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IMAGINE PROJECT:

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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**INSPIRING MALE  
ACTION ON GENDER  
EQUALITY IN EUROPE**



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## INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview and analysis of the monitoring and evaluation of the IMAGINE project.

The IMAGINE project is a partnership between three organisations: MÄN (Men and Gender Equality Sweden), The Great initiative/The Good Lad Initiative (UK)<sup>1</sup>, and Emancipator (NL). The overall aim of the project is to reduce sexual violence and sexual harassment (SV&SH) by reaching out to boys and sensitizing them on the subject.

The IMAGINE project seeks to recruit volunteers to design and carry out interventions aimed at teenage boys. Recruiting and training volunteers, as well as carrying out interventions, is expected to contribute to the objectives of the project.

These volunteers are called “peer educators,”<sup>2</sup> as they are themselves young men, and can hopefully reach out to other young men more easily than trainers from other age groups.

This report is one of the results of the evaluation that was conducted during a number of sessions and other activities organised in various organisations with the help of the peer educators. The evaluation is based on both quantitative and qualitative data collected from the participants and the peer educators. Among other methods, two survey sources were used for the evaluations:

- written questionnaires, filled in by the participants at the end of the sessions;
- written questionnaires, filled in by the peer educators, about their sessions;

In this report, we first consider the perspective of the participants, and then turn towards the perspective of the peer educators. After thorough analysis and discussion of the data, we then conclude the report with recommendations for possible future projects. Several annexes provide additional material that the especially engaged reader may find helpful.

## IMAGINE PROJECT CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

The scale of violence against women and children has been described as the biggest public health and human rights scandal in Europe today. The 2014 FRA EU-wide survey on violence against women found that, “One in three women (33%) has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since she was 15 years old,” and that, “An estimated 13 million women in the EU have experienced physical violence in the course of [the last] 12 months.”

The IMAGINE project, funded by the Daphne programme of the European Union, is a partnership between MÄN (Men for Gender Equality Sweden), The GREAT Initiative (UK) and Emancipator (NL); the project targets sexual harassment and sexual violence (SH&SV). The action includes recruiting

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<sup>1</sup> The Great Initiative was the UK partner until 30 June 2017. It was then replaced by The Good Lad Initiative – using the same volunteers and project coordinator – on 1 July 2017.

<sup>2</sup> The term *peer* would refer to them as being the same sex/age as the participants in the sessions. This is only partially true. Although the participants in most of the sessions were of the same sex (male), there was usually an age difference, where participants were mostly high school-aged persons (adolescents 15-18), while the peer educators/trainers were young adults. Nevertheless, the project’s guiding vision is to work with trainers with whom the participants can easily relate.

volunteers to design and carry out interventions aimed at teenage boys. Recruiting and training volunteers, as well as carrying out interventions, is expected to contribute to the objectives of the project.

The project runs for 24 months, from 2016-09-01 to 2018-08-31.

The main objectives of the project are listed as follows:

