



**The 5W-H Model and Strategies to  
Engage South Asian Men and Boys as Allies to  
Combat Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**

# The 5W-H Model and Strategies to Engage South Asian Men and Boys as Allies to Combat Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

## SUMMARY

The 5W-H model offers strategies for organizations and service providers to engage men and boys as allies to combat gender-based violence and challenge harmful norms in the South Asian community in Canada.

The model comprises 6 categories: Why, Who, What, When, Where, and How, to support program planning and delivery.

## WHY

- Clarify your purpose.
- Learn about GBV.

## WHO

- Define your audience.

## WHAT

- Define your objectives.
- Identify your project activities.
- Explore potential topics for activities.
- Identify topics of interest to men.
- Understand and Address Cultural Norms.

## HOW

### Method

- Shift Behaviors Within Networks.
- Offer Opportunities for Leadership.
- Engage Community Partners and Stakeholders.

### Approach

- Use a Survivor Centered Approach.
- Adopt a Trauma-Informed Approach.
- Foster Positive Values.

## WHEN

- Identify Key Moments of Engagement.

## WHERE

- Meet Men Where They Are.

### Mindset

- Seek to Understand.
- Focus on South Asian Men's Worldview.
- Promote Inclusion.
- Collect Feedback.
- Create Safe Spaces.
- Consider Safety.

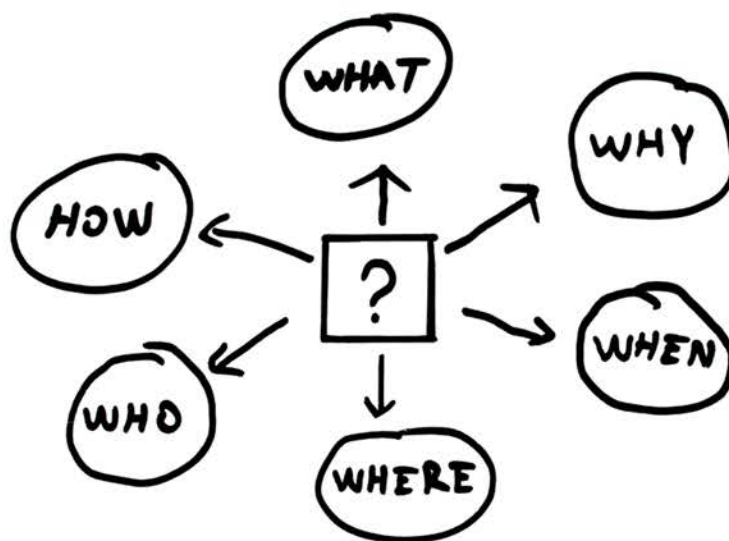
## 5W-H MODEL AND STRATEGIES

### WHY

- Clarify your purpose: Why do you seek to engage men and boys as allies to combat GBV? What are the benefits, potential downfalls, and challenges of engaging in this work as it relates to your community?
- Learn about GBV: Seek out resources, professionals, people with lived experience, and organizations engaging in GBV work. Learn about GBV, its causes, mechanisms, and impacts. Understand the interrelated factors leading to GBV, such as gender norms, substance abuse, unemployment, intergenerational trauma, and mental health challenges. Consider how your project will address these interconnected factors.

### WHO

- Define your audience. Who will act as an ally to combat GBV? Men are not a homogeneous group. Describe the characteristics of men and boys targeted by your project. Consider culture, socio-economic status, age, immigration status, level of education, religious beliefs, disability, marital status, and life stage to define your target audience. Use an intersectional approach in program planning and delivery.



## WHAT

- **Define your objectives.** What will your project achieve? Do you seek to raise awareness of GBV among men and boys, offer skill-building to combat GBV, or provide support to male allies?
- **Identify your project activities:** How will you engage men and boys as allies to combat GBV? Each medium has its own purpose and benefits. (Workshops, Social Media Campaigns, Group Discussions, Podcasts, Cultural Radio Shows, TV Broadcasts, School Lessons, Summer Camps, Case Studies, Documentaries, etc.)
- **Explore Potential Topics for activities:** What knowledge or skills are disseminated through your project activities? Define key topics men and boys need to understand to shift gender norms, and act as an ally to end GBV. Potential topics may include:
  - Understanding Men's Experiences (Gender Norms, Childhood Experiences, Past Trauma, Sexual Abuse, War, Toxic Masculinity, etc).
  - Understanding Gender Roles and Norms in South Asian Communities.
  - Understanding GBV – Types, Causes, Impacts, and Legal Landscape.
  - GBV Training for Boys and Young Men.
  - Family Violence.
  - GBV and Interrelated Factors (Addictions, Mental Health, Financial Insecurity, etc.).
  - Preventing and Addressing GBV.
  - Supporting Victims and Survivors of GBV.
  - Supporting Perpetrators of Violence.
  - Bystander Training.
  - How to be an Ally.
  - Skill Building (Emotional Regulation and Expression, Effective Communication, Building Healthy Relationships).
  - Skill-Building (Financial Literacy, Access to health, social, legal, and financial resources, GBV Resources).

