



Canadian Council of Muslim Women  
Le conseil canadien des femmes musulmanes



## **ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS TO END VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY**

***An overview of promising practices in the engagement of men and boys  
in preventing family violence in the Canadian Muslim communities***

*Canadian Council of Muslim Women  
and  
White Ribbon*

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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this desktop research review is to examine a) the reality of violence against women and girls in Muslim families; b) relevant prevention strategies and approaches that have been developed. Together, these will inform the ways in which the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, and White Ribbon can best engage men and boys to prevent violence in Muslim families, against women and girls, ultimately to inform the toolkit Engaging Men and Boys to End Violence in the Family. This research will examine the following forms of violence to inform the development of the toolkit in conjunction with focus groups, interviews and surveys: Female genital cutting/mutilation (FGCM), forced marriage, elder abuse, physical violence, rape and other sexualized violence, emotional violence, spiritual abuse, body shaming and guilt about changes in women's bodies.

### **Research Methodology**

This desktop research review has been informed by academic sources, informational websites (including non-governmental organizations), news sources, and blog sources. Key findings from the literature will inform core topics and content of the toolkit, by detailing the reality of violence for Muslim women and girls. Additionally the research will examine some of the prevention tools, and approaches currently being used to prevent each of the forms of violence, if they are relevant for the creation of the toolkit.

### **Limitations**

This research provides an analysis of the various prevention strategies currently being employed globally and explores a collection of relevant primary prevention approaches.

However, information is not readily available about how most of these approaches have been evaluated, or are considered best practice approaches. This research can only highlight programs that appear to be effective in gender-based violence response and prevention.

## **Forms of Violence**

### **Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation**

The World Health Organization defines FGCM as the following: “FGCM is any procedure that involves total or partial removal of the external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.”<sup>1</sup> Statistically, the reality of assessing the actual prevalence of FGCM is very difficult, because the vast majority of cases are never reported and often occur outside of Canada. In 2011, 29,000 women from countries where FGCM is openly practiced became permanent residents to Canada.<sup>2</sup> It is statistically probable that many of these women have undergone some form of FGCM, and it is possible that some families may return to their birth countries to have the procedure performed on their children. Doctors however do have a duty to report to law enforcement agencies if they see evidence of FGCM. FGCM is an offence punishable under the criminal code of Canada. The UN has banned the practice globally, despite the fact that over 140 million girls have experienced FGCM and it is widely practiced, particularly in Northern and West Africa.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.who.int/topics/female\\_genital\\_mutilation/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/female_genital_mutilation/en/)

<sup>2</sup> Craig and Marc Kielburger, “Female Genital Mutilation Is a Canadian Issue Too,” 03/06/2013. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/craig-and-marc-kielburger/female-genital-mutilation\\_b\\_2813119.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/craig-and-marc-kielburger/female-genital-mutilation_b_2813119.html)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/prevalence/en/>

Research shows many men do not believe FGCM is good for women and want to see the practice eliminated.<sup>4</sup> *Men Speak Out*, is a new prevention project based in Europe,<sup>5</sup> engaging men in community based dialogue circles. Eliminating Female genital mutilation: An interagency statement (OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO), states community based dialogue is a best practice approach to addressing this issue. The United Nations Population Fund noted that “Empowering and enabling community leaders, civil society organizations and NGOs” is critical.<sup>6</sup> The document also noted the importance of engaging religious leaders in clarifying that FGCM is not an obligation. Within Canada, all of the documented prevention resource materials<sup>7</sup> dispelling myths and misconceptions would be considered child protection.

### **Forced Marriage**

According to the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, “A forced marriage is one in which someone other than the people getting married (usually other family members and particularly fathers) make the decision about who is to marry whom.”<sup>8</sup> Toronto’s South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO) studied the reality of forced marriage for girls and women in Canada. In 2013, they released a report, entitled Who, If, When to Marry-The Incidence of Forced Marriage in Ontario. This report documented confirmed or suspected cases of forced marriage in Ontario and Quebec. In 57% of the documented cases, girls and women were taken

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<sup>4</sup> Varol, N., Turkmani, S., Black, K., Hall, J., & Dawson, A. (2015). The role of men in abandonment of female genital mutilation: a systematic review. *BMC public health*, 15(1), 1.

