

**Session Guide for Parents/Caretakers of Older Adolescents**

**(ages 15 - 19)**

Global version designed for adaptation

May 2023

**Foreword**

Pathfinder, in partnership with CARE, and with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), first implemented the [Act With Her](https://www.pathfinder.org/projects/act-with-her/) (AWH) program in Ethiopia from 2017 to 2023. Beginning in 2021, Pathfinder also partnered with the Institute for Family Health, through funding from the Elsa & Peter Soderberg Charitable foundation, to [expand AWH into Jordan](https://www.pathfinder.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/AWH-Jordan-Fact-Sheet-2022.pdf).

Expanding further from an earlier program model in Ethiopia called *Her Spaces*, AWH is a panoramic program model that partners with adolescent girls in laying the health, education, economic, and social foundations that they need to thrive during the transition to adulthood. This upstream approach provides girls with support during one of the most crucial life stages, reaching them before or during some of the most common disruptors of their future well-being (such as forced marriage, pregnancy, or school dropout). Although it’s a girl-centered program, AWH also directly includes adolescent boys and connects with parents/caregivers and local communities, to ensure that adolescent girls have support now and in the future from their peers, partners, families, and influential allies. A longitudinal randomized impact evaluation, conducted by the Gender & Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) research consortium and funded by the UK government, is assessing the program’s impact in Ethiopia.

Adolescents in age- and gender-segmented groups receive either 25 discussion modules (ages 15–19) or 40 discussion modules (ages 10–14). Topics covered include a wide range of puberty and menstruation, health, nutrition, education, safety, gender, communication, and economic empowerment themes (with 4 sessions designed as joint-gender meetings). The curriculum-based discussion groups are led by local “near peer” mentors of the same gender ages 18–25. Parents or caregivers of adolescents also meet for a short series of facilitated discussions on the topics shared with their children, improving their own knowledge and their ability to communicate about complex issues with their children. Beyond the adolescent and adult group programming, AWH also partners with communities to advance locally-led social norms change and systems strengthening.

This document is the global version of the Act With Her **Session Guide for Parents/Caretakers of Older Adolescents (ages 15 - 19)**.

For the entire suite of open-access materials, please visit:

[**Act With Her Program Package: Open-Access Editable Materials for Replication & Adaptation**](http://www.pathfinder.org/publications/act-with-her-program-package)

The program package includes the global versions of all group discussion curricula per gender and age group, participant booklets, mentor pre-and post-tests, and key MEL tools.

**Acknowledgements**

The Act With Her program model was initially collaboratively designed in 2017 by Pathfinder, CARE, the GAGE research consortium, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with key inputs and thought partnership from the Government of Ethiopia and Save the Children. The global session guides for very young adolescent (VYA) were first developed in 2017, followed by adaptation for use in Ethiopia. Next, in 2020 the global session guides for older adolescents (OA) and all global participant guides were developed, followed by adaptation for use in Ethiopia. Finally, in 2021 the VYA materials were adapted for use in Jordan. All AWH materials are intended for free and open-access replication, adaptation, and use in new contexts. **For their use in new settings, please:**

* Inform Pathfinder at [**info@pathfinder.org**](mailto:info@pathfinder.org)
* Kindly include the following acknowledgment in your adapted materials:

*The global Act With Her program materials were first developed in 2017 by Pathfinder, CARE, and the GAGE research consortium, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Through open-access commitment and permissions, we have further adapted them for use in [add your setting or program information].*

* Consult the [**How-To Guide**](https://www.pathfinder.org/publications/act-with-her-how-to-guide/#downloads) which provides 20 simple step-by-step suggestions for adapting the Act With Her program for different contexts, and for making basic startup preparations and decisions.

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***Global VYA materials***

Via Pathfinder: Rachel Rifkin, Courtney Boudreau, Anne Scott, Marta Pirzadeh, Jodi DiProfio, Caitlin Corneliess, Camille Collins Lovell, Kathryn Mimno, Catherine Lane, Olivia Moseley, Tricia Petruney, Cara Dunhill (layout)

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***Global OA materials and all participant materials***

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***Materials for Jordan***

Via Pathfinder International: Wejdan Abu Lail, Huda Hajjaj

Via Institute for Family Health: Areej Sumreen, Neveen Samhouri, Rawan al Qtefan, Maysa Mustafa**Welcome to the Meeting Guide for Parents/Caretakers**

**Parent Meetings**

Parent Meetings are designed to inform adolescents’ parents about the AWHProgram and the purpose of the Girls and Boys Clubs. They also serve to increase parents’ knowledge and skills to support their children as they participate in the Girls and Boys Club. In some cases, participants in the Girls and Boys Clubs may not have or be living with a biological parent. However, for simplification purposes, throughout the document all caregivers will be referred to generally as “parents”. The term encompasses biological parents and other relatives as well as caregivers who are not related to the participant but are responsible for their wellbeing. Feel free to change the language to reflect your audience, as appropriate.

The first Parent Meeting will be held prior to the implementation of the Girls and the Boys Clubs to:

1. Introduce parents in the community to the AWHprogram.
2. Explain the purpose of the Girls and the Boys Club.
3. Obtain consent for their children to participate in the Girls or the Boys Club meetings.

Four additional Parent Meetings are designed to promote positive parenting skills and inform parents on how to talk to their adolescent daughters and sons about some of the topics that will be covered in the Girls and the Boys Club meetings. This will help parents support their children as they learn and absorb the new information. The young adolescents attending the Club meetings will need support from their family and friends as they transition into adulthood. This Parent Meeting Guide should be used to facilitate the Parent Meetings.

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# **Meeting Facilitation Guide**

This Parent Meeting Guide was developed for you – the facilitator of the Parent Meetings. It provides you with all the information you need to implement each Parent Meeting. This Parent Meeting Guide is organized based on the suggested order of Parent Meetings – see Table below. The meeting topics coincide with the topics that young adolescents will be learning in the Girls and Boys club around the same time.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Meeting** | **Topic** | **Objective** |
| 1 | Orientation to the AWHProject | Secure parents’ support for AWH and Girl/Boy Club activities. |
| 2 | Changing Roles | Improve parents’ understanding of gender roles and gender norms and how these effect adolescent health, education, and occupational outcomes. |
| 3 | Talking to Older Adolescents about Health and Sex-Related Topics | Improve parents’ comfort with and skills to communicate with their children about reproductive health and sex-related topics. |
| 4 | Staying Safe (Harassment and Violence) | Improve parents’ capacity to effectively understand gender-based violence (GBV) and respond to GBV directed at adolescents. |
| 5 | Importance of Education | Increase parents’ awareness of the importance of education and ways to help children stay in school. |

**Planning for Each Parent Meeting**

Several days before each Parent Meeting read the Session Plan for that meeting. Be very familiar with the content and how to conduct the meeting. This will help you to feel comfortable with the content and stay on time. There is a lot to cover in a short amount of time.

Each Parent Meeting session has a list of supplies you might need. Gather all of the supplies so that they are ready and available the day of the meeting. Please note that it is helpful to use flipcharts to capture parents’ responses during certain exercises. When you write down what a parent says, it makes a parent feel that their comment(s) are valuable. Writing parents’ responses on a flipchart also helps you, the facilitator, to remember and summarize everything that was said. However, if there are no flipchart stands, paper, or markers that is fine too. Adapt to the situation.

Some of the Parent Meeting topics can be sensitive, such as those on gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices. Invite representatives from organizations against harmful traditional practices, gender-based violence or organizations that support women’s rights to help you during these meetings. Do this in advance of the meeting.

**During the Parent Meeting**

Each meeting Session Plan explains the main concepts to be discussed, how to present the content and how to implement the exercises. During the Parent Meeting follow the content of the Session Plan, but feel free to use your own words to explain the concepts and adapt the language to the situation.

The Parent Meetings are only 90 minutes in length. **So, it is essential that you mind the time carefully** so that you can cover all the content during each meeting. If need be, practice some of the exercises beforehand so that you are familiar with them and can lead them without relying too much on the Parents Guide.

There may be information covered in the Parent Meetings that you may not be familiar with. If parents ask you questions during the meeting which you cannot answer be honest with them that you do not have the answer. Tell them that you will try to have the answer for them at the next Parent Meeting. Work with AWH staff and/or other resources such as organizations that support women’s rights, supportive health care providers, and/or supportive community officials to learn more about the topic.

**Session 1: Orientation to the AWHProgram**

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Understand the physical, emotional, social, cognitive (thinking and reasoning) changes their adolescent children go through.
* Learn the role that parents can play in providing guidance and support during this important time.
* Understand the purpose and goals of the Act With Her program and why it is important.

**Learning Objectives**



## **Total Time: 90 minutes**



**Materials Needed:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | A variety of colored markers |
| Flipchart paper |  |

**Preparation Notes:**



* **Read the Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two Facilitators, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.



**Session Plan:**

**A.** **Welcome: Total Time - 10 minutes**

1. Welcome everyone. Thank them for attending this Parent Meeting.
2. Introduce yourself and any other facilitator or guest speaker with you.
3. Explain that parents have been invited to this meeting because, as parents, they want good things for their daughters and sons.
4. Conduct this or another introduction exercise:

* Ask everyone to stand up and find a partner. Have them pair up with someone they do not know as well.
* Explain that the person will introduce their partner to the group. But, first they must gather some information about their partner.
* Have each person ask their partner three questions: (**Note:** Allow about 2 to 3 minutes for parents to talk to each other.)

