

3.4 TAKING ACTION TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

As a faith leader, you can take action to promote gender equality by making changes in your community and its everyday practices. This section has many useful ideas and examples of activities that your community can do to encourage equality and respect between women and men. These are:

- Create a gender equality/preventing violence against women community action plan.
- Encourage young women to be involved in leadership.
- Educate and train leaders in your community.
- Encourage women to become involved in leadership and decision-making positions.
- Create a gender equality / preventing violence against women action group.

Examples from the community:

Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence (Victoria)

The Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence have arranged for Rabbis to be trained about family violence and how to support those who have experienced such violence.

Anglicans Promoting Respectful Relationships - Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

As part of the *Anglicans Promoting Respectful Relationships for Violence Prevention project*, the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne has provided violence prevention training for clergy across the Diocese.

Gender equality/preventing violence against women community plan

Your community could develop a plan that commits to encouraging gender equality and preventing violence against women. The plan could state what your community stands for and what you will do. A community plan could include:

- Information about family violence and violence against women including definitions, different forms of violence and the significance of the issue. Use the fact sheets in Section 2 of this resource to help.
- Information about the causes of violence against women. Use the fact sheets in Section 2 of this resource to help.
- What is prevention and why is it important.
- How the values of your community align with primary prevention of family violence.
- A plan of activities your community will undertake to promote gender equality within its own practices (use an example of the community action plan below to help do this).

Once you have developed the plan, ask your leadership team and others who have decision-making responsibilities in the community to sign or endorse it. It is important to make sure that women contribute to the plan. You might like to present the plan to the rest of the community by making hard copies available or uploading it to your website.

Encouraging young women to be involved in leadership

Many faith communities run programs or groups for young people and children often for the purposes of social interaction, mentoring or leadership, such as youth camps, youth resorts or Sunday school. These could be used as settings for ensuring that young women are given opportunities for leadership.

You could set up a youth leadership program or a youth committee in your community and ensure that young women are encouraged to be involved in these groups. This will give both girls and boys an opportunity to contribute to decisions that are made within their community and present ideas to senior faith leaders.

Training for leaders

Some faith communities already provide new leaders with training about healthy relationships. You might like to consider participating in community education or training for leaders to gain knowledge about primary prevention of violence against women and how to promote equality and empower women in the community.

Involving women in leadership and decision-making

Involving women in leadership and decision-making in your community is an important step in moving toward equality between the roles of women and men. In some faith traditions, it is not practice for women to become leaders, but there are other ways that women can be given more opportunities for leadership and decision-making in the community such as:

- Making sure women are represented on faith committees and boards.
- You could make sure that your community's committee has an equal number of women and men. Ensure that women and men are able to contribute equally to discussions.
- Giving women an opportunity to take on senior roles in education.

Gender equality/preventing violence against women action group

An action group is another way of making sure that the work your community does to promote equality in order to prevent violence against women continues. An action group could include members in the community who hold positions of leadership, decision-making and educating/teaching as well as community members more generally. This should include both men and women.

The purpose of an action group is to talk about ideas for promoting equality in the community and how actions will be carried out. It also gives an opportunity to think about prevention actions in your community – Are these working well? What impacts are they having? How could they be improved?

The action group should meet regularly to keep the issue on the agenda.

Example of a community action plan

An example of a community plan is:

Our community's plan to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women

Introduction

Violence against women is any kind of violence that causes harm or suffering to women. It is a significant issue in our community.

- One in three Australian women are estimated to have experienced violence from a male in their lifetime.
- Over half of all women have experienced at least one incident of physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime.

Women are most likely to experience violence in the home and from someone that they know, usually a male partner or a male relative.

- Since the age of 15, almost 34 per cent of Australian women have experienced violence from a male known to them.

Causes of violence against women

The key factors that cause violence against women:

- Unequal power between men and women.
- Rigid gender roles and stereotypes.
- Social norms that condone violence by men.

Unequal power between men and women

The power and influence that men and women have is not equal. Often men have greater power in public and private life. For example, men most often have leadership positions in politics or in business. They may also have greater power in their relationships and at home.

Rigid gender roles and stereotypes

Gender roles and stereotypes are beliefs about what it means to be a 'man' and a 'woman'. This includes what is appropriate behaviour for men and women in regards to, for example, work, domestic roles, parenting, leisure and dress.

Social norms that condone violence by men

These social norms are beliefs in our society that feel it is acceptable for men to be violent. These kinds of social norms can be seen across our society such as in sport, in the media and in the way men are described as 'tough' and 'strong'.



So what does this mean?

These key factors support beliefs and actions that lead to women being treated with less respect and dignity in their relationships.

It is important to remember that not all men are violent. Other factors such as poverty, alcohol, seeing violence as a child or having violent friends are factors in violence against women. These factors can contribute to violence against women, but do not cause it.

Preventing violence against women

We can take action to stop violence against women before it occurs in the first place. This is known as **primary prevention**. We must do this by addressing gender inequality between women and men.

ACTIVITIES	WHAT WILL WE NEED?	WHEN WILL WE DO THIS?	WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE?
e.g., Encourage the involvement of women in leadership	Invite women to be involved; Offer leadership training for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2016-2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equal number of men and women on our committee