<sup>5</sup> <http://menspeakout.eu/>

<sup>6</sup> A Holistic Approach to the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, Retrieved from [http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/726\\_filename\\_fgm.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/726_filename_fgm.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/screening/fgm> . This resource is for physicians to discuss FGM with parents of girls who might be vulnerable. It discusses myths and misconceptions and provides questions physicians could ask parents to initiate a conversation.

<sup>8</sup> <http://ccmw.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Forced-Marriage-Factsheet-EN.pdf>

out of the country to facilitate the marriage. Of the 219 documented cases, 103 were Muslim. Over half of these females were Canadian citizens. In 35% of the documented cases, those forced to marry were under the age of 19. MacLean's Magazine documented various cases<sup>9</sup>, noting that those responsible for perpetuating the phenomenon were mostly family members. The phenomenon of forced marriage in Canada is connected to the practice being perpetuated in other countries where laws do not exist to criminalize it. Globally, more than 15 million girls and women are forced into marriage annually.<sup>10</sup>

Youth Agency and the Culture of Law,<sup>11</sup> produced by SALCO, provides information for teachers to engage students, focusing on consent, rights and emancipation. Included in the kit is a graphic novel entitled My Choice: Who, If, When to Marry. Girls Not Brides, approaches the issue of child early forced marriage (CEFM) through an integrated approach, combining education about CEFM with sexual and reproductive health education, noting that this is an effective best practice.<sup>12</sup> Research and evaluated prevention<sup>13</sup> emerging in India, where approximately one third of the cases of CEFM occur, also supports this approach and a shift in social norms which lead to CEFM. Plan International places not only CEFM, but FGCM within the mandate of child protection, and a human rights based framework. Plan International directly engages men and boys in preventing forced marriage with the *Champions of Change* program, within the *Because I am a Girl* campaign<sup>14</sup>, not only creating space to challenge social norms,

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<sup>9</sup> Rachel, Brown. "Against Their Will: Inside Canada's CEFMs," January 5, 2015.

<http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/against-their-will/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/>

<sup>11</sup> [http://ojen.ca/sites/ojen.ca/files/resources/Youth%20Agency\\_Age%20of%20Majority.pdf](http://ojen.ca/sites/ojen.ca/files/resources/Youth%20Agency_Age%20of%20Majority.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/escaping-child-marriage-in-bangladesh-by-knowing-your-sexual-and-reproductive-health-rights/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/law-street/education-including-sex-education-can-curb-the-evils-of-child-marriage/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.plan-uk.org/because-i-am-a-girl/early-and-forced-marriage/>

masculinity, and male privilege amongst men, but also funding programs to keep girls in school and educate them about their legal, sexual and reproductive rights and health.<sup>15</sup> Oxfam's *We Can End All Violence Against Women*<sup>16</sup> program, developed in South Asia and replicated successfully in Africa, also shows the need for dialogue to shift social norms which accept violence against women and girls, to bring about change.<sup>17</sup>

### **Physical Intimate Partner Violence**

The Centre for Disease Control defines physical violence as the following: "Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm."<sup>18</sup> According to CCMW's own factsheet<sup>19</sup> from the report *Violence Against Women – Health and Justice for Canadian Muslim Women*<sup>20</sup>, "Recent research looking at Muslim marriage and divorce in North America found that approximately one-third of the women interviewed had experienced abuse within their marriage, which is at a similar rate to women in the general population." Annually 40,000 individuals are arrested for domestic violence in Canada, and each night 3,200 women stay at shelters for victims of violence and abuse, according to research conducted by the Canadian Women's Foundation.<sup>21</sup> Immigrant and newcomer populations reported lower rates of domestic violence than non-immigrant populations, according to a study conducted by the city of Toronto in 2011.<sup>22</sup> However,

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<sup>15</sup> See Plan's I AM A GIRL campaign: <https://plan-international.org/what-we-do/campaign-girls/priorities>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.wecan.org.pk/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/ending-violence-against-women-oxfam-guide-nov2012.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/definitions.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://ccmw.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Violence-Against-Women-and-Girls-in-the-Family-Factsheet-EN.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <http://ccmw.com/violence-against-women-health-and-justice-for-canadian-muslim-women/#>

<sup>21</sup> The Facts About Violence Against Women, by the Canadian Women's Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence>

<sup>22</sup> <http://wiki.settlementatwork.org/w/index.php/Women>

participants in a study by the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, indicated that stereotypes of Muslim men as violent, may have dissuaded them from reporting violence, because they did not want to perpetuate this stereotype.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, women may not report because they fear jeopardizing immigration applications, which the sponsoring person (a spouse) can withdraw.<sup>24</sup>