- Their full name.

- What their name means – or – who they were named after.

- One thing that most people do not know about them.

* When participants are ready, ask one pair to stand up and introduce their partner. After the first person has been introduced, ask the second person to introduce their partner.
* Thank the first pair for beginning the exercise.
* Ask another pair of participants to stand up and introduce each other. When done, thank them.
* Continue this exercise until all participants have introduced each other. If there is not enough time for everyone to share, that is also ok.

5. Thank everyone and ask them to take a seat.

**B.** **Overview of AWH Program: Total Time – 40 minutes**



**Act With Her Program (AWH)** (about 10 minutes)

1. Tell parents about the AWH program, including these and/or other key points:

* AWH promotes and strengthens protective factors in an adolescent’s life. It is implemented by Pathfinder and Care, two large international NGOs.
* AWH supports adolescent girls and boys to transition into adolescence and adulthood in healthy ways.
* AWH teaches skills that will empower girls and boys as they grow into adults. It will also prepare them to deal with situations that may be harmful to them.

2. Discuss key components of the AWH program:

* Girls and Boys Clubs:
* Meetings for girls and boys 15 to 19 years of age on a variety of topics and life skills over a 6-month period.
* Girls and Boys clubs will be held separately, except for four joint sessions.
* Parent’s Meetings: Meetings to give parents the knowledge and skills to successfully support their daughters and sons during adolescence.

3. Explain why AWH is focusing on adolescents from 15 to 19 years of age:

* **This is the age when both girls and boys continue to change physically, emotionally, cognitively (thinking and reasoning), and socially.**

o Girls and boys become more interested in new things, develop great friends, and grow beyond their childhood interests.

o Girls and boys feel more sensitive or feel anxious about the changes in their bodies.

o Their behavior is greatly influenced by feelings.

o They begin to question authority and society standards.

o They are more conscious of their physical appearance.

* Working with adolescents helps to build the foundation for healthy behaviors and good decisions later in life.
* Adolescents gain the most from support from their parents and the community.
* If you give adolescents knowledge early in life, **it empowers** them to make better decisions during more challenging situations when they are adults.[[1]](#endnote-1)

4. Ask parents what empowerment means to them.

5. Discuss what empowerment means:

* A process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling (or having more control over) one’s life.
* Developing and having the confidence to share your thoughts and opinions.
* Developing and having the confidence to protect yourself from risky situations.
* Having the belief in yourself to make positive decisions.

**Girls and Boys Clubs** (about 20 minutes)

1. Mention that one of the things that protects adolescents from risky behaviors is positive social support from their friends and parents.

2. Explain that the AWH Girls and Boys Clubs will:

* Provide adolescent girls and boys with accurate information and life skills to grow up into healthy and productive adults. These skills will help protect them from some risky situations.
* Build a group of informed, supportive peers who will help and support each other during the program and beyond.

3. Discuss the key features of AWH Girls and Boys Clubs:

* They will be held for girls and boys 15 to 19 years of age.
* Club meetings will build life skills in health, education, staying safe, communication, good decision making, gender, and finances.
* Ideally, Club meetings should be led by two trained, older, same-sex Mentors.
* Club meetings will also be overseen by a local (town, regional, parish, etc.) supervisor.
* Other details, such as:

- How Girls and Boys Clubs are formed.

- How frequently they will meet and at what time.

- Where they will meet and for how long (2 hours).

- Other important details, as needed.

6. Explain that four of the Girls and Boys Club meetings will be held together as Joint Club sessions where girls and boys will learn about good communication skills and how to protect and support each other.

7. Mention that trained, older, same-sex Mentors will run the Club meetings because:

* As a natural part of adolescent development, peers often become more important than parents when seeking information about sensitive topics, such as adolescent health and sex-related topics.
* Older peers – those who are a couple of years older –tend to have a greater influence on adolescents. The adolescents see them as knowledgeable near peers and feel more comfortable with them when talking about sensitive issues.

8. Explain that your children are involved voluntarily with your oral consent.

9. Mention that adolescents will be creating goals in their Clubs.

10. Ask the following questions:

* How can parents support their children in achieving the goals they established in their Boys and Girls Clubs? (**Note:** Encourage discussion)
* How can parents support their children when they run into roadblocks? (**Note:** Encourage discussion)

11. Ask if anyone has questions.

**Parent Meetings** (about 10 minutes)

1. Discuss the following:

* Most parents begin to notice their children are becoming adolescents when there is a dramatic change in their child’s behavior towards them. For example, they may seek more privacy, be less willing to talk about things, sulk, be moody, and/or not comply with rules.
* Adolescents will start to separate from their parents and try to become more independent. They will want to do more things alone or with their friends.
* More and more adolescents will seek information about sensitive topics, such as their bodies, health, and sex-related topics from their peers and not their parents.

*Ask:* ***How can parents avoid trying to solve children’s problems for them and rather work together with them to find solutions?***

* Adolescents start to want more freedom. When this happens parents can feel the need to continue to parent them like children. This can create tension.
* No matter their behavior, adolescents still need and want guidance and support from their parents.

2. Ask: As parents we feel like we need to have all the answers. How can parents avoid trying to solve children’s problems for them and rather work together with them to find solutions? (**Note:** Encourage discussion)

3. Point out that adolescents actually value support and boundaries set by their parents. However, it is good to do this in a way that is less authoritarian and more negotiated, because young people have evolving capacities and it can be counterproductive to treat them as young children.

4. Ask: How can parents engage their children in discussions about their choices and capabilities?

5. Ask: What is the parents’ role during adolescence? (**Note:** Encourage discussion)

6. Summarize parents’ comments. Discuss any of the following not mentioned:

* Family connectedness is the strongest protective factor in helping adolescents make good decisions as well as respond to risky circumstances.
* Even though adolescents are expressing their independence, they still trust and value the guidance and support from their parents and community. They actually value support and boundaries set by their parents, although they may not show it.
* Discussing sensitive or sex-related topics openly with adolescents before they are exposed to them actually makes it more likely that they will act in healthier ways when exposed to risky situations.
* Parents may not be aware of, or know how to best deal with, the changes adolescents are experiencing.
* Parents often find it difficult to talk to their children about adolescent health related topics that their children need to hear from their parents.

7. Explain that AWH wants to support parents as they guide and support their children through adolescence.

8. Mention that the AWH program will be holding several meetings with parents to help them develop skills to talk to and interact with their daughters and sons in ways that adolescents can hear and appreciate.

9. Review what parents will learn during Parent Meetings.

* An awareness of the health, emotional, cognitive (thinking and reasoning) changes and social pressures their adolescent children will face.
* New skills to communicate effectively with their child about their changing body and sex-related topics.
* Key protective factors that contribute to healthy development and how to help their daughters and sons stay safe as they grow and mature.
* How gender and social norms determine how women and men in the community are expected to behave and how these can influence health and wellbeing.

**C.** **The Changing Adolescent[[2]](#endnote-2) – Total Time: 30 minutes**



1. Ask how many adolescents do parents have in their home now.

2. Ask: What kind of changes are you noticing among your adolescent children?

3. Summarize some changes that occur to adolescent girls and boys:

* Their bodies begin to change and mature.
* They become more emotional, with many mood swings.
* Socially, they begin to seek independence from their parents and want closer relationships with their friends and peers.
* They begin to form and speak their thoughts and views on a variety of topics.
* They **are less motivated by threats and punishments than young children.** Incremental rewards and positive reinforcements are more motivating.

4. Discuss positive things that occur during adolescence:

* Adolescence is a period of tremendous growth and maturity.
* Adolescents expand their ability to reason and think for themselves.
* Adolescents make deep friendships which can last a lifetime.
* As their brains mature, they become better able to think though problems and see the consequences of different points of view or actions.
* Adolescents become interested in and open to new ideas, learning new things, and contributing to their community.

5. Discuss some of the challenges that adolescents face:

* Girls’ and boy’s growth and development begins to draw more attention from adults and other adolescents. This may expose them to sexual risk situations at an early age.
* The hormones that cause girls’ and boys’ bodies to change also causes them to begin to have romantic and sexual feelings towards others.
* Lack of emotional maturity leads to decisions that are based more on feelings and less on the consequences of the decisions.
* Decisions made based on emotions can lead to greater risk-taking or not knowing how to get out of risky situations.
* Adolescents begin to look to their peers and friends instead of their parents for information. This puts them at risk of getting inaccurate and/or misleading information.
* Media, such as mobile phone videos, magazines, radio, television, etc. also begin to influence adolescent attitudes and behaviors.

6. Ask the following questions:

* How can you support your children facing these challenges? (**Note:** Encourage discussion)
* What are some of the things that make you uncomfortable to discuss with your children? How do you address them? (**Note:** Encourage discussion)

7. Explain that there are three protective factors that make adolescents more resilient to these challenges and influence healthy and positive development as adults:

* **Family connectedness** – This is the most protective factor in the lives of adolescents.
* **Close social relationships** – When close peer relationships exist, there is less emotional stress and less risky behavior, including early sex.
* **Education** – For school age adolescents school attendance positively influences adolescents and makes them less susceptible to harmful behaviors.

