

# A Network to Prevent Violence

## Empowering Change: Lessons from Engaging Men and Boys in the Women and Youth Resilience Project



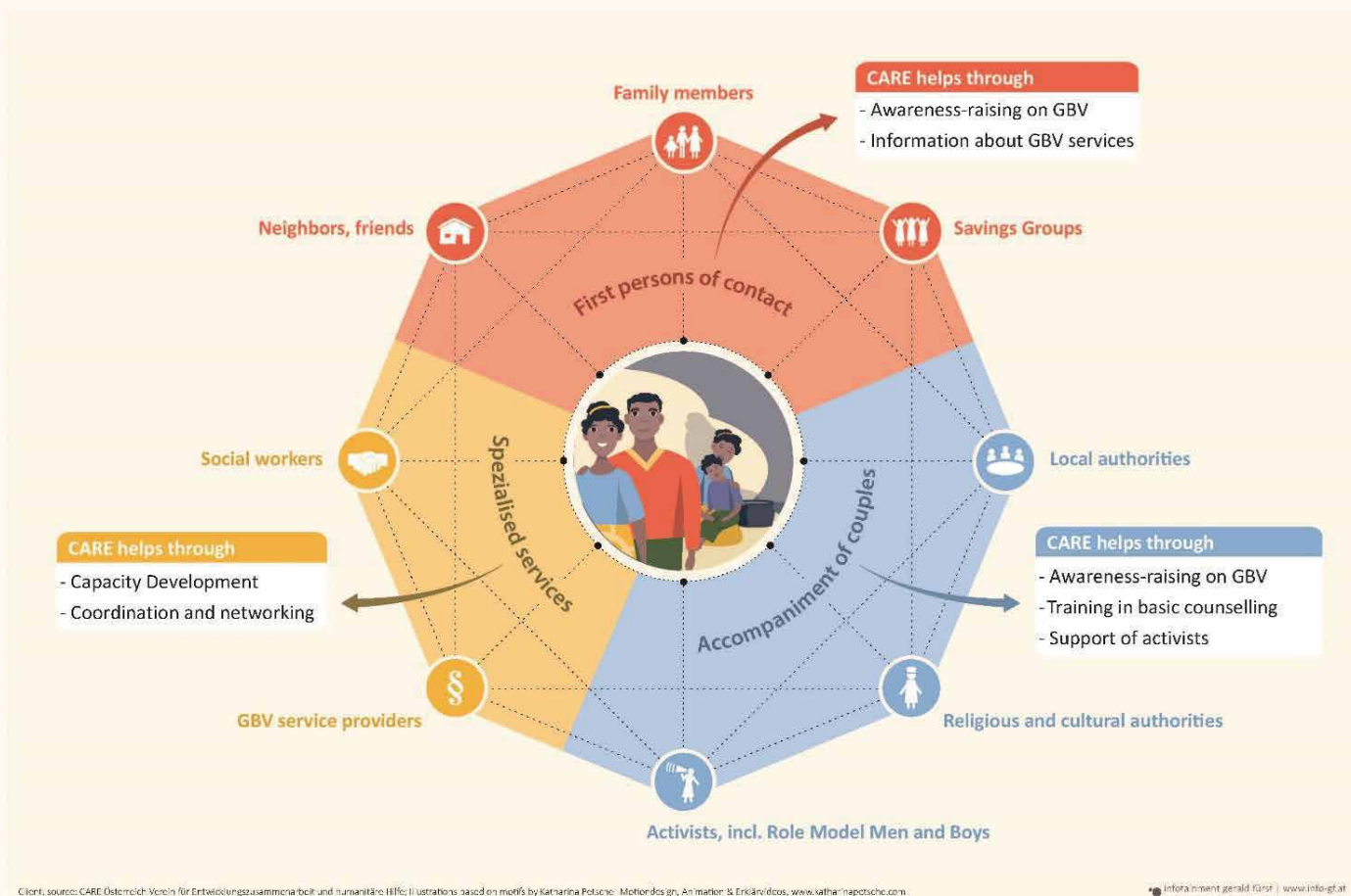
The Women and Youth Resilience Project (WAYREP) aimed to strengthen the resilience of refugee and Ugandan women, girls, and youth, while reducing gender-based violence in Northern Uganda. The project's Role Model Men and Boys have successfully promoted positive masculinities and improved household relations, thanks in part to their collaboration with community members, friends, and local leaders.

