

WWP EN



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Accountability in practice: Towards a WWP EN methodology



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ACCOUNTABILITY IN PRACTICE: TOWARDS A WWP EN METHODOLOGY (2018)

as accepted by the AGM on 24 October 2019

1. Introduction

“Accountability” is an important ethic in perpetrator work, not only in terms of programmes encouraging men to take personal responsibility for their behaviour or being part of a community response holding abusive men to account, but also at all levels of the delivery of perpetrator programmes themselves, mainly with regard to prioritising the safety of women and children. This is the common methodology for perpetrator programmes and their umbrella organisations to create accountability structures and processes at all levels of their operation.

Further, WWP EN recognises that work with perpetrators of domestic violence was developed out of a feminist tradition and that much is owed to the specialised women’s support services who have brought domestic violence into the public and policy arenas over many years. Therefore, in the words of MenEngage, WWP EN is in agreement that accountability, as it refers to the relationship between workers and the different sectors, is “the commitment and appropriate conduct that individuals and organizations working in the engaging men and boys field must have toward women’s rights groups and other social justice movements. It involves the responsibility to listen to, consult and partner equally with such groups, making sure that the work of engaging men and boys makes a real contribution to social justice and gender equality”.

This methodology was developed out of ideas in a position paper commissioned by WWP EN in 2017. The ideas were explored in the WWP EN 2018 Annual Conference and this methodology will be finalised over 2019, with input of WWP EN members and further discussions at the 2019 Annual Conference.

2. Definitions of Accountability

A note on definitions: not all languages have direct translations for the word “accountable”. “Responsibility” is a word that comes close to describing accountability but there are key differences. “Accountability” holds the idea that we need to respond to others of the consequences of our actions/behaviours, while responsibility is a more internally driven concept. I can take responsibility for something that I have done, without this implying that other people are being involved in the process, while if I am accountable, it requires that I also need to take into consideration to “whom” I am accountable. It is, of course, important for programmes to put the following suggestions and ideas into a daily **practice**, than it is to



have the “right” word. One useful term to replace the word “accountability” is “building gender equity”¹, which means taking actions to build and model equal partnerships between women and men at all levels, in ourselves, with our clients, within and between organisations, and in our societies.

The International Rescue Committee’s Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls: Engaging Men Through Accountable Practice (EMAP), defines Accountable Practice as, “a framework for engaging men in preventing violence against women and girls in safe and effective ways that strengthen the voices and leadership of women.” They describe different types as they see it:

- **Personal accountability** is an ongoing process that involves identifying, monitoring and challenging harmful personal attitudes, beliefs and behaviours related to gender. Workers must recognize that change begins from within. Only by exploring and acknowledging their own gender prejudices will facilitators be equipped to support others in their own process of change and model change for others.
- **Relational accountability** encompasses the ways that power and privilege play out in interactions between men and women. Once workers are able to reflect on their own biases, they will then recognize ways to address power differences with other people. Relational accountability requires staff to examine how they interact with others and whether, and how, they are exerting power over them. It focuses on nurturing allies for women and girls and on continually reappraising the purpose of male programming.

It is also relevant to consider a third level of accountability that relates to the system. We shall call this third level “**Social accountability**”. In this sense we should also always consider different ways of being accountable in practice, related but not limited to:

- a) the justice system,
- b) the social/health care system,
- c) the Institutions, in terms of support or criticisms, but also of lobbying,
- d) extended families. For example, if a perpetrator is in a program and he kills his partner, are we not also accountable to her family? In this case we could consider the issue under “relational accountability”, but is not exclusively between the perpetrator and his partner.

Other definitions are included in the relevant sections.

¹ Kris Macomber, Integrating men as allies in anti-violence work: accountability and beyond.