8. Mention that the Act With Her program builds on these protective factors by:

*Through the Girls and Boys Clubs*

* Strengthening adolescents’ life skills on a variety of topics.
* Building strong, positive peer support through the Girls and Boys Clubs.
* Promoting the importance of reaching out to and building strong relationships with trusted adults in their community when they need help.

*Through the Parents Groups*

* Providing a space where parents can explore how they can positively support their children as they go through adolescence, and help them reach their life goals.



**D. Wrap Up: Total Time – 10 minutes**

1. Ask if anyone has questions.

2. Say: We hope you heard some interesting ideas today and feel reinforced as parents.

* Where is a good place to hold Parent Meetings?
* When is a good time to hold Parent Meetings?

3. Come to an agreement when and where the next Parent Meeting will take place.

4. Make any concluding remarks.

5. Hand out the parent participant guide

6. Thank everyone for coming to the meeting.

7. Close the meeting.

# **Session 2 - Change Starts in My Home**

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Learn the difference between sex and gender.
* Understand how gender roles change over time.
* Understand the effects of gender roles and behaviors on adolescent health, education, and occupational outcomes.
* Appreciate the need to talk about things that make us uncomfortable, but that we know need to be brought up with my children

**Learning Objectives**



## **Total Time: 90 minutes**



**Materials Needed:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | Flipchart paper |
| A variety of colored markers | |

**Preparation Notes:**



* Label one flipchart, “**Women**” with a colored marker. Label another flipchart, “**Men**” with a different colored marker.
* Just before the meeting starts, tape the flipchart labeled **Women** on one side of the meeting site. Tape the flipchart labeled **Men** on the opposite end of room – about 5 meters apart, if possible.
* Make a flipchart for Girls/Women with three columns, labeled as below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Grandmother’s time** (past) | **Women (you) now** (present or future) |
| Clothing |  |  |
| Schooling (grade level achieved) |  |  |
| Chores, household responsibilities |  |  |
| Friends |  |  |
| Jobs/work |  |  |
| Parenting |  |  |
| Technology (electricity, mobile phones) |  |  |
| Marriage |  |  |
| Childbirth |  |  |

* Make a flipchart for Boys/Men with three columns, labeled as below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Grandfather’s time** (past) | **Men (you) now**  (present or future) |
| Clothing |  |  |
| Schooling (grade level achieved) |  |  |
| Chores, household responsibilities |  |  |
| Friends |  |  |
| Jobs/work |  |  |
| Parenting |  |  |
| Technology (electricity, mobile phones) |  |  |
| Marriage |  |  |
| Childbirth |  |  |

* **Read the Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two Facilitators, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.

**Session Plan:**



### What is a Woman/What is a Man?[[3]](#footnote-1)*: Total Time – 20 minutes*

1. Welcome everyone to the Parent Meeting. Thank everyone for coming.
2. Introduce yourself and any other facilitators.
3. If there are any new parents at the meeting, ask them to introduce themselves.
4. Explain the following exercise:

* You are going to read a word out loud.
* If someone thinks the word describes a woman, they should stand by the flipchart labeled **Women.** (**Note**: Point to the flipchart labeled, “**Women**”.)
* If someone thinks the word describes a man, they should stand by the flipchart labeled “**Men”**. (**Note:** If some parents are unable to read, tell them which color writing is the woman and which color represents the man.)
* If you think the word describes **both** men and women, stand in the middle, between the two flipcharts.

1. Give examples:

* If I say “Mother”, stand by the **Women** flipchart because only girls/women can become mothers.
* If I say “Tall” and you think that only men can be tall, stand next to the **Men’s** flipchart (different color writing).
* If I say “cooks food,” and you think that only women can cook food, stand next to the **Women’s** chart.
* If I say, “Smart” and you think that both **Men** and **Women** can be smart, then stand in the middle between the two flipcharts.

1. Begin the exercise by reading the first word in the list below (see sentence #9 below).
2. Once everyone has moved to their flipchart (or in between), ask: Why did you chose to stand by your flipchart – or in the middle?
3. Read the next word from the list below.
4. Repeat steps 6 to 8 for all the words on the list below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Strong | Clever | Cook |
| Smart | Rich | School graduate |
| Teacher | Good communicator | Loving |
| Decision maker | Care for children or elders | Mother |
| Doctor | Community leader | Respected |
| Helps with schoolwork | Father | Health provider |
| Cleaning | Farmer | Police |
| Market seller | Nurse | Engineer |

1. When the exercise is done, ask everyone to sit down.
2. Ask participants:

* Which of these words was difficult to decide whether they describe women or men?
* For those words for **Women,** ask, “Can a man do any of these things?”
* For the words for **Men,** ask, “Can a woman can do any of these things?”
* What things are men **not** expected to do? Why?
* What things are women **not** expected to do? why?

1. Mention that many people believe that only men can be strong, brave, financially successful, and make decisions for the family. Many people believe that only women can do the cooking, care for sick family members or take care of children.
2. Ask participants how they feel about these beliefs and roles.
3. If your daughter told you that she wanted to become a doctor or community leader, what would you say to her?
4. If your son told you he wanted to become a nurse, what would you say to him?
5. **What is Gender?[[4]](#footnote-2): Total Time – 20 minutes**
6. Ask what is the difference between **biological** **sex** and **gender**? (**Note:** Encourage a discussion on this. Expect parents not to know the difference.)
7. Discuss what “**Sex**” means:

* Sex refers to the biological aspects of a man and a woman, such as the differences in reproductive organs and genitalia. Women have vaginas and produce eggs, while men have penises and produce sperm.
* These are traits that a person is born with.

1. Discuss what "**Gender**" means:

* In general, it refers to how society defines how men and women are supposed to be, meaning it is defined not by biology, but by society’s expectations, traditions, and “rules.” How a society defines what being a man or woman is can vary from place to place, even within the same country, and can change over time.
* Expectations of how men and women should act and what they should do are referred to as **Gender Norms and Roles.** While most people are born either male or female, they are taught gender norms and roles – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and workplaces.

For example, gender norms and roles could dictate that:

* Women be timid, physically weak, and vulnerable (gender norms).
* Men be strong, assertive, “the boss” (gender norms).
* Women cook meals, clean the house and tend the children (gender roles).
* Men work outside the home and earn money (gender roles).

1. Explain that the “What is a Man? and What is a Woman?” exercise is a good example of these terms. For example, everyone agrees that only a woman can give birth, but not everyone agreed with the different roles that women can/should have. (**Note**: Discuss a role from the exercise that not everyone agreed upon.)
2. Explain: Although a girl is biologically female, there are expectations, such as certain roles and behaviors given to her by society. These have nothing to do with her biological sex.

* Physically, only females have breasts, menstruate, and can give birth.
* But, both females and males are capable of being strong leaders, cleaning the house, tending cattle, or becoming doctors.

1. Mention that this is the same for boys.

* Physically, only males have a penis, testicles, and produce sperm, but they cannot give birth.
* They are also capable of being good caretakers, washing dishes, and feeding children. Men’s biological sex does not prohibit them from doing these things.

1. Ask these or similar questions about expectations about **how men and women are supposed to be**. (**Note**: Encourage a discussion.)

* Where and when do we begin learning these gender expectations?
* How do they affect the way that women act and live? And how men act and live?
* How do families pass along these roles from parents to children?
* Will these norms always stay the same or do you think they will change?
* Are the roles of women and men equally respected?

1. Discuss the consequences of gender roles and norms with these or similar points:

* Society’s expectations of gender roles for both boys/men and girls/ women can limit the choices that adolescent girls and boys make in their lives.
* Gender roles and norms influence the abilities of girls and boys to obtain education, type of work women and men do (unpaid and paid), and the ability to earn money.
* Strict gender roles can limit girls’ and boys’ capacity to have fulfilling productive lives and provide well for their families.
* Strict gender norms also restrict a girls’ social interactions and mobility – keeping her in the house more, instead of empowering her to protect herself.
* Gender norms influence boys – they obtain more freedom but may have less family support.
* It is important to raise sons to be respectful of the work that is traditionally accomplished by girls and women, and to support and participate in some of those roles.

1. Explain that gender roles and norms are passed down from society to the family and to the child. But societal gender roles and norms can (and do) change over time or from region to region.
2. Let’s see how society has changed gender roles and norms in your community.
3. **Changing Gender Roles: Total Time – 30 minutes**
4. Explain that we are going to explore how roles may have changed over time in your community/region.
5. Ask the following questions for women (**Note**: Write responses to the questions on the three -column flipchart for Women – prepared beforehand. Put responses related to grandmother in the “Grandmother” column and responses related to themselves in the “Women now” column.)

* How did your grandmother dress? How do you dress now?
* Did your grandmother go to school? If so, to what grade?
* Did you go to school? How far in school did you go?
* What kind of chores did your grandmother do? What kind of chores do you do now?
* What kind of work or job did your grandmother have? What kind of work or job do you have now?
* Who took care of the little children in your grandmother’s time? Who takes care of the children in your home now?
* Did your grandmother have electricity? Do you have electricity in your home?
* Did your grandmother/mother have a mobile phone? Do you have a mobile phone?
* At what age did your grandmother marry? When did you get married?
* How did your grandmother give birth? How did you give birth?