This learning brief explores how the social environment supports positive transformation in individuals, families, and communities, with a focus on men, boys, and couples.

### Transformation journey of the RMMB methodology

The Men and Boys Engage Model is built on a systems approach that strengthens the support network for couples at all levels. This comprehensive strategy enhances both the impact and sustainability of the Engaging Men and Boys approach. WAYREP successfully implemented this model by: Creation of awareness about Gender-Based Violence (GBV) among community members; Training of local activists, such as Role Model Men and Boys (RMMB) and local leaders, to prevent GBV and provide support to survivors; Capacity enhancement and coordination of GBV service providers to offer specialized support. By addressing GBV through a multifaceted approach, WAYREP fostered a supportive environment for positive change and GBV reduction.

**Before Role Model Men and Boys intervene, family members and/or local leaders would typically try to approach violent husbands or couples experiencing conflicts.** Many couples have a person in their close circle who they trust and turn to for support. However, the longer conflicts persist, the more households become isolated in their communities.



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**Inner circle consultation and support.** Prior to the involvement of Role Model Men and Boys, family members or local leaders would often attempt to intervene in cases of domestic violence or conflict. Typically, couples have a trusted individual within their social circle who they turn to for guidance and support.

**Many men often subconsciously recognize the need for change in their lives,** typically prompted by significant personal experiences such as the death of a father, the birth of a child, or health challenges. These events can introduce new responsibilities or necessitate adjustments in their lifestyles, such as reducing alcohol consumption.

**The RMMB builds on this momentum to drive change effectively.** As a third party, and leveraging their training, RMMB connects with violent men and boys in ways that family members may not. They strengthen these men's motivation to change, consistently challenge them, and provide guidance on managing their emotions, attitudes, and behaviors. By regularly supporting couples, RMMB helps maintain progress despite external pressures. In WAYREP, RMMB utilized various approaches to engage men, boys, and couples, including household dialogues, couple seminars, outreach in male spaces, and Male Action Groups. Participants have expressed appreciation for the relevance and impact of RMMB's work in their lives.

## Takeaways

The journey of transformation is an ongoing process that extends beyond the involvement of the RMMB. A strong network of support is essential to ensure lasting change. Key take aways include:

**Sustaining personal, economic and social life changes.** Men, boys, and couples can sustain personal, economic, and social changes when they recognize the benefits of transformation, understand the risks of violence, and experience improvements in their relationships, often facilitated by lifestyle changes such as reduced alcohol consumption and altered peer groups.

**Role models are aligned to the community's expectations.** Transformed individuals and couples can serve as powerful role models and agents of change in their communities. Their motivation and commitment to promoting positive changes are intensified when they support and mentor others.

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**Well-trained and equipped Role Model Men and Boys (RMMB) effectively sustain and spread positive messages of change within their communities.**

By leveraging various platforms such as household dialogues, community gatherings, and male-dominated spaces like sports fields, RMMB can create a lasting impact. Even when their level of engagement may decrease, their influence and credibility remain, allowing community members to continue seeking their guidance and advice.

**Community-led initiatives can be a powerful catalyst for change in preventing and responding to Gender-Based Violence (GBV).**

When community members and leaders, including Role Model Men and Boys (RMMB), actively reject GBV and support survivors, a culture of non-violence and accountability can take hold. By leveraging existing support structures, such as family, friends, local leaders, and community organizations, RMMB can create a network of allies that reinforce positive messages and provide critical support to couples in need. This community-led approach ensures that

support is brought closure to the community, accessible, and sustainable, ultimately contributing to a safer and more equitable community for all.

**Community-led groups play a vital role in promoting accountability, support, and transformation in efforts to prevent and respond to Gender-Based Violence (GBV).**

By mobilizing community groups, such as savings groups, to hold violent men accountable and support survivors, a culture of solidarity and mutual support can be fostered. These groups can also provide a platform for couples to receive accompaniment and support throughout their transformation journey. Furthermore, economic empowerment initiatives, like savings groups, help reduce economic stress, a common trigger for violence thereby contributing to a safer and more supportive community environment.

With all the progress made, economic pressure, peer influence, and the experiences of men from different districts still pose potential triggers of harmful behaviors. Economic instability and high mobility in urban and refugee settings also pose significant challenges to build a strong community of individuals who support positive masculinities and gender equality. Addressing these issues during program planning and implementation while strengthening the support systems for couples within their communities is crucial.



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