

C4: ALLY VS PROTECTOR

AIM

By the end of the session, participants will have:

- ▶ Clarified the difference between the “ally” role and the “protector” role in men taking action to challenge patriarchal masculinities and promote women’s political participation .
- ▶ Identified the reasons why men should take action as an ally and rather than acting as a protector.

STEP-BY-STEP

1. Explain the learning aims of the session.
2. Explain that one way to explore what it means for men to ally with women in challenging patriarchal masculinities is for men to recall experiences from their own lives when they have felt supported by other men.
3. Ask participants to take 5 minutes to recall an experience from their own lives when they were facing a problem, and another man supported them in dealing with it.
4. After 5 minutes, ask participants to pair up with someone with whom they will feel comfortable sharing their story. Explain that each person will have 4 minutes to share their story with their partner, and that you will announce when it is time for participants to swap roles.
5. After 8 minutes (when both partners in each pair have shared their stories), bring everyone back together to debrief the stories and what we can learn from them about being an ally. Use the following questions:
 - ▶ *What did the other person do to help you feel supported in dealing with the problem that you were facing?*
 - ▶ *In what ways did the other person’s support build your own confidence and ability to deal with the problem that you were facing?*
6. Referring to the Handout C4, present the first two definitions of what being an ally means, emphasizing the key points that an ally:
 - ▶ Supports someone or some group in dealing with a problem.
 - ▶ Reinforces, rather than reduces, the power and ability that this person or group has to deal with the problem.
7. Recall the discussion of power-over relationships from the Gender Boxes activity (C1). Explain that it is important to think about the different meanings of power in thinking about what it means to be an ally. This means that for men who want to ally with women in challenging patriarchal power-over relations, it is important that they act in ways that build power-with relations with women and that do not, explicitly or implicitly, reinforce power-over relations.

Time: 60 mins

Materials:

- ▶ Flipchart paper and pens
- ▶ Handout C4: Becoming an Ally

Training Tips:

- ✓ This activity uses storytelling to help participants understand the meaning of “being an ally” and to relate this to their own lives. You can help participants with this by sharing your own stories about being an ally to women and what this involved.
- ✓ Make sure that any story you tell brings out at least some of the key points made in the Handout about what it means to be an effective ally.

8. Break participants into smaller groups. Ask each small group to discuss a scenario from their own experience, or one that could happen in their own party/organization, in which a man thought he was being an ally to women's struggle for greater political participation but was in fact undermining women's power-within and power-to and not building power with relations with women. In developing their scenarios, ask each group to discuss the following questions:
 - ▶ *What did the man do and not do that he/ ped to reinforce rather than reduce power-over relations between men and women?*
 - ▶ *How could the man have better supported women's power-within and power-to?*
 - ▶ *How could the man have behaved in ways which helped to strengthen power-with relations with women in their struggles for greater political participation?*
9. Allow the small groups 15-20 minutes for their small group-work, and then bring everyone back together. Invite the small groups to take it in turns to report back on their conversations, and their answers to the three questions.
10. Once the small groups have reported back, lead a general discussion on the difference between being an ally and being a protector, and the importance of men being allies to women rather than protectors of women. Referring to Handout C4, make the following key points:
 - ▶ In most societies, the social expectations of masculinity with which boys grow up to be men emphasize that a man must be strong (emotionally as well as physically) because women are weak and in need of protection. These norms of masculinity send the message that masculinity = strength and that femininity = weakness.
 - ▶ This message is a patriarchal message because it denies women their power (power within and power-to).By insisting that power is masculine, it reinforces men's power-over relations with women.
 - ▶ When men take on the role of being a protector of women, they reinforce this power-over situation by acting on behalf of women (reinforcing the idea that women cannot act on their own behalf) rather than acting with women to change a harmful situation.
 - ▶ In order to secure greater political participation, women need men to be allies rather than protectors. Being a male ally involves listening to and working with women to address the barriers to their political involvement and progress, rather than taking on the role of protector and trying to solve the problem for women.
11. With this distinction between being an ally and being a protector in mind, end the session by briefly reviewing the scenarios from the small group-work. Highlight the ways in which men can be an ally to women in each scenario by supporting women's power-within and power-to, and working to strengthen power-with relations with women in their struggles for greater political participation.