1. Ask the following questions for boys/men (**Note**: Write responses to the questions on the three -column flipchart for Boys/Men – prepared beforehand – just as you have done for the women. You can also do this exercise if only women are attending the Parent Meeting, by asking the questions about their husbands instead of about them.)

* How did your grandfather dress? How do you dress now?
* Did your grandfather go to school? If so, to what grade?
* Did you go to school? How far in school did you go?
* What kind of chores did your grandfather do? What kind of chores do you do now?
* What kind of work or job did your grandfather have? What kind of work or job do you have?
* Who took care of the little children in your grandfather’s time?
* Who takes care of the children in your home now? Do you participate in child rearing?
* Did your grandfather have electricity? Does your home have electricity?
* Did your grandfather/father have a mobile phone? Do you have a mobile phone?
* At what age did your grandfather marry? When did you get married?
* What was your grandfather’s role during the birth of his children? What was your role during childbirth? Did you attend the birth or participate in some other way?

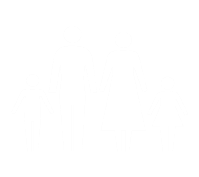
1. When done, review the two flipcharts and responses. Initiate a discussion:

* In which areas of life have gender roles changed the most since your grandparents’ time?
* Since your grandparents’ time whose roles have changed the most, women’s or men’s?
* Which changes do you think have been better for women? For men? Why?
* Which changes do you think are worse for women? For men? Why?
* Which factors may have brought about these changes?
* How has transportation affected these roles – are there better roads and/or transportation (cars, buses, bicycles, etc.) than before?
* How has radio, TV, and/or the internet affected gender roles?
* How has technology (electricity, solar lamps etc.) changed your lives and gender roles?

1. Point out that society, and, thus, some gender roles and norms, may change in some areas and not change in other areas.
2. Continue the discussion by asking these or similar questions:

* Will gender roles and/or norms continue to change in your children’s time? If so, in what ways?
* How might changing gender roles and/or norms affect the kind of work/job your daughters will have in the future?
* How might changing gender roles and/or norms affect the kind of work/job your sons have in the future?
* How might we support our daughters and our sons to complete school and achieve income-generating and professional goals?

1. Point out that gender roles are **not** permanent. They are shaped by society over time. Traditions, popular culture, the media, peers, family, and the community (including schools) all play a role in shaping, reinforcing, and/or changing these gender roles.
2. Mention that it is usually young people who contribute to positive changes in gender roles and norms over time. Girls will be doing different things than their mothers did, and boys will do different things than their fathers did.
3. Explain that it is okay to do things differently than your parents or grandparents. This has happened in every generation.
4. Summarize by explaining that as gender roles change over time there will be more equal opportunities for boys and girls in terms of education, work opportunities, and earning potential.
5. **Gender Inequalities– Total Time: 10 minutes**

Explain that adolescence is a time when gender roles and norms passed on by families, communities, and institutions are greatly felt and internalized.[[5]](#footnote-3)

Point out that gender roles and norms for boys and girls create inequalities in treatment and opportunities.

Discuss the effects of **gender inequality** on girls and boys:

* Because of strict gender norms for young girls and women, their physical health is often compromised by limited knowledge and access to health services, menstruation supplies, food, money-making opportunities, etc.
* Beliefs related to withholding food, as well as certain types of food, from adolescent girls at a time when they are growing the most inhibits their growth and their health as mothers and the health of their future babies.[[6]](#footnote-4)

Gender roles and norms limit girls’ education and learning because they are often required to leave school due to:

* Menstruation – due to lack of menstrual hygiene supplies and/or cultural beliefs.
* Having to do more chores around the house.
* Having to marry early.
* These norms often cause them to abandon their educational and occupational plans as well as friendships.

Girls have less mobility when they get older because they are kept inside due to the fact they menstruate, can get pregnant, and have more restrictions on their freedom.

* Girls often have fewer empowerment opportunities and less voice within their homes, schools, and communities.[[7]](#footnote-5)
* Gender also impacts young boys. Gender norms put pressure on boys to prove their masculinity, or what it means to be a man. Often, they have few role models that demonstrate ways to act differently towards girls and women.
* Gender norms can drive boys to engage in risky and harmful behaviors, such as violence toward other boys, as well as girls, reckless driving or other behaviors, unsafe sex, and substance abuse.
* For the sake of girls and boys, it is important to raise sons to respect and support girls and women. Households where there is greater mutual respect, support and sharing of roles tend to experience better health, education and overall wellbeing.[[8]](#footnote-6)
* Working with adolescent boys before gender attitudes and behaviors are firmly cemented is critical.[[9]](#footnote-7)

Mention that gender norms and roles have changed over time, and these changes have been good for both women and men. Everyone can benefit from expanding rigid gender norms and roles.

Say, it is important to talk about things that make us uncomfortable. They are often things that are important to bring up with our children!

Say, parents can play an essential role in challenging certain entrenched roles and creating a home where there is room for discussion, exchange and mutual support.



**E. Wrap Up: Total Time – 10 minutes**

1. Ask if anyone has questions.
2. Thank everyone for their participation and ask if anyone has any questions. Remind them that they can also submit anonymous questions now or at any point in the meeting. These questions will be answered in the next session.
3. Initiate a discussion about today’s meeting using these or similar questions:

* What is your take-away from this Parent Meeting?
* What did you learn?

1. Ask: Based on what you learned today, how can parents best support their child as she/he attends the Girls or Boys Club?
2. Thank everyone for their participation and input today.
3. If there will be another Parent Meeting, explain when and where it will take place.
4. Close the meeting.

# 

# **Session 3: Talking to Adolescents About Health and Relationships**

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Explore and gain skills on when and how to talk to your children about adolescent health, sex, and relationships.
* Become more confident on how to talk to your children about menstruation.
* Feel more comfortable being a trusted adult their children can turn to when they have concerns or worries about their health and relationships.

**Learning Objectives**



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## **Total Time: 1 hour and 30 minutes**



**Materials:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | Flipchart paper |
| A variety of colored markers | |

**Preparation Notes:**



* **Read the Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two Facilitators, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.
* On a flipchart, copy the “Contraceptive Methods” Tables shown further below.

**Session Plan:**



**A.** **Welcome – Total Time: 5 minutes**



1. Welcome everyone to the Parent Meeting. Thank everyone for coming.
2. Introduce yourself and any other facilitators or guest speakers.
3. If there are any new parents at the meeting, ask them to introduce themselves.
4. **How to Talk to Your Child about Adolescent Health**

**New Changes, New Relationships (15 minutes)**

1. Ask everyone to close their eyes and remember what it was like when they were 15 to 18 years old. (**Note**: Allow about 2 to 3 minutes for participants to think.)

* Who was your best friend or who did you like to spend time with?
* What was the popular song or your favorite kind of music to listen to?
* What was this time of being a young person like?
* What did you like about this age?
* How did you feel?
* What were some of your challenges?

1. Say: ***Like you did, your child has already begun experiencing a lot of the emotional and physical changes associated with puberty and becoming an adult.*** Ask the following:

* What changes have you noticed happening with your son/daughter physically?
* What changes have you noticed happening with your son/daughter emotionally?

1. Ask: ***How did you learn about sex and relationships? How did you learn about how babies are made?*** Some questions to ask:

* Did you hear your older siblings or cousins talk about it? If so, how accurate was the information?
* Did you hear about it from your peers and friends? If so, how accurate were they?
* Did you hear about it from your parents?

1. Point out that some important challenges for any adolescent is how to manage their new feelings about their changing body, romantic and sometimes sexual feelings for others, and other sex-related topics/issues.
2. Ask: ***Why is it so difficult to talk about sex with our children? Why is this topic such a taboo for so many families?***

*Ask:* ***Why is it so difficult to talk about sex with our children? Why is this topic such a taboo for so many families?***

1. Say: ***The evidence is clear that talking about sex and relationships does not lead to sexual activity. In fact, talking to youth about sex, relationships, and how to protect themselves and their partners openly and without shame helps them to make better choices. It also helps build better relationships between parents and their children.***
2. Continue by saying: ***Despite the challenges of talking about sex, relationships, and changing bodies, parents play an important role in their child’s development and growth - even if it doesn’t feel like it right now!*** Make the following points:

* Even though it may not feel like it right now, adolescents actually **do** look to their parents for advice and guidance.
* There is so much misinformation out there from peers, boyfriends/girlfriends, magazines, the internet, the mobile phone, etc.
* Your child trusts your perspective. Talk to them openly about your values and expectations while providing correct information wherever you can. Also admit when you don’t know the answer and work together with them to find it out. This helps build trust!
* By showing that you care about what they are going through, you can be a safe place to go when they face problems.

1. Explain that talking to your children about adolescent health and sex-related topics might not be easy or comfortable. It might even feel embarrassing. You might think:

* What does one say?
* How do I say it?
* When is the best time to talk to my child about these things?

1. Say that in this session, they will learn about how to talk to your children about adolescent health, relationships, and how to become a little more comfortable discussing the uncomfortable!

**My Daughter’s Changing Body (about 15 minutes)**

1. Before going into this session, re-emphasize that parents do not need to know everything that is happening in the minds and bodies of their children. The purpose of this exercise is to simply provide them with information on how they are changing so that they as parents can best support them.
2. Say that you will begin by talking about young women. Young women aged 15 and older are already experiencing lots of changes in their bodies and minds. Pointing out the images in the Parents’ Participant Guides for Session 3, make the following points:

*Physical changes*

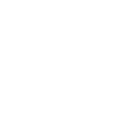
* Your daughter’s body has already begun to change, such as the development of breasts, body odor, growth of underarm or pubic hair.
* She has already started to menstruate regularly or will begin very soon.