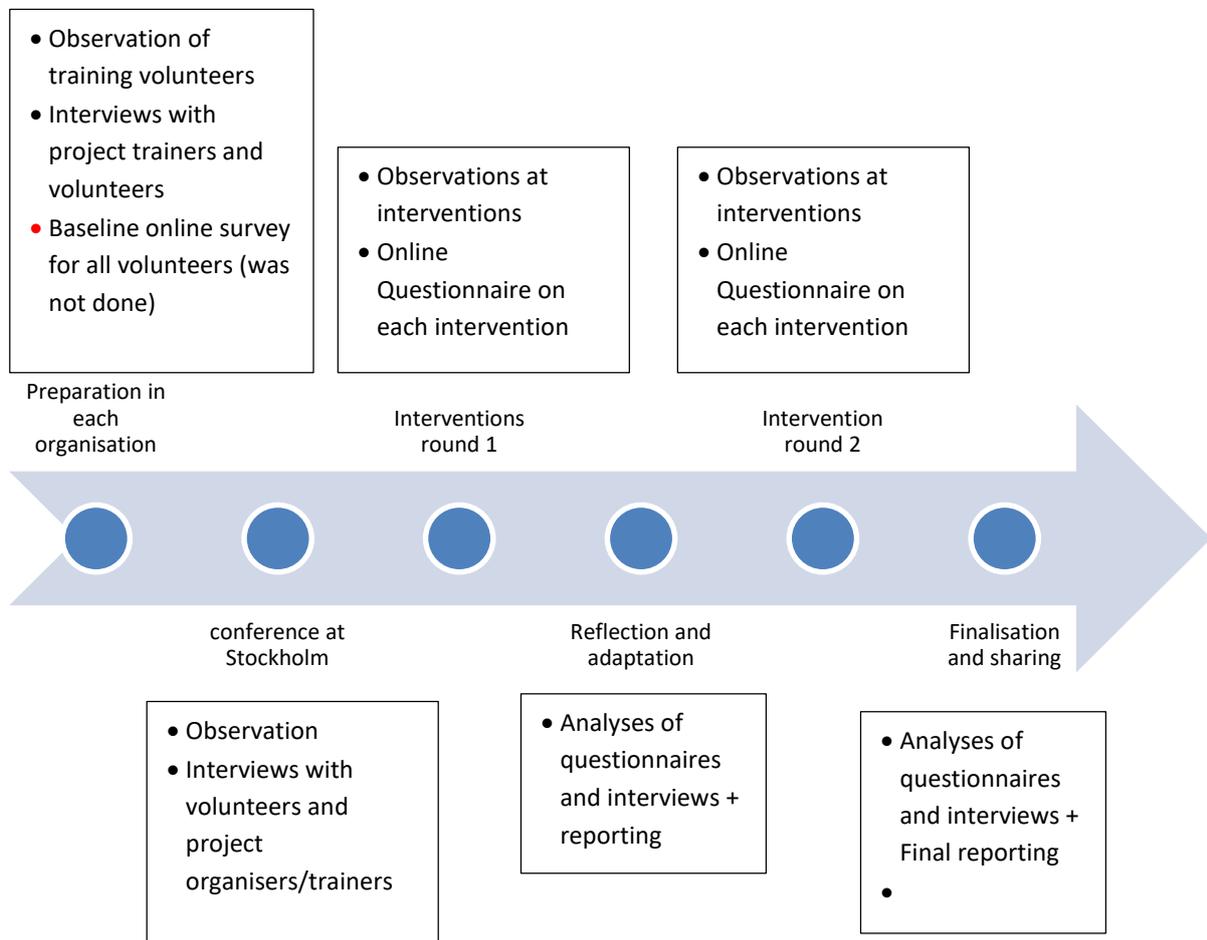
- develop a pan-European initiative for engaging men/boys to eliminate sexual harassment & sexual violence (hereafter SH&SV);
- share good practices on how men/boys can contribute to eliminating SH&SV;
- improve awareness of the links between SH&SV and gender inequality;
- develop accessible tools for engaging men/boys in gender equality and violence prevention throughout Europe;
- build a pan-European community of individuals and organisations committed to working with men/boys on gender equality and violence prevention.

The expected results of the project were:

- a decrease in incidence of SH&SV for women/girls in intervention areas in lead member states;
- increased awareness of the systemic causes of SH&SV and how these can be disrupted;
- increased awareness of ways that positive masculinities and engaging men and boys in gender equality can effectively challenge and prevent SH&SV and contribute to gender equality;
- a decrease in negative effects associated with unhealthy masculine stereotypes (e.g. risk-taking, substance abuse, unresolved male mental health needs, suicide, etc);
- increased engagement of men/boys in SH&SV prevention and the promotion of gender equality;
- greater awareness, visibility, and resources explaining the ways in which men/boys can be involved in SH&SV prevention and the promotion of gender equality.

## EVALUATION: METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

In most respects, the methodology for the evaluation followed what was proposed at the inception of the evaluators' engagement with the project. This was connected to a timeline:



## EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Below, the activities for evaluation, monitoring, and support of the project are briefly described.

In the initial stages, the precise direction in which the evaluation and monitoring evolved remained open, since its eventual path was the result of the co-creation process that the evaluators elaborated with the project lead. The activities that comprised the framework, and which were co-created and validated by the evaluators and partners at project start, eventually evolved into a different shape, but nevertheless retained the general contours of the original plan.

The *second objective* of the activities was that the evaluators, throughout the project, were to offer *intervention quality support* to the partners in various forms. These entailed formal and informal styles, and occurred not only during events, via e-mail as well as by phone and Skype, but also a small number of meetings (since travel resources were prohibitive) in each phase, specifically planned for that purpose. Below, the activities, which encompassed both of the objectives of the evaluation and the monitoring, are listed.

## DEVELOPMENT PHASE

### M&E KICK-OFF MEETING

During the M&E kick-off period, an initial meeting between the coordinators of each participating country and the two evaluators was held to set up and agree on the final Evaluation Framework. Ideas and views were collected and discussed, for use by the evaluators in constructing the Evaluation Framework. The evaluators were also allowed to join part of a coordination meeting already planned for other purposes.

### DEVELOPMENT OF EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Ideas and views collected during the kick off meeting were written down in a coherent and detailed evaluation and monitoring framework, which was used as a roadmap throughout the project. This Framework fit completely into the co-created model for working with teenage boys, which the partners were developing at the start of the project.

### *VALIDATION OF EVALUATION FRAMEWORK + INTERVENTION QUALITY SUPPORT*

During virtual Skype meetings, the partner organizations and evaluators discussed and validated the Evaluation Framework, as well as any other items the evaluators could contribute for quality support.

## IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

### FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

Qualitative face-to-face