Addressing domestic violence in Canadian Muslim communities: A training manual for Muslim communities and Ontario service providers,<sup>25</sup> explores many promising practice approaches. The manual highlights *The Muslim Family Safety Project*<sup>26</sup>, a secondary intervention program. The program highlights key insights around preventing violence in the home, including the need to take into consideration the perspectives of men and women. The prevention toolkit is important because it “discusses Islamic perspectives and cultural practices regarding domestic violence,” which would indicate the lack of acceptance of violent social norms. *Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence*, at the University of Calgary<sup>27</sup>, “identified seven promising areas for engaging men and boys in domestic violence prevention.” These include:

- Engaging fathers in domestic violence prevention;
- Men’s health and domestic violence prevention;
- The role of sports and recreation in domestic violence prevention;
- The role of the workplace in domestic violence prevention;
- The role of peer relationships in domestic violence prevention;
- Men as allies in preventing domestic violence; and

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<sup>23</sup> Violence Against Women: Health and Justice for Canadian Muslim Women, a report by the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, by Pamela Cross, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> <http://ccrweb.ca/en/how-immigration-status-can-affect-women-situations-violence>

<sup>25</sup> Baobaid, M., & Hamed, G. (2010). Addressing domestic violence in Canadian Muslim communities: A training manual for Muslim communities and Ontario service providers. London, ON: Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration.

<sup>26</sup> <http://mrcssi.com/our-services/family-safety-program/>

<sup>27</sup> Wells, L., Lorenzetti, L., Carolo, H., Dinner, T., Jones, C., Minerson, T., & Esina, E. (2013). Engaging men and boys in domestic violence prevention: Opportunities and promising approaches. Calgary, AB: The University of Calgary, Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence. Retrieved from <http://blog.calgaryunitedway.org/socialvoice/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Shift-Engaging-Men-and-Boys.pdf>



- Aboriginal healing and domestic violence prevention.

Utilizing the engagement of fathers, and the role of peer relationships and men as allies, could inform the ways in which men and boys in Muslim communities can be engaged in preventing violence against women and girls.

### **Physical Parent to Child Violence**

Reliable data does not exist around the prevalence of physical abuse of children in Canadian Muslim families specifically. The Canadian Child Welfare Research<sup>28</sup> reported in 2008 that 3.1 in every 1,000 children were physically abused, in acts ranging from spanking to punching. Considering the vast majority of physical (as well as sexual) abuse goes unreported, it is not surprising then that the Canadian Mental Health Association<sup>29</sup> reported that 31% of boys and 21.3% of girls have experienced physical abuse.

Family physical violence prevention programs are vast and numerous globally. The Centre for Disease Control developed THRIVES: A Global Technical Package to Prevent Violence Against Children, emphasizing the following: “Training in parenting; Household economic strengthening; Reduced violence through legal protection; Improved services; Values and norms that protect children; Education and life skills; and Surveillance and evaluation.”<sup>30</sup> The Canadian Red Cross developed *Be Safe* and *It’s Not Your Fault*, two school-based prevention programs for child abuse prevention.<sup>31</sup> These programs address both physical and

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<sup>28</sup> <http://cwrp.ca/infosheets/physical-abuse-and-physical-punishment-canada>

<sup>29</sup> <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/one-third-of-canadians-have-suffered-child-abuse-highest-rates-in-the-western-provinces-study-says>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/vacs-thrives.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/violence--bullying-and-abuse-prevention/educators/child-abuse-and-neglect-prevention/child-abuse-and-neglect-prevention-programs>

sexual abuse of children and youth by focusing on children's rights, safe and supportive friendships, adults' responsibility to protect children from harm, privacy and safe and unsafe touching.

## **Sexual Violence**

According to the Centre for Disease Control, sexual violence may be defined as the following: "A sexual act committed against someone with that person's freely given consent."<sup>32</sup>

According to the Canadian Council of Muslim Women's own report<sup>33</sup>, "Research does not indicate there is any greater risk of violence for Muslim women than for women in other communities who are similarly socially located." Nonetheless, as with physical violence, the lived reality for Muslim women may include becoming a victim of sexual violence within the family, particularly experiencing sexual assault, including rape within a relationship.