*Emotional changes*

* She may be moody, emotional and/or has mood swings.
* She may question your and society’s authority and want to become more independent.
* She may have sexual feelings and a desire to be in relationships, or may already be in one.
* She may feel anxious and sensitive about the changes to her body.

***Menstruation***

1. Explain that menstruation is a particularly important topic to discuss with their daughter because many girls can feel a sense of shame when they have their period. Knowing what menstruation is and how to handle it when it happens will empower the daughter to take good care of herself.
2. Point out that it is also important for parents to discuss menstruation with boys because they can support girls from feeling shame during their periods. Boys will also learn about menstruation in the Boys Clubs so that can be a good time to have a family discussion!
3. Make the following points about menstruation:

* Menstruation is not something to be scared or ashamed of. It is normal and natural for girls/women to menstruate, and it can be managed.
* During puberty a girl’s body begins to release an egg from the ovaries inside of her about once a month.
* After the egg is released, the uterus (womb) will develop a lining with a little bit of tissue and blood in preparation for a possible pregnancy.
* If the girl/woman does not become pregnant, her body will get rid of the tissue and blood in the uterus. This is called menstruation.
* Menstruation usually happens about once a month and lasts about 4 to 7 days (but can last longer or shorter).
* Some girls menstruate monthly and some girls have irregular menstrual cycles. A menstrual cycle will probably become regular with time.
* Menstruation means that a girl is now biologically capable of becoming pregnant, but it does not necessarily mean they are ready to have children.
* Girls should feel proud! This is a sign they are healthy and maturing.
* Girls do not need to stay home from school or be secluded when menstruating. They can use homemade cloth pads or sanitary pads to catch the blood.
* Girls can continue their normal activities, including attending school.

1. Discuss menstrual hygiene management by making the following points:

* When menstruating, girls can manage their menstruation by using cloth rags or home-made cloth pads to catch the blood.
* When menstruating, girls should change the cloth/pad every 2 to 3 hours or more if they are bleeding heavily.
* During the Girls Club, girls will learn how to make home-made cloth pads which they can wash and reuse.
* When outside the home, girls should try to bring an extra cloth or pad in a bag to use later.
* After changing a cloth or pad, girls should wash the outside of their vagina (vulva) with water and pat dry.

1. Ask if anyone has a question.

**My Son’s Changing Body (about 10 minutes)**

1. Tell parents that they should also tell their daughters about changes that happen to boys as well and vice versa.
2. Remind parents that boys enter puberty and adolescence about two years later than girls on average, but this varies with each boy.
3. Explain that boys, like girls, are already experiencing lots of changes associated with puberty. Using the images in the Parents’ Participant Guides, point to the changes happening in adolescent boys’ bodies. Use it to make the following points:

*Physical Changes*

* A boy’s body changes during adolescence, and he begins to grow from a child into an adult.
* Your son’s voice will have begun to crack as it changes.
* His penis and testicles will get bigger. He will begin to produce sperm, a substance that can make a girl pregnant.
* It is very common for boys to awake with an erection in the morning.
* When a boy has an erection, it will eventually go down.
* When a boy has an erection, he can also ejaculate. When this happens, a fluid comes from the hard penis. He can control whether he ejaculates.
* Boys and men often ejaculate while they are asleep. This is called a sex dream or wet dream. It is very common and normal. These nocturnal emissions only happen when boys/men sleep. They cannot control them.
* Even though a boy’s body has the ability to produce sperm, have an erection, and ejaculate, this does not mean that he is necessarily ready to become a father yet.

*Emotional and Social changes*

* He may be moody, emotional and/or have mood swings.
* He may question your and society’s authority and want to become more independent.
* He may have sexual feelings and a desire to be in relationships, or already be in one.
* Boys may feel pressure from peers or other men to have sex to prove themselves.
* He may feel anxious and sensitive about the changes to his body.
* He will feel more emotional and moodier. He may feel more angry than usual.
* All of these changes are natural. All boys will go through them, but maybe not at the same time.

**“How” to Talk About Adolescent Health (about 10 minutes)**

1. Point out that “how” parents share information with their child is just as important as the information itself. Ask: ***What are some ways to make your child more comfortable talking to you about their own health and body changes?***
2. If not mentioned, discuss these general tips for talking to children about adolescent health and relationships. Put them on a flipchart paper if you have time.

* Look for opportunities to simply **listen** instead of giving advice right away. This will make it easy for them to talk to you.
* Say: “This is normal and natural” (because it is!)
* Sometimes, your child may want to vent and is **not** looking for advice. Instead, empathize with their problems and be a source of comfort (e.g. say soothing words, give them a hug, etc.).
* When they are looking for answers, give them little bits of information at a time. You do not need to tell them everything at one time.
* Reward questions by affirming that questions are always welcome and that you would love to have the opportunity to talk about these things with your child.
* Ask your daughter/son if s/he has any questions.
* Follow their lead. When your daughter or son is distracted and/or no longer interested in listening, close the conversation.

**Let’s Have a Conversation - A Role-Play (15 minutes)**

1. Break parents into pairs and tell them that they will have to come up with a short 2-minute role-play. In this role-play, one person will play the parent and the other will be the child. They should imagine that their child comes to them with a question about their body, something they “heard” from their friends or siblings, or something they learned from the Boys/Girls Club, etc. The parent will then respond in a way that makes the child feel comfortable based on what they learned so far and aim to start a conversation.
2. Remind them of a few things that parents can say.

|  |
| --- |
| * Listen and ask questions. * Say: “What you are feeling is normal and natural.” * Say: “Your body is beginning to change because you are becoming an adult.” * If they are upset, provide comforting words. * Provide information in small bits at a time. Avoid long lectures. * Follow their lead. Keep the conversation short and light. * Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know”. Work together to find the answer. |

1. Ask for a couple volunteers to share their role-plays. **Note**: Because of time, not everyone can perform, most likely.

**Sexual Feelings and Relationships - (15 minutes)**

1. Explain that in the Boys and Girls Clubs, their children are learning the skills to have respectful, intimate relationships.
2. Ask: ***What emotions do you think young people feel when they have a crush or feelings for someone? Why do these emotions feel good or pleasurable?***
3. Say that feelings of attraction often include having sexual feelings for another person. These types of feelings are not only completely normal, but can also feel fun and maybe a little scary!
4. Explain that it is completely normal and natural for young men and women to develop romantic and sexual feelings for other people during this time. This is a wonderful time for parents to talk about how to enjoy being in these new relationships and also how to keep themselves safe.

*Ask:* ***Why is it important for parents to talk with their older adolescents about sex?***

1. Ask: ***Why is it important for parents to talk with their older adolescents about sex?***
2. If not discussed, point out the following:

* It can be an opportunity to listen to their joys, fears and concerns about being in sexual relationships, and provide good advice, if that’s what they are looking for.
* These conversations can also build trust between parents and their children.
* It gives you insight into an important aspect of their private lives, and how you can support them.
* It can be an opportunity to spot any issues (e.g. controlling and other unsafe behavior) that you can address as a trusted adult.

1. Remind parents of the following:

* This gives you an important opportunity to share with your child about your values and your aspirations (dreams) for their future.
* Adolescents actually want to talk to their parents about sex, although it feels very uncomfortable for them.
* Talking to adolescents about sex does **not** encourage them to have early sex. Actually, children are **more likely to delay intercourse** when they talk to their parents about sex.
* Many adolescents who ask questions about sex are **not** necessarily sexually active. They are probably curious and want to know more information.

1. Say that because many youth are not ready to become pregnant, but may be having sex. For this reason, there are many short-term and long-term contraceptives available to prevent unwanted pregnancy.
2. Ask parents where they can go to get access to contraceptives.

* Encourage them to talk with their children about their contraceptive needs and, if they feel comfortable, to accompany them to seek those services. Every contraceptive method has advantages and disadvantages so certain methods are best for different people.
* Parents can play an important role in going with their son or daughter to a health clinic so that they can get access to contraceptives.

**D.** **Wrap-Up – Total Time: 5 minutes**

1. Initiate a discussion about today’s Parent Meeting, using these or similar questions:

* What is your take-away from this meeting?
* What did you learn?

1. Ask: Based on what you learned today how can parents best support their child as she/he attends the Girls or Boys Club? Ask them to write any notes or observations in their Participation Guides.



1. Thank everyone for their participation.
2. If there will be another Parent Meeting, explain when and where it will take place.
3. Close the meeting.

# **Session 4: Staying Safe**

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Understand how gender norms can lead to gender-based violence (GBV).
* Appreciate the linkages between gender-based violence and specific cultural practices (child marriage and female genital cutting).
* Think about the needs of adolescents beyond economic security and education, to include non-violent, safe, equitable households.
* Learn some ideas for how to create warm connections with their children to reflect a broad spectrum of experiences and to develop family closeness and safety.

