
Talking Points: Women's Leadership

Talking points are brief statements that can serve as an outline or reminder of points to highlight during a discussion with different stakeholders, including community leaders. Talking points are most useful when the user is knowledgeable on issues and can engage in discussion beyond talking points.

Below are talking points for GBV teams to discuss women's leadership and the balance of power between women and men.

We cannot fully ensure the safety, wellbeing, and success of our community without women in leadership roles.

- We must all work together to help ensure the safety and wellbeing of our community by supporting women with opportunities and access to leadership roles.
- By supporting women's leadership, we are helping our community to utilize our full human potential so that we can better face current and future challenges such as pandemics, poverty, food insecurity, war, or climate change.
- Supporting women's leadership has proven to be "...critical to all areas of a healthy society, from reducing poverty to promoting the health, education and wellbeing of girls and boys." (UN Sustainable Development Goals)
- To ensure the safety, wellbeing, and success of our community, we need to understand our community members needs and interests. Women leaders are best positioned to understand women and girls needs as they themselves are women and women and girls feel more comfortable discussing their needs and interests with trusted women leaders.

When women leaders are engaged in leadership roles at all levels, women, girls, and the entire community benefits!

- Women are a valuable resource with vast amounts of skills, knowledge and expertise that can benefit our communities. Elevating women into leadership roles with decision making responsibilities taps into women's skills, knowledge, and expertise which benefits politics, business, and the community.
- When women leaders are included, they can represent women and girls' best interests and participate in key decision-making processes that shape their lives and futures. The result is healthier families, increased peace and security, and greater overall community wellbeing.
- When women are engaged in leadership roles, there is greater economic, social, and political progress for all.¹³
- For example, there are lower levels of income inequality in countries that have greater numbers of women leaders in legislative positions.¹⁴
- Women's decision-making within households has been shown to improve family members access to healthcare and education¹⁵ which has a positive impact on the current and future wellbeing of the family.

¹³ Women Deliver. *Balancing the Power Equation Women's Leadership in Politics, Businesses, and Communities*, 2018. <http://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/09/2018/Women-Leadership-Policy-Brief9.23.18-.pdf>

¹⁴ OECD. *Women, Government and Policy Making in OECD Countries: Fostering Diversity for Inclusive Growth*, OECD Publishing, 2014. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/en>

¹⁵ O'reilly, M. *Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies*, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/why-women-inclusive-security-and-peaceful-societies/>

A balance of power between women and men will help ensure the overall wellbeing of our community.

- Power isn't in limited supply—A balance of power simply creates more power and strength.¹⁶ If we use our power and strength together, think of how much more we can accomplish.
- We can support women's leadership, decision-making and collective action so that women and girls can control their own lives and start to transform the balance of power between men and women.
- We can transform the balance of power by making changes through our workplace. This could be through fair and equitable policies for all staff such as professional development opportunities, benefits, fair and equal wages, or zero-tolerance policies for any violence in the workplace.
- There are many opportunities for us to help transform the balance of power. We can start by addressing power dynamics in our own household; we can condemn violence against women and girls; ensure our daughters have a quality education; stop harmful practices such as early marriage; place women in roles traditionally held by men; support income generating activities and financial independence for women; and support women's inheritance rights.
- When women's lives improve, so does their decision-making capacity at all levels in all spheres of life which has a positive impact¹⁷ on not only women, but their families and the community as a whole. To help improve women's lives and decision-making power, we need to transform the balance of power between men and women.

Promoting and supporting women's leadership starts with us.

- Promoting and supporting women's leadership starts with each one of us and how we treat women and girls in our own families and personal lives. We can do this by first reflecting on our own lives and use of power, our beliefs, values, and actions that affect how we promote and support women's leadership.
- We can examine our leadership structures, policies and practices and eliminate the barriers within those systems that directly oppose or limit women's access to leadership opportunities and positions.
- All of us can work to promote women's leadership in our communities from high level support from lawmakers to traditional leaders to working with communities, organization, religious and faith leaders, families, and individuals.
- We can help women access essential services and help create equal access to and control over resources so that women can participate in leadership opportunities.¹⁸

We can all support women's leadership by modeling balance of power in the community.

- We can celebrate women's leadership and accomplishments with the community through awareness raising, campaigns, social media, discussions with families, friends, community members, and leaders.
- We can ensure equitable power within our own homes, with families and friends, and in our workplace by listening to one another, treating one another with respect and kindness and working together.
- We can ensure women are invited to and included in decision making spaces.
- We can help take on duties within the home that are traditionally completed by women and girls so that they don't miss out on important opportunities such as education, trainings, running for or holding political office, etc.
- We can model balance of power in our homes for our children to see and learn from. Parents play an important role in shaping their children's beliefs and seeing a balance of power between men and women in their families can help to change their beliefs about women's leadership.

¹⁶ Raising Voices. *SASA! Together: An activist approach for preventing violence against women*, Kampala, Uganda, 2020.

¹⁷ UNFPA. *Women Empowerment*. UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund, (n.d.). Issue 7. <https://www.unfpa.org/pcm/node/9551>

¹⁸ WFP Gender Office. *Gender & Participation*, 2019. Retrieved from <https://gender.manuals.wfp.org/en/gender-toolkit/gender-in-programming/participation/>