Furthermore, according to a fact sheet published by the Canadian Women's Health Network, "the pressure to maintain culture, traditions, language, and religious practices may lead to violence if a member of the family begins to integrate into Canadian society in a way that conflicts with these values."<sup>34</sup> No specific data exists around the prevalence of sexual violence against children in Muslim families, though if we were to assume similar parallels between Muslim families and other Canadian groups, as with other forms of violence, roughly 5.8% of boys and 14.4% of girls experience sexual abuse in the family.<sup>35</sup> Because of the sensitivity and

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/definitions.html>

<sup>33</sup> Violence Against Women: Health and Justice for Canadian Muslim Women, a report by the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, by Pamela Cross, 2013, P. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Fact Sheet: Violence Against Women In Canada. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.cwhn.ca/sites/default/files/CRIAW%20FACTSHEET%20Violence%20against%20women%20-%20long%20version.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/one-third-of-canadians-have-suffered-child-abuse-highest-rates-in-the-western-provinces-study-says>

stigma around this, the consensus is that as with much sexual violence, underreporting is pervasive.

To date, there are no primary prevention programs specifically exist that would address sexualized violence in Muslim families in Canada. However, White Ribbon's strength-based *Draw the Line Campaign*<sup>36</sup> and education resources, engages men and boys in action-based dialogue focused on preventing all forms of violence against women and girls. The Alberta school system has implemented school based initiatives to raise awareness amongst children about sexual abuse.<sup>37</sup> The initiatives focus on the following key topics:

- Information about sexual abuse;
- Bullying;
- Good, bad and confusing touches;
- Incest;
- Screaming and yelling to attract attention;
- Telling an adult whom they trust;
- Children are never to blame for the abuse – the perpetrator is always responsible, never the child;
- A chance to practice skills in class;
- Information to take home;
- Meeting with parents;
- and Repetition of material over more than a single day.<sup>38</sup>

The Canadian Red Cross has also developed programs in this area, most notably the *It's Not Your Fault* program<sup>39</sup>, which examines the causes of abuse, and creates awareness about resources and support for youth to access.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.whiteribbon.ca/draw-the-line/>

<sup>37</sup> The Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence; Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence; and the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (January 2013) Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence: Preliminary Research. Retrieved from [http://preventdomesticviolence.ca/sites/default/files/research-files/Primary%20Prevention%20of%20Sexual%20Violence\\_0.pdf](http://preventdomesticviolence.ca/sites/default/files/research-files/Primary%20Prevention%20of%20Sexual%20Violence_0.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/violence--bullying-and-abuse-prevention/educators/child-abuse-and-neglect-prevention/child-abuse-and-neglect-prevention-programs>

## **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional violence/abuse (or psychological violence/abuse) is defined as “...a form of violence characterized by a person subjecting or exposing another to behaviour that may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, chronic depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder.”<sup>40</sup>

Emotional abuse rates in Muslim communities in Canada have not been studied. Similar to emotional abuse in other segments of the Canadian population, most goes unreported. Several varying forms of emotional abuse define unhealthy relationships, including but not limited to financial control, spiritual abuse (a phenomenon that has received little scholarly attention, and for which we unfortunately have no reliable data or prevention programs), control of people’s time and communications with others, body shaming, belittling, verbal abuse, name calling, manipulation, mistrust, chronic anger, blaming and shaming, humiliation, and co-dependent behaviours. These are present within families and intimate partner relationships, just as they are amongst other segments of the Canadian population.

No specific programs exist to directly address emotional abuse in Muslim communities in Canada. There are numerous healthy relationship programs in Canada that address emotional abuse and violence. One of the longest standing, most evaluated, best practice programs is Salt Spring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse (SWOVA) Community Development and Research Society’s Respectful Relationships program.<sup>41</sup> Since 1999, the program has been delivered in various communities with high success rates according to evaluation, focusing on building core relationship skills (emotional intelligence, empathy, conflict resolution, boundaries, consent, assertive communication, positive self-esteem, and knowing our rights) to

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<sup>40</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological\\_abuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_abuse)

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.swova.org/rr/>

eliminate all forms of violence, including emotional abuse. Australia also has a healthy relationship program entitled Respectful Relationships<sup>42</sup>, focusing on many of the same SWOVA components, but making connections between healthy relationship skill development, mental health and emotional well-being. Part of the *This is Abuse*<sup>43</sup> campaign in the UK, *Expect Respect: A Toolkit for addressing Teenage Relationship Abuse*<sup>44</sup>, focuses on identification of behaviours, myths and realities of violence, and conflict resolution skills. Violence prevention/healthy relationship skills are now being taught prior to adolescence in schools, because acceptance of unhealthy relationship patterns most often begins in teenage dating.