**Learning Objectives**



## **Total Time: 90 minutes**



**Materials:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | Flipchart paper |
| A variety of colored markers | |

**Preparation Notes:**



Note: It is very important that you are aware of the legal issues and any mandatory reporting requirements if a minor discloses any type of violence or abuse. Please be sure to review relevant guidelines or laws before the Parent Meetings begin so you are prepared if disclosure should arise.

* **Read the Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two Facilitators, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.
* Invite a member of a women’s rights group or an expert on gender-based violence or similar to participate in this meeting and answer parents’ questions.
* Have a plan in place to be able to support and refer any parent who comes to you after the meeting reporting violence in her/his household or who faces other household difficulties that need to be discussed with their adolescent children.



**Session Plan:**

1. **Welcome (Gender and Gender-Based Violence) – Total Time: 30 minutes**



1. Welcome everyone to the meeting. Thank them for coming.
2. Introduce yourself and any other facilitator.
3. If there are new parents at the meeting, ask them to introduce themselves.
4. Explain that today we are going to talk about the connections between gender norms, or the expectations that guide men’s and women’s behavior, and gender-based violence.
5. Remind parents of gender roles and norms, which were discussed in a previous Parent Meeting:

* Gender norms and roles are “rules” for how men and women should behave that a particular community and/or society adopt.
* We learn these “rules” early in life from family members, schools, religious organizations, and social institutions.
* Gender roles and norms for women and men can and do change over time. Remember the exercise we did showing how some of our grandparents’ roles are so different from modern day roles of men and women?

1. Remind parents that because of gender norms, society expects men and women to look and behave in certain ways.
2. “Gender-based violence” is when the more powerful gender inflicts violence on the less powerful gender. In most cases, gender-based violence is done by men who inflict violence on women.
3. The fact that men are seen as powerful and women as weaker leads to an imbalance of power. Any power imbalance will typically result in violence as those with less power (girls and women) are judged as “less than” or “valued lower”. Men often have greater power to make decisions. Women are sometimes expected to go along with men’s decisions.

***Note: This can be a particularly emotional session for some parents who have been victims of GBV or know that their children have been, or who experienced FGC or child marriage. Oftentimes when these topics are discussed, disclosures can occur. In this case it could be a parent’s disclosure of assault or harassment or something they are aware happened to their child.   
  
Participants may become upset by some of the topics in the Girls Club and Boys Club meetings. They may feel uncomfortable talking about issues related to sex or violence with other parents. The activities may remind them of their own violent situations they’ve experienced. If a parent is upset by an activity, talk to them after the session in private to find out why they are uncomfortable. Listen to what is being said rather than forcing them to talk about what’s upsetting. Keep this information highly confidential. Before proceeding:***

1. Say: Discussing violence against children can be upsetting. It may also bring up bad memories from you own life or things that happened to people you care about. If during this session, you feel yourself becoming upset, I encourage you to focus on a tree or other pleasing plant and count the leaves until you feel calmer. Remember this is a safe space. I will stay here for a while after the session ends if you would like to speak privately.
2. Explain that the expectation for men to have power over women is often so strong in a community that the imbalance of power is not noticed – or it is tolerated – even in an intimate relationship.
3. Say: The inequalities that we see in our communities can sometimes perpetuate gender-based violence. Explain that as adolescents mature and grow, new things begin to happen to them.
4. Ask whether parents or their daughters have noticed people reacting to their daughters differently now that the girls’ bodies are beginning to change. Ask whether parents or their sons have observed changes in those boys’ behavior now that the boys’ bodies are changing.
5. Point out that adolescent girls can receive more attention when their bodies and behaviors are changing. They may experience:
   1. More pressure about their looks, how they are dressed, etc.
   2. Unwanted attention from older boys, men.
   3. More attention from some family members.
   4. Teasing or harassment at school or on their way to and/or from school.
6. Observe that this is not at all the girls’ doing and in fact it is boys and men who are behaving differently.
7. Ask if adolescent boys experience the same kind of attention. Why/ Why not?
8. Mention that boys can experience the following as they grow into adolescents and young adults:

* Teasing from peers and/or older boys, especially if they are not maturing as quickly as their peers.
* Harassment from peers and/or older boys and family members.
* Teasing or harassment at school or on their way to and/or from school.
* Pressure to show their masculinity.

1. Have your children ever asked you questions about these kinds of things? These things can be difficult to talk about!

***Adolescents should know they are not to blame if they experience GBV.***

1. Explain that both girls and boys can experience gender-based violence (GBV), however, GBV affects girls and women more often. GBV is usually inflicted by boys or men, mainly because of the power imbalance between men and women.
2. Discuss these and/or other similar points:

* Adolescents may experience harassment and gender-based violence for the first time.
* Adolescents need to be aware of GBV risk factors, how they can protect themselves against GBV, and what to do if they do experience GBV.
* **Adolescents should know they are not to blame if they experience GBV.**
* Parents play a big role in helping adolescents deal with GBV and/or harassment.

1. Explain the different types of violence that can be inflicted on adolescents:

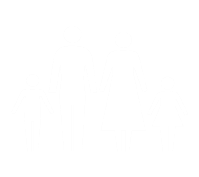
* **Sexual harassment & sexual violence** - involves **any type** of unwanted sexual attention, including:
* Unwanted touching, including touching sexual parts of a person’s body. For girls/women, this may include breasts, buttocks. For girls and boys, this may include touching or grabbing their genitals or buttocks.
* Touching in a sexual manner against the will of a person (e.g. kissing, grabbing, fondling, forcing a girl to touch a boy’s penis). Showing sexual videos or sending unwanted sexual pictures or messages.
* **Bullying** – when one person hurts, harms, or is mean to another person over and over again. Some bullies may repeatedly trip, hit, or push someone, while other bullies may leave a person out or not invite them to join games or group activities.
* **Intimidation** – intentionally scaring or frightening someone to do (or not do) something.
* **Isolation** – separating someone from people or events; withholding information to control the person.
* **Labeling or giving a bad name** – saying insulting and/or humiliating comments, such as calling a person stupid, dumb, fat, etc. to make the person look and feel bad.
* **Spreading rumors** – telling negative things/lies about a person.
* **Physical violence** – like punching, slapping, beating, etc.

1. Point out that harassment and GBV can come from many sources, in particular from people that adolescents know:

* Peers – both boys and girls
* Older boys or older girls
* Teachers
* Family members
* Family friends
* Neighbors

1. Discuss ways that GBV affects the lives of the adolescents. Girls and boys who experience GBV can:

* Have health problems, get pregnant and/or get infections, such as sexually transmitted infections and/or HIV from a rape.
* Become anxious, depressed, despondent, withdrawn, fearful, distrustful.
* Experience feelings of shame or guilt, **even though the gender-based violence was not their fault.**
* Have poor self-esteem.
* Poor performance in school and/or in life.

1. **Emphasize that any type of gender-based violence is never the victim’s fault**. Gender-based violence such as sexual harassment and/or violence toward adolescents has nothing to do with how they are dressed, their mannerisms, or their behaviors.
2. Explain that during the Girls and Boys Club meetings girls and boys will learn about the various forms of GBV, including sexual harassment, and what to do if it happens to them.
3. Ask if anyone has questions. (**Note**: Have a trusted member of a women’s rights group, a gender-based violence expert, or a reproductive health expert available to help answer questions.)
4. **Gender-based Violence, Cultural Traditions and Our Children**[[10]](#endnote-3),[[11]](#endnote-4),[[12]](#endnote-5),[[13]](#endnote-6)  **– Total Time: 30 minutes**
5. Say: The inequalities that we see in our communities can sometimes perpetuate gender-based violence. Today we will be learning about the connection between gender inequality and our cultural traditions for boys and girls, and for women and men.
6. Continue by saying: Cultural traditions are an important part of the fabric of our society. They hold us together as a community. At the same time, there may be certain practices that can cause harm to those we care about, and in this exercise we will explore new ways to think about them.
7. Discuss the following questions:

* What are some cultural practices that girls participate in?
* Are some of these practices helpful? (For example, the tradition of caring for one’s elders and young siblings is helpful to society.)
* Are some practices and expectations harmful? (For example, older men having sex with young girls, to make the girls “more mature.”)
* We know that many traditions change. For example, it used to be appropriate to throw garbage on the ground, because most garbage was made of natural products, like leaves, that naturally decompose. Now that the materials used to make many products have changed to synthetics such as plastic, it is no longer appropriate to throw that garbage on the ground.
* Changing traditions mean that people in different generations can have different ideas about what is right. This can contribute to conflict.

1. Ask, what are some coming-of-age cultural traditions and/or expectations that happen to adolescent girls and young women in your community?
2. Summarize what the parents tell you. Then, explain that today we are going to discuss two practices that sometimes happen when a girl is “coming of age”, but also might happen at birth.
3. *Say: Many of the practices and expectations for girls in adolescence have to do with their emerging sexuality and the desire of parents and community members to regulate it and prevent girls from having sex with anyone who is not approved by the parents.*

Note to Facilitator: This lesson is organized around FGC and child marriage, but if other practices in your community are more important, you may prioritize those. These may be present in their community:

* Female genital cutting (FGC)
* Child and forced marriages
* Other

1. Say, we are going to talk about some of our cultural practices and how they affect the lives of adolescents. (**Note:** Take time to discuss each question.)
2. What changes do you observe in your daughters at this age?
3. What coming-of-age rituals for girls are in the family? In your community? In your religious group?
4. Ask whether boys have the same social changes as girls at this age? If so, what are these? (**Note**: Encourage a discussion about what is expected of adolescent boys.)