3. Principles of our Work

WWP EN has already outlined the pre-conditions and principles for these in detail, please refer to:

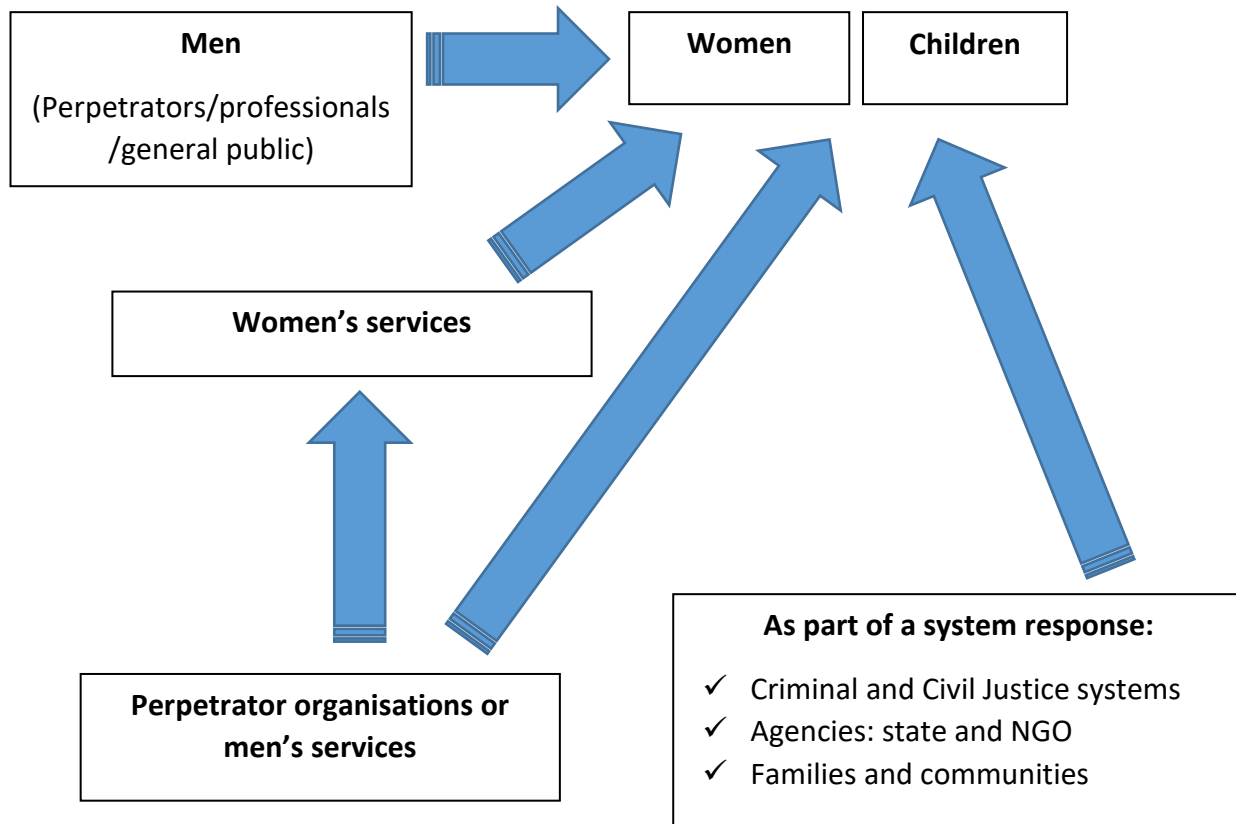
1. WWP EN Guidelines for Standards v3 2018, in Section A: Principles of Perpetrator Work, as follows:
 - A.1. The main goal of the work with perpetrators is to increase the safety of the victims of violence. Violence against women and children is unacceptable and that violent men are responsible for their use of violence. Perpetrator programmes must give priority to the human rights and dignity of women and their children.
 - A.2. It is particularly important for perpetrator programmes to cooperate closely with services for women victims and their children to ensure their safety. Perpetrator programmes should be an integrated part of a holistic intervention system and actively participate in inter-agency alliances tackling domestic violence. WWP EN supports non-competition for funds, and considers that it is the responsibility of perpetrator programmes to reach out to the specialised women's support services to establish communication in an attempt to set up collaboration.
 - A.3. Programmes should use an ecological model to understand the complex factors and pathways that enable and influence perpetrators' use of abuse. Programmes should incorporate a gendered perspective, i.e. an understanding of structural inequalities and power relations between men and women and with the underlying historical and social constructions. Further, they need a critical awareness of the intersections of gender with other social locations such as nationality, race, etc. and to situate their understanding within a wider process of cultural and political change towards abolishing gender-based violence, gender hierarchies, as well as other forms of personal and structural violence and discrimination.
2. WWP EN Members' Guiding Principles on Good Practice in Victim Safety, (Ex)Partner Support and Partnerships (from WWP EN 2017 Report on Member Organisations' Good Practice on these issues), as follows:-
 - Prioritising the safety of women and children subjected to men's violence (attending to their safety practically and prioritising the provision of services for them).
 - Violence is a perpetrator's responsibility (programmes should support the perpetrators to take responsibility for their abusive behaviours and develop non-abusive relationships based on mutual respect).
 - Gender sensitivity (men's abuse/violence is a structural, gendered and a form of discrimination of women, this should be attended to in the core work, organisational cultures and work methodologies).