- **Identify Topics of Interest to Men:** Focus on topics of relevance and interest to men. You may face resistance when engaging men. Bring in men not by focusing on GBV, but by focusing on challenges such as stress, anger, or addictions to initiate conversations on GBV. Focus on what they want to learn rather than what you want to teach.
- **Understand and Address Cultural Norms:** Cultural Norms may perpetuate violence. Initiate discussions on topics such as the stigma of divorce, fear of dishonoring the family, taboo topics such as abuse, mental health, counselling, and sexual violence, patriarchal norms, reasons why women stay with the abuser (cultural and familial pressure, fear of children's future, financial dependence), etc. Understand and address the role of both men and women in perpetuating these norms.

## WHEN

- **Identify Key Moments of Engagement.** Men can be engaged as allies at any point in time. However, some key moments of engagement include national and international campaigns (16 days of activism), moments of transition (fatherhood, marriage, etc), and after witnessing harmful behaviors (sexist jokes, victim-blaming, etc.). Men may be more receptive to your project during these time periods.

## WHERE

- **Meet Men Where They Are:** Offer your activities at workplaces, schools, sports clubs, social groups, and places of worship often frequented by men. Offering programs at these relevant and convenient locations can increase attendance, understanding, and receptivity to your project.



## HOW

### METHOD

- **Shift Behaviours Within Networks:** Work within communities of men and key influencers with large networks within these communities to promote change. Focus on behaviour over attitude. When 25% of a group can adopt a new behavior, the behavior will spread to others.
- **Offer Opportunities for Leadership.** South Asian men and boys need to see other South Asian men and boys working to combat GBV so that they feel comfortable following. Adult male mentorship is needed for boys and young men. Opportunities to lead are also important.
- **Engage Community Partners and Stakeholders:** Working collaboratively will improve your ability to engage men as allies. Involve South Asian male peers, victims and survivors of abuse, former perpetrators of abuse, positive role models, religious leaders, influencers, culturally relevant non-profit organizations, media outlets, service providers, etc., in program planning and delivery.

### MINDSET

- **Seek to Understand:** Seek to understand men's point of view and the issues and challenges they seek to discuss rather than focusing on a pre-determined agenda. Remember, the goal is not to engage in reactionary activism. Work from a place of healing rather than anger. Do not demonize men. Work collaboratively.
- **Focus on South Asian Men's Worldview:** Using a Western, scientific, or individualistic approach may not work with South Asian men who come from collectivist cultures. Challenge gender norms and attitudes with empathy rather than proposing a Western alternative. Understand the languages, values, traditions, and religious frameworks of South Asian communities.
- **Promote Inclusion:** Build narratives that invite men and include positive aspects of masculinity. Use accessible language, avoiding words such as patriarchy, masculinity, or feminism, especially early in the discussion, to avoid backlash.
- **Collect Feedback:** Engage the voices of victims and survivors of GBV, along with the voices of women and men, to guide program planning and delivery. Collecting feedback during the project can help you understand the strengths and weaknesses of your programs. Invite intergenerational and intersectional input.

## APPROACH

- **Use a Survivor Centered Approach:** Center the rights, needs, and desires of survivors. Prioritize survivors' safety and well-being. Integrate their perspectives and advice into program processes.
- **Adopt a Trauma-Informed Approach:** Recognize the emotional, psychological, and intergenerational trauma that participants may carry. Participants should feel safe, trust those around them, be supported by peers, and be empowered that they have a role in combatting GBV and unlearning harmful norms. Emphasize healing as a key element of engagement.
- **Foster Positive Values:** Focus on fostering values of inclusiveness and confidentiality. Set ground rules such as listening with respect to understand and not to misinterpret or interrupt, speaking from your own experience, using I statements, avoiding blaming or making assumptions, making sharing a choice, not a requirement, and respecting differences in culture, age, gender, faith, and experiences, even in disagreement.
- **Create Safe Spaces:** Create safe spaces for difficult conversations related to GBV, mental health, religion, culture, caste, etc., without fear or judgment or shame. In these spaces, men can build relationships, empathize with each other, and support each other during the learning process.
- **Consider Safety.** Challenging traditional norms can increase the risk of violence towards women. Consider the safety of individuals, including facilitators, spouses, and other women in the community.



## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

While your project may focus on engaging men and boys as allies to combat GBV, to achieve a greater impact, consider raising awareness of this issue among people of all genders.

- **Engage all genders:** GBV work cannot be conducted in silos. Harmful norms are reinforced by people of all genders. To shift thinking and behaviour, you need to work with men and women.
- **Engage Families:** In collectivist South Asian cultures, marriage is the union of two families, not two individuals. Families and communities often play a role in gender-based violence. To address GBV within the South Asian community, you need to engage women, children, parents, in-laws, extended families, and community members, alongside men and boys.

## CONCLUSION

Organizations can adopt the 5W-H Model and guidelines to engage South Asian men and boys as allies to combat GBV in the South Asian community in Canada.