* Mention that both boys and girls experience some coming of age changes and rituals when they enter adolescence. However, several rituals or practices for girls are particularly harmful to them and their future.
* Explain that we are going to talk about two traditional practices that often occur during early adolescence in many countries.

**Female Genital Cutting (FGC)[[14]](#endnote-7)** (about 15 minutes)

1. Explain that female genital cutting (FGC) is common in many parts of the world and can occur as a rite of passage for girls entering adolescence.
2. Point out that FGC is very painful to girls/women after it has been done and for a lifetime. It has no health benefits and is quite harmful to girls and women.
3. Discuss the harmful effects of FGC:

* **Immediate harmful effects**: pain, bleeding, swelling, infection, death from severe bleeding.
* **Recurring, long-term effects:** problems urinating, inability to menstruate properly, constant urinary tract infections, vaginal infections, painful intercourse, and infertility.
* **At labor and delivery**: prolonged labor, tears while giving birth, severe bleeding, and death of the infant or the mother.

1. Ask the guest speaker and expert on this topic to:

* Provide additional information about the harm of FGC to girls/women and the local laws against it.
* Discuss beliefs and myths that “justify” the practice, such as cleanliness or not being marriageable.

1. Discuss the country’s law against FGC.
2. Emphasize that if parents:

* Are considering this practice for their girls, please learn more about it, the harmful consequences to their daughter – including to her fertility – and the legal ramifications.
* Have already had their daughter/s cut, explain that it is understandable when people do things as a consequence of gender norms. It can be a common practice, and people emphasize the benefits when they make the decision.
* Want to say no to the practice, they should talk to any organization or authority that helps girls and women who **do not want** the practice.

1. Explain that anyone interested in learning more about this practice and how to prevent it in your family should talk to a member of the Anti-FCG organization, a supportive female leader.

**Early Marriage** (about 15 minutes)

1. Explain that in some communities a girl can be forced to marry before she turns 18 years of age for various reasons (family promises, traditional pressure). Or, the girl may want to marry before 18 years of age.
2. Discuss the benefits of girls waiting to start a family until after 18 years of age:

* Their bodies will be more mature and better able to deliver a baby healthfully. There is less risk of life-threatening complications in mothers and babies when the mother is over 18.
* They will have fewer premature births when the babies come too early and are too little to thrive.
* Their relationships will be more mutually supportive and less likely to be touched by violence.
* They will be more mature, and, thus, better able to care well for themselves and their children.

1. Point out that if girls get married too early they will not be able to achieve their aspirations and dreams, finish school, or take care of themselves and their family if something should happen to their husband.
2. Emphasize any existing laws that prohibit marriage before 18 years of age.
3. Delaying marriage until girls have been able to complete their schooling results in better economic future for her and her future husband and family.
4. Ask someone from any anti-gender-based violence or anti-traditional practices group to:

* Provide additional information about the harm of early marriage to girls, women, and future children.
* Discuss beliefs and myths that “justify” the practice, such as: being a sign of purity, avoiding the loss of virginity before marriage as a reason to get married early, and stigma around a girl being “impure “or “too old “to marry.
* Discuss the laws against early marriage.

1. Explain that FGC and early marriage are considered acts of violence against women. They are very harmful to the girl, her children, and they are usually against the law.
2. Mention that more and more community members are becoming aware of the harm that girls face through early marriage. They can help in the prevention of early marriages.
3. Point out that if early marriage is not something you want for your daughter, get help and advice from any organization working against harmful traditional practices and/or gender-based violence.
4. Ask if anyone has questions? (Note: Have a member from an organization against harmful traditional practices or GBV, or an expert supporter of women’s rights available to answer parents’ questions.)
5. **Creating Connections with Our Children – Total Time: 20 minutes**
6. How can we make our homes places of safety, communication and warm connection between family members?
7. Parents are the best source of education and support for their children. While adolescents tend to want to spend more time with their peers, they still want and need support and advice from their parents.

*Ask:* ***How can we make our homes places of safety, communication and warm connection between family members?***

1. Avoiding sensitive subjects won’t make them go away. If parents avoid talking with their child about GBV and harassment, children may turn to their friends for information and advice. This increases the chances that what they hear will be wrong information, or information not in line with your values.
2. It is hard for anyone to talk about difficult subjects such as GBV. As parents, you have an important job to help your children know they can come to you if they are scared or need help.
3. There are many advantages of discussing and deciding things together, between wives and husbands, and between children and parents. Ensuring that our homes are safe places for us and our children to discuss things that are on our mind helps us meet life’s challenges better together. Discuss ways that parents can help their children handle GBV and/or harassment if it occurs:

* **Observe if your daughter or son is acting differently, withdrawn, or does not want to go to school. Talk to your child about what is happening.**
* **Girls and boys may not feel comfortable reporting harassment or sexual assault for fear of not being believed or for being blamed. Be very open and non-judgmental if they tell you anything.**
* **Be open to communication, any time. Remain approachable and “ask-able”.**
* **Listen to your** child without judgment. Your child needs your love and support. Chances are she is blaming herself for any abuse that is happening.
* **Emphasize that harassment and sexual assault are never the victim’s fault.**
* Problem solve with your child.She/he will be learning ways to avoid harassment or what to do if it happens during the Girls and Boys Club meetings. Ask them about what they are learning and practice the techniques with them.

1. Discuss empowering things that parents can say to their child if she/he reports that they have experienced some sort of harassment or violence:

* “I believe you.”
* “I am glad you told me this – you are very brave to have come forward.”
* “I am sorry this happened to you.”
* “You are not alone in having this experience – it can happen to lots of people.”
* “It is not your fault.”
* “There are people who can help.”

1. Ask parents if they know where they can get support if they suspect their children are victims of GBV and harassment.
2. Discuss sources of support for girls/boys and parents:

* Talk to, and report to, someone from a service that protects girls and women from violence.
* Talk to a trusted, supportive adult, such as an older friend or knowledgeable auntie.
* Discuss the issue with a trusted, youth-friendly health care provider.
* Report the incident to local officials, such as *community* officials and organizations that support girls and women against violence*.*
* *Report the incident to the local police.*

1. Point out that when the community speaks out and rejects the power imbalance between women and men, and the resulting violence, violence against our young girls will end.
2. Ask if anyone has questions.
3. **Wrap-up – Total Time – 10 minutes**

1. Remind parents that GBV and harassment are never your child’s fault.
2. Reinforce the following:

* **Show love**. Young adolescents need adults who are there for them, connect with them, communicate with them, spend time with them, and show a genuine interest in them. This is how they learn to care for and treat others.
* **Provide support**. Young adolescents need encouragement and support to overcome obstacles in their lives.

1. Initiate a discussion about today’s Parent Meeting, using these or similar questions:

* What is your take-away from this meeting?
* What did you learn?

1. Ask: Based on what you learned today how can parents can best support their child as she/he attends the Girls or Boys Club and school?
2. Thank everyone for their participation.
3. If there will be another Parent Meeting, explain when and where it will take place.
4. Close the meeting.



# **Session 5: Supporting My Child’s Future**

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Increase their awareness of the importance of children’s education and lifelong learning.
* Develop strategies to help their children stay in school.
* Develop strategies to help their children continue to learn even when they are out of school.
* Explore how they can support their children to become economically empowered.

**Learning Objectives**



## **Total Time: 2 Hours**



**Materials Needed:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | Flipchart paper |
| A variety of colored markers | |

**Preparation Notes:**



* **Read the Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two Facilitators, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.
* Keep in mind that there may be parents whose adolescents won’t be able to continue their education. While you should encourage parents to implement solutions to staying in/returning to school, it is also important to be sensitive that it is not feasible for everyone. In this case, shift the focus to be more broadly on lifelong learning and personal growth in a general sense, both within formal (including vocational and trade) schools and out of school.

**Session Plan:**



**A.** **Welcome[[15]](#footnote-8) – Total Time: 15 minutes**

1. Welcome everyone to the meeting. Thank them for coming.
2. Introduce yourself and any other facilitator.
3. If there are new parents at the meeting, ask them to introduce themselves.
4. Ask the parents if they can remember the three most protective factors that help adolescents become resilient to challenges in their lives? (**Note**: This was first explored in the first Parents session)
5. If not mentioned, discuss the three most protective factors that help adolescents become resilient to challenges in their lives.[[16]](#endnote-8)

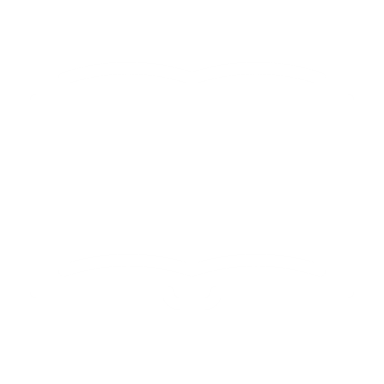
* **Family connectedness**:
  + This is the most protective factor in the lives of adolescents.
  + It is why it is so important to talk with your children and maintain a good relationship with them.
  + It is also important that parents not take adolescents’ desire for freedom and close connection with their friends too personally. This independence is needed for the child to grow up. But, this will change and there will be a greater closeness to family when they are older.
* **Positive social relationships**:
  + When adolescents have close, positive social peer relationships, there is less stress and likelihood of making poor decisions.
  + Adolescents who are several years older tend to have the greatest influence on both girls and boys.
  + This is why the Girls and Boys Clubs are led by older, trained same-sex Mentors.
* **Remaining in School – School attendance is consistently linked to**:
  + More positive and less disruptive behavior.
  + Less emotional distress.
  + Delayed initiation of sex.
  + Being able to earn a good income and livelihood once they complete school.