- Multi-agency cooperation (domestic violence is a societal problem, and it is vital to work systematically on different levels, including attending to the legal framework, preventive and protection measures).
- Respectful partnership approaches between women's services and programs for perpetrators (highly important in order to ensure victims' safety as well as to achieve an integrated approach, partnership is crucial as it shows that perpetrator organisations respect specialist women's organisations as equal partners and value their expertise concerning forms of violence against women, women's oppression and discrimination and concerning the principles of safety).
- Zero tolerance to violence against women and other forms of violence (supporting a clear and unequivocally expressed political will and engagement of the entire society in tackling and preventing abuse are of a crucial importance its citizens' rights and freedoms).



4. Accountability Chart



N.B. - Note on power and accountability: this chart focusses on accountability towards women and children from all those who potentially have power over them in society. Readers are asked to consider the interaction of other historical oppressions within gender-based oppression, 2 examples being - white people's accountability to global majority/black/indigenous women and children; abled-bodied people towards disabled women and children.

5. Practical Guidelines

A. Perpetrator accountability to the women and children they have harmed

It is often unclear what is meant when talking about accountability. Perpetrator accountability to those he has hurt is not the same as a police intervention, or judicial punishment designed to “hold him to account”. Further, women and children’s accounts tell us that justice interventions do not always make them safer let alone hold him to account. A lack of understanding can lead to unworkable demands on perpetrator programmes and unrealistic expectations from other agencies that it will be able to “cure” him, whilst they abandon their own responsibilities in encouraging him to engage with a programme of behaviour change or holding him to account in other ways. If the man isn’t “cured” then it leads to services seeing the programme as “failing”.

A programme cannot force men to become personally accountable; however, programmes should encourage him to do so. However, neither we nor abusive men can define what accountability should look like for each man, only their victims can define this. For example, one child may want to have nothing to do with their father, another may wish for an apology and steps to repair the relationship. In this way, behaviours and the framing of reparation (as a form of accountability) would look very different in these two situations. Further, if a man was not willing to behave accountably, programmes should not neglect their obligations to women and children to hold him to account within a community response, for example, be aware of any measures in place to lessen his opportunities to abuse and contribute to these.

Further, there is a challenge in maintaining a focus on perpetrator accountability when perpetrator interventions increasingly focus on addressing 'criminogenic needs' (e.g. mental health issues). As the focus on addressing these increases, the potential for encouraging accountability within a gender-based response, and especially in terms of coercive controlling behaviours and their impacts, can become lost.

Practice Points

- ✓ Programmes should be part of, or create, community structures to manage his risk, situational risk and tackle system-generated risks. Where possible, this should be as wide a set up as possible and include as many formal and informal systems (please refer to section E on Collective Accountability for further details).
- ✓ Programmes should have very clear assessment procedures and criteria, to ensure programme integrity and consistency, and that men’s accountability is built into the systems. These and the reasons for these, should be communicated to referral agencies, women and men coming into contact with the service.

