generation of girls and boys are raised.

The work with men will include;

- Similar to output 1, the virtual platform that will operate with several layers—some open to the public, some password protected. A specific site will be devoted to boys and men with an area for them to come together with AGW in a mixed-gender forum. This virtual platform will be linked into the most relevant social media, and these social media will be used as a marketing tool for the website, as well as an additional layer to the virtual platform—yet another forum for discussion and facilitated peer to peer groups, drawn from existing fora where men regularly meet to for discussion; religious fora; age/ethnic group meetings, trade union or associations of workers, existing sexual health programmes etc. The issues for exploration will broadly cover; what is a man, healthy relationships, violence against women and girls, HIV/AIDS, drinking, good communication and conflict resolution (both conflict with women in relationships and conflict among men)

- Key to this multiplier strategy will be to identify existing groups within post-secondary and tertiary education that have a strong and regular membership, integrate discussions of masculinity, relationships and caregiving. V4C will train the facilitators, brand ambassadors or influencers within these institutions that can reach out to a number of groups and their peers who will be recruited to both ground and amplify the messages promoted by the V4C brand identity.

- This will be supported by positive media campaigns (You are my father - see mencare.org) to encourage men to spend more time with children, to show affection to children, listen to them, as well as to their partners.

(3) Building networks and campaigning with men and boys to promote the 'new norms' around GEWE.

As discussed above, V4C recognises that today the majority of gatekeepers, influencers and decision makers are male. Thus, V4C will both seek out existing GEWE champions, and recruit new ones, to publicly commit to change, and thus bring on board more people. These influencers play a key role in the social transformation process because, as people begin to change their attitudes, these changes can be inhibited by many factors, including what they think their peers are thinking and doing, and what they think their leaders and role models are thinking and doing. Because it is impossible to know what others in the community are thinking, it is what they do that has more influence. And as each person waits to change until others change first, the transformation is very slow until the point where the tipping point is reached. By having key influencers publicly commit to change, though, these thoughts are made public, and therefore change can be sanctioned and endorsed early on. Therefore recruiting and working with gatekeepers, opinion leaders and influencers is absolutely critical. This work will;

- focus on the positive role boys and men can play in healthy relationships, good communication, end to bullying and sexual harassment, assault and abuse. The positive approach follows the lead of international campaigns (White Ribbon
Campaign - focused on engaging boys and men to end violence against women and girls

- Involve a range of influential males (community leaders, sport figures, politicians, religious leaders, actors, musicians, educators, writers, military and police officers, business and trade union leaders, etc.) to sign a statement and appear on posters and ads to launch a national (or state-wide) campaign: men working to end violence against women. (This is strictly non-partisan and reaches out to men across the political and social spectrum.)

- Street level activities with state wide or national media campaigns, using both traditional media and social/new media.

- Participate with the V4C advocacy efforts around the Violence against the Persons Bill (VAPP Bill).