1. Explain that today we are going to talk about the third most protective factor – education, as well as how to support their child to become economically empowered.
2. Say: We will also talk about ways in which you can provide opportunities for your children to continue learning even when they are out of school.

**B.** **Importance of Education – Total Time: 25 minutes**

1. Ask parents to close their eyes and dream about what it would be like for their children if they were able to finish secondary school. Encourage them to use their imagination as you ask them these questions. They should think about their answers to these questions silently:

* How would their child feel about themselves?
* How would you feel about your child?
* After they complete secondary school, what would they be doing? If working, what kind of work would they be doing?
* After they complete secondary school, would they be better able to support the family? How so?

1. After about 5 minutes, ask parents to describe what their children would be like or be doing if they completed secondary school. (**Note**: Encourage many parents to share.)
2. ******Ask: ***What are the benefits of your child finishing secondary education?***
3. Summarize these or other benefits to girls and boys staying in school and finishing primary and secondary school:

* It can help your children to achieve their long-term dreams and goals.
* Your children will have more knowledge and skill to start and/or run a family business, find a job, or start a good career.
* There will be more occupational opportunities for your children.
* Your children will be able to earn more money, take care of their family, and even invest for emergencies or a new house.
* Girls will have healthier children that will experience fewer infant and childhood illnesses and death.
* Children will be better able to support their parents when they are older.
* Educated adults will advocate for education and better schools for children.

1. Say that it is not always possible for children to stay in school for many reasons, but this does not mean that their learning stops!
2. Ask: **What are the benefits of providing opportunities for your child to continue learning if they are out of school.**
3. Summarize these or other benefits to girls’ and boys’ continued learning outside of school:[[17]](#footnote-9)

* There are different programs – such as the Clubs! - that can support your children to increase their knowledge on sexual reproductive health and rights, even when they are out of school.
* Continued learning outside of school improves social relationships and mental health outcomes.
* By having more opportunities to learn even when out of school, girls and boys can improve their communication and negotiation skills
* Continued learning outside of school improves self-confidence and self-esteem.

1. Ask: ***What are the challenges for girls to stay in school?*** (**Note:** Encourage an active discussion. Write answers on flipchart, if available.)
2. If not mentioned, ask if any of these challenges exist in your area:

* Menstruation – Lack of menstrual supplies and private places to change in or near schools, and/or cultural beliefs that keep menstruating girls at home.
* Household chores – As girls get older they are given more household chores, which can interfere with going to school and/or studying.
* The distance to travel to school is very long.
* It is unsafe to walk back and forth to school.
* Harassment, bullying, or violence at school or on the way to and from school.
* Expectations around early child marriage.
* Society’s expectation that girls do not need education.
* School costs (fees, books, uniforms, etc.)

1. Ask: ***What are the challenges for boys to stay in school?*** (**Note:** Encourage an active discussion. Write answers on flipchart.)
2. If not mentioned, ask if any of these challenges for boys exist in your area: (**Note**: Add these to the flipchart responses from the question above.)

* Regular or increased chores and responsibilities on the farm or taking care of animals – for boys.
* Not enough time to study because of chores and responsibilities.
* The distance to school is very long.
* Safety - It is unsafe to walk back and forth to school
* Harassment, bullying or violence at school, or on the way to and from school, especially from other boys.
* School costs (fees, books, uniforms, etc.)

1. Acknowledge everyone’s comments. Then say: ***Let’s talk about ways to overcome some of these challenges that prevent your child from going to or finishing school.***

**Note:** Depending on your group, you may want to split the group so that one group focuses on identifying the solutions to promoting lifelong learning and the second group focuses on solutions to staying in school. Take care not to ask parents whether or not their children are in school as this may carry stigma and shame depending on your setting. **The directions provide some guidance on how to carry out the session depending on if the children of parents in your group are in or out of school.**

**C.** **Solutions to Staying in School / Continuing Lifelong Learning – Total Time: 35 minutes**

1. Draw the illustration below on a blank flipchart[[18]](#footnote-10) (see instructions below):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Instructions:   * Draw a ditch with a stream or rocks. * On one side of the ditch draw a picture of a child (it can be a stick figure). * On the other side of the ditch write, “Completing school”. |

1. Explain that between many girls and boys completing school are challenges and obstacles. The ditch and stream in the illustration represent all the challenges/obstacles that your children face in completing school / continuing to learn even when out of school.
2. Ask what are the obstacles to going to school/lifelong learning for girl and boys.
3. Write all the challenges to going to, remaining in, school (or the challenges to lifelong learning if children are out of school) in the ditch. (**Note**: See the illustration on the following page.)
4. When the challenges are done, draw a road or bridge over the ditch (**Note**: See the illustration on the following page.)

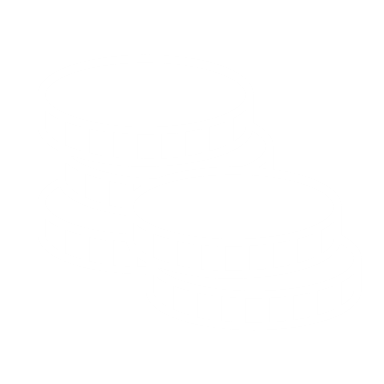
|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Instructions:   * Ask what are challenges to staying in school? Write responses in the ditch – see illustration. * Draw a bridge over the ditch/stream. * Ask what are ways to overcome the obstacles to staying in school? (Write responses above the bridge – see illustration.) |

1. Ask parents what are some ways to overcome these challenges? Write the solutions on top of the bridge (see instructions and illustration on this page.) (**Note:** Encourage an active discussion.)
2. Review the solutions mentioned with the parents.
3. Ask if they would like to add any others.
4. Discuss the following:

* Are these solutions something you can realistically implement?
* How can your children help with these challenges?
* Who in the community can help you deal with these challenges/obstacles to keeping children in school? Who in your community can help you to promote your child’s lifelong learning if they are out of school?
* If not mentioned, ask how other family members, teachers, community officials, etc. can help you find and implement solutions for your child to continue her/his learning.

1. Depending on what solutions are discussed, make an action plan with the parents. Have them commit to steps needed to implement any of the solutions discussed.
2. Thank everyone for the great ideas and input.

**D. Supporting My Child’s Economic Empowerment (25 minutes)**

1. Ask the parents: ***Once your children finish school or even once they are no longer in school, what unique challenges might they face once they begin looking for a job or want to start a business?*** Get as many responses as possible.
2. Explain that in the Boys and Girls Clubs, their children are learning new skills and how to join groups such as Village Savings and Loans Associations that can help them to save and invest their money to support themselves and their families.
3. Ask parents: ***What have you heard about Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA’s)?***
4. Explain to the parents that VSLAs are made up of groups of about 15-25 people (most often women, but men can join too) who save together and take small, low interest loans from those savings. Add more information as needed from the box below.
5. Ask: ***What are some ways that you can support your child to save and invest their money? What are some ways you can support their participation in the VSLA’s? What can you do now?***
6. Thank the parents for their ideas.

|  |
| --- |
| **Village Savings and Loan Associations - How They Work**   1. Community is oriented to the VSLA concept. 2. Individuals opt to join a group and identify their own members (typically 15-25 members). 3. Members trained on group governance and management. They get a lockbox with three locks and three keys, and passbooks for recording transactions. 4. Group establishes a constitution and bylaws, including meeting frequency, rules and regulations. 5. Group elects a chairperson, secretary and treasurer for a one-year term. 6. Group sets the price per share and the minimum/maximum number of shares a member can purchase during a meeting. 7. Groups begin saving on a weekly basis and are trained on financial management. 8. Groups add lending to the routine, making loans to members and collecting repayments with interest (a 10% monthly rate is typically applied to loans). 9. After 9-12 months, groups host “Share-Out Day,” ending the cycle and distributing savings and profits to members according to the number of shares each has purchased during the cycle. 10. Most groups quickly initiate a new cycle autonomously. |

**Learning Objectives**



1. Say that this is the final session they will have together as a Parents group.
2. Ask the parents to stand in a circle and share any reflections from their experiences in the Parents Group.
3. Thank everyone for participating in this group and say you hope that they will continue to rely on one another for support and ideas on how to develop close and trusting relationships with their adolescents.
4. Give everyone an opportunity to exchange contact information, if they prefer to do so.
5. Say that you look forward to seeing everyone at the Boys and Girls graduation session!
6. Close the meeting.

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11. Adapted from Module 6 Gender Based Violence (Ethiopia)– source: [www.open.edu/openlearncreate/pluginfile.php/.../6.\_gender\_based\_violence.doc](http://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/pluginfile.php/.../6._gender_based_violence.doc) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
12. Adapted from Understanding Boundaries, A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
13. Adapted from Artemis Pana and Stalo Lesta. Youth4Youth. A Manual for empowering young people in preventing gender-based violence through peer education. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
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16. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
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