- ✓ Programmes could choose to create, in partnership with the man, a plan for him to take accountability going forwards and around safety. This should be done as a one to one process and revisited throughout the life of the programme, including as an exit plan at programme completion. This should not be done without a) direct input from his (ex)partner where it is safe to do so OR b) input from the partner support service/worker on what would be safe for his partner and children, and defined by their wishes. In this way, he is encouraged to think about reparation beyond apology and accountability beyond attention only to issues of safety.
- ✓ The incentive to become a better father and role model for their children is a very motivating factor for the men on a programme. Whilst programmes should capitalise on this to encourage the man's commitment to behaviour change, there is a need to be careful to take the children's wishes into account. This can happen when a programme is fixated on outcomes (such as contact with children) not meaningful reparation to them. What his children want and need should be at the centre of our work.
- ✓ Perpetrators need to learn to understand the consequences of their abusive behaviour, for example, accepting that there are some things that cannot be "fixed". Part of being accountable to the woman is to be willing to "live with the damage done" to her, to stay with her without the expectation that at some point everything will be fixed or to understand that she may still leave him, even if he thinks he is making an effort to change.
- ✓ Programmes need to have clear guidelines in place in terms of their legal obligations (for example, within a criminal justice or child protection system). This may need decisions on what to do if he behaves abusively whilst on the programme: does a programme report all coercive control behaviours; does a programme report any further use of violence this the Police/the authorities and, in these situations, does he keep his place on the course or lose it?

B. Perpetrator programmes' accountability to abused women and children

Understanding women and children's responses to the abuse they are faced with as resistance not only has implications for partner support services, but also what it means to intervene with perpetrators on their behalf. Perpetrator interventions can choose to align themselves with women and children's active resistance, and their attempts to restore safety, dignity and self-determination whilst under the perpetrator's coercive control. As such, interventions with each perpetrator should be informed by the specific nature of this in each family (Vlais et al., 2017).

Perpetrators should be held fully responsible for their violent behaviour by programmes, this should be underlined in every interaction with him. Further, programmes should understand

that manipulation of programme is possible and have procedures in place to minimise this, the most important of which is offering support to women and children.

As well as structures for victim safety, there needs to be consideration of accountability to women and children in all aspects of the programme. This consideration should extend to all aspects of the levels of confidentiality offered, all information sharing processes internal and external to the agency, plus to situations where women and children disclose risk and/or abuse and violence.

Practice Points

- ✓ A Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions 2018 outlines four conclusions on risk assessments to keep the victims safe and the perpetrators accountable:
 1. There must be routine risk assessments, and safety work must be ongoing during the programme and afterwards.
 2. Structured risk assessment methods (prioritising women's fears and thoughts on their situations and allowing for professional judgment) are preferable to clinical assessments.
 3. There must be an offer for partner contact and support for children linked to the perpetrator work.
 4. There must be procedure to ensure a quick and clear response to repeated violence.
- ✓ Perpetrator programmes should give structured and informed reports to referral agencies, for example, if a man is assessed as unsuitable for a programme or if he does not complete it. Programmes should be clear about their purpose as well as what they do not do, otherwise there can be negative consequences for the victims and for cooperation between different agencies.
- ✓ Programmes should hold joint case and risk management meetings between services for victims and their male partners, to ensure that women's views are heard in both processes. Programmes should also hold all or at least some of their supervision and quality assurance sessions with both services, and children's services, where they exist.
- ✓ Women and children are often further silenced or put at risk by services (service generated risk, see Grant & Mitchell 2010). Therefore, advocacy for women and children should be part of the service offered to them.
- ✓ Programmes should not use the same person to work with perpetrators and victims parties as there is the risk of jeopardising safety by sharing information unsafely. There are also issue of being seen to take sides and therefore trust if this is done.

- ✓ Programmes could consider contacting the women on receipt of a referral before they do an assessment with the man. This would help reassure women that there is also an independent service for them, and to prioritise her safety and views. It may also help tackle her fears of programme collusion with him, and trust in the programme.
- ✓ Evaluation procedures should seek and prioritise women's views wherever possible. Measurement systems such as the WWP EN Impact Outcome Monitoring Toolkit are recommended.
- ✓ Perpetrator programmes could consider holding focus groups for women and/or children who have used their services to ask about their experiences and consider any suggested recommendations from them. Further, women could be invited onto the programme's committee or steering group to share their knowledge, or invited to supervision sessions.