## **Elder Abuse**

According to the Centre for Disease Control, elder abuse may be defined as “Abuse and neglect of persons age 60 and older by a caregiver or another person in a relationship involving an expectation of trust.”<sup>45</sup> The majority of elder abuse happens from children or grandchildren towards vulnerable elderly individuals. There are three primary forms of elder abuse reported: physical, financial and sexual abuse. While emotional abuse and neglect may be more common than the most reported forms, they are often not reported. Statistics Canada indicates that one in ten elders experience some form of abuse in their lifetime.<sup>46</sup> Annually, the rate is 2% as of 2009.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately there is no statistical data to reliably convey the reality of elder abuse in Muslim communities, though there are documented cases according to the Vancouver Police, who have a special unit to handle this form of violence, according to CCMW’s Muslim Youth

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.relationshipsvictoria.com.au/services/childrens-services/ILLY/>

<sup>43</sup> <http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/>

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97773/teen-abuse-toolkit.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97773/teen-abuse-toolkit.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/elderabuse/definitions.html>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/elder-abuse-sentences-to-be-toughened-1.1134154>

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11627-eng.htm>

Canada Project<sup>48</sup>. In all likelihood the prevalence of elder abuse is under-reported, but could be reduced through healthy relationship programs, targeting adult children and grandchildren, emphasizing empathy, emotional intelligence and effective non-violent communication.

The Social Services Network (SSN), “a non-profit charitable organization delivering culturally and linguistically appropriate programs and services to the diverse South Asian community in York Region,”<sup>49</sup> has created resources and held trainings, in conjunction with the Muslim Resource Centre in London, Ontario, to create awareness about elder abuse, why it happens and share resources with community members. Additionally, Family Services of Toronto has published a brochure outlining the characteristics of elder abuse to create awareness.<sup>50</sup> The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, and the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) offer trainings such as the Peace Curriculum<sup>51</sup>, for staff and families to identify elder abuse, intervene and create healthy environments to prevent violence from happening.<sup>52</sup> This is a unique prevention initiative that helps both service providers and families recognize and prevent elder abuse.

## **Conclusion**

This desktop research review informs the toolkit creation, and the data collected in this desktop research can help to frame the creation of the toolkit, attesting to the urgency and need to address violence against women and girls within Muslim families. Examples of interventions within Canada and internationally, along with findings from the project needs assessment, input

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<sup>48</sup> <https://muslimyouthcanada.wordpress.com/tag/elder-abuse/>

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.socialservicesnetwork.org/Portals/0/Workshop%204%20-%20Elder%20Abuse.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.familyserVICEToronto.org/programs/seniors/Pamphlet.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.nurseone.ca/en/knowledge-features/elder-abuse/peace-resources>

<sup>52</sup> <http://rnao.ca/bpg/initiatives/promoting-awareness-elder-abuse-longterm-care>

from the advisory committee and results from key stakeholder interviews, will help inform the content and development of the toolkit for Engaging Men and Boys to End Violence in the Family. The toolkit will fill a gap of gender-based violence prevention learning resources in Muslim communities.

The field of healthy relationships programming has helped the violence prevention movement by creating critical relational skills, such as listening, assertive communication, and boundary setting, to be taught in varying educational settings to prevent violence. These evidence based programs with long track records can inform the toolkit creation, as commonalities emerge between them, and the knowledge and wisdom of mobilized community members collected during focus groups. As the toolkit development moves forward, entry points for this work must also be considered. This will be informed by key stakeholder interviews, comprised of key informants and subject matter experts in the community, combined with best practices in engaging men and boys in gender justice. Clearly, however, there is room for innovation and experimenting with new entry points that can effectively engage men and boys in the process of ending violence against women and girls.

It is our hope that the development of this toolkit will begin to support families to realize healthy relationships and end violence against women and girls. In doing so, we are optimistic that the quality of life for men and boys will also improve, as they can hopefully experience less stress, grow communication skills, build strong family bonds, and become more effective and positive role models. This toolkit, and these positive outcomes will aim to contribute to the global movement to end the harmful cycle of violence against women and girls.