C. Perpetrator programmes to the specialised women's sector

The Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM) define accountability as a practice of:

- Promoting and ensuring women and girls' leadership in work on violence against women and girls;
- Listening to the demands and advice of diverse women and girls when undertaking male involvement efforts;
- Recognizing the existing gender hierarchy, and striving to transform a system of inequality from which men have benefited and continue to benefit;
- Working at both individual and structural levels to change personal behaviour while transforming patriarchal systems;
- Ensuring that male involvement efforts demonstrably empower women and girls;
- Examining funding decisions to ensure that gender hierarchies are not inadvertently reproduced.

Cooperation between the two sectors (where they exist as two sectors) is essential in order to make the work more effective. Work with young people on violence prevention would also benefit from getting a complete picture of violence, its effects on the ones subjected to it (first of all, women and children) and perpetrators' responsibility for it.

What is needed is to build bridges "between everything and everyone", as the WWP EN 2018 Annual Conference participants put it. That means bridges between services, different approaches and ways of work, finding common grounds and methods and carrying out this work jointly.

National and regional umbrella organisations could also work to the following. On a European level, WWP EN could work to the following guidelines and practice points, plus



push for the adoption of the Istanbul Convention articles (in particular, Article 16.3) within its membership to strengthen cooperation.

Practice Points

- ✓ Keep the feminist analysis of men's violence. Men's violence against women is a gendered issue that should be approached and dealt with, first of all, from a structural perspective.
- ✓ Formalize cooperation with women's rights organisations working specifically with domestic and sexualised violence on a front-line basis, not only organizations working with women's rights in general.
- ✓ Continue the work of women and their history of working with men's violence. Tell the story of the women's movement. The women's movement has defined violence as a social problem and not only an individual problem. The work women have carried forward for decades should be visible and provide a foundation for future development in the field of domestic violence.
- ✓ The work with perpetrators or with primary prevention measures must never take resources from work on support and protection for women and children exposed to men's violence.

Possible components of an accountable cooperation and capacity building effort:

- ✓ Raising funds together instead of competing with each other,
- ✓ Local women's specialised support services on the perpetrator programme steering group or committee,
- ✓ Consulting with the women's sector on setting up perpetrator programmes or on any developments associated with them,
- ✓ Joint supervision or meetings between the sectors in the presence and with active participation of "neutral" supervisor,
- ✓ Close insight into work with survivors of male violence through internship programmes for representatives of programmes,
- ✓ Organising mutual trainings for each other as well as planning and delivering trainings for other relevant actors,
- ✓ Close collaboration with relevant agencies and institutions, and
- ✓ Sharing the political ideas and "delivering" them to the public together through joint awareness rising campaigns, advocacy measures, etc.
- ✓ Creation of spaces to listen to each other and be open to each other's ideas, reflections and criticism. There should also be place for – and acceptance of – "honest mistakes" and possibility to correct them with each other's help.

D. Worker accountability to women and children

Generally, no professionals should ever ask a man to do something they are not prepared to do themselves. Part of the work involves asking perpetrators to open up and really examine deeply held beliefs; as such, training should cover perpetrator professionals completing some of the exercises they will be delivering in the programme. Also, workers should be given time and space to examine their own value base/beliefs. This should also be followed up and supported in the supervision sessions.

Practice Points

- ✓ Perpetrator work poses particular challenges on handling some of the powerful responses from men in regard to taking responsibility. He denies, trivialises the abuse, makes it invisible and often interprets violence in a way that puts all burden of guilt and shame on the victim. In order to handle the risk of negative alliance/collusive behaviour, workers should:
 1. Prioritise the safety and security of women and children – victim safety centred approach.
 2. Recognize the violence and psychological abuse.
 3. Stop playing off the victim.
 4. Make violence and its consequences visible.
 5. Not legitimize or minimize the violence.
 6. Strive for a changed attitude towards women.
 7. Be clear about responsibility and debt.
- ✓ For professionals, it is important to be grounded in knowledge of violent and abusive behaviour, and the effects of these such as trauma, plus the nature of victims' survival strategies.
- ✓ The professional also needs to create a positive working alliance with that part of the man who wants change, as it is important to try to understand the man and to create a relationship with him. He must listen and work with what is said but at the same time, he should always be cautious and know that the woman and children may have different stories.
- ✓ Workers should also be able to understand the ways in which violence and psychological abuse might be invisible to the man (and to a certain extent to society generally), but can create severe consequences for women and children. The perpetrator worker should always be able to see how minimisation and denial might be present and always strive to hold men accountable for their violence.

E. Male worker accountability to women workers

The potential for modelling equality in relationships between men and women is a powerful tool that programmes can use especially in group sessions. This means that male workers should be prepared to examine and work on their accountability to women, and express it accordingly. For example, how do workers deal with male privilege in the work? Readers should refer to Section 2, the International Rescue Committee definitions for explanations of both personal and relational accountability.

Practice Points

Unizon, a Swedish organization who works with women and children subjected to men's violence, has together with Peter Söderström, formulated some guidelines:

- ✓ Keep the feminist analysis of men's violence. Knowledge and self-reflection are the key here.
- ✓ Men need to have strategies to openly declare how gender inequality in practice is always present.
- ✓ Men as representatives of feminist organisations and men as leaders have greater responsibility for combating violence and always pointing out the perpetrator's responsibility for violence.
- ✓ Men should be prepared to examine their own relationship to and benefits from patriarchy. Changing a society based on gender power perspective means that you as a man must take responsibility for your own places of power.
- ✓ Who talks about what in the sessions? For example, men should discuss with female co-facilitators about whether they can take responsibility in sessions for highlighting the subjects that usually meet most resistance, such as talking about men's responsibility to counter pornography and prostitution or to say that men are responsible for the violence in society.

Further ideas:

- ✓ Quality assurance sessions could be used to make sure that there is either a 50/50 or 60/40 weighted in women's favour (as the men will experience it as a 50/50 situation) split between female and male groupworkers in time taken speaking and actively facilitating in the sessions.
- ✓ Programmes could run sessions for male workers to examine their accountability to women adapting tools such as the MenEngage Accountability Toolkit or International Rescue Committee's Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls: Engaging Men Through Accountable Practice (EMAP) Sessions.

F. Collective Responsibility: Influencing and including the general public and multi-agency structures

Women and children do not always receive an adequate response to their disclosures of experiencing abuse, often there can be negative effects of such a disclosure, such as being put further at risk by unintended consequences of interventions. Often, a woman is held entirely responsible for the abuse perpetrated against her, with the man remaining “hidden” or “invisible” in the intervention. When agencies do get involved, they often “take over” from the victims, acting in ways that undermine their dignity or leave them at risk. Multi-agency responses need to find ways to support victim autonomy (in age appropriate ways), whilst not leaving them totally on their own in attempting to manage the abusers’ behaviour.

Specialist services are ideally placed to help educate other services or take actions to changing societal responses to tackling domestic abuse, including helping agencies to understand men’s use of psychological abuse and its impacts.

A coordinated “system” surrounding a perpetrator programme is influential in improving the engagement of men, risk assessment and men being able to continue to manage their abusive behaviour long term (Gondolf, 2002). Again, programmes are ideally placed to support the women’s sector to lead on ensuring a unified response and message to abusive men, women and children and in society generally.

Practice Points

- ✓ Programmes should collaborate with the local multi-agency or community structures (or create them where these do not exist), emphasising and supporting local women’s organisations.
- ✓ Creating “webs of accountability”. This concept was developed by Smith, Laming and Humphreys (2013) in Australia. “Webs of Accountability” focus on the way that partners are already attempting to hold men on perpetrator programmes accountable or have very good ideas on how this would look for them. In the paper, it was stressed how this was helped by perpetrator programmes supporting the partners’ ideas around this, in particular partner support services empowering them. This was further enhanced when agencies and the civil and criminal justice systems worked together to form a web of accountability that supported the women, rather than working against their ideas and actions. This could also include family, friends and local communities.
- ✓ Invite key people (friends or family) identified by the men in being able to hold them accountable after programme completion (practice in Men Stopping Violence, Atlanta in the U.S.), to several sessions at the end of the man’s programme. This is so that they can understand the key messages and support the man in an ongoing way. They could also be included in the accountability plan as prepared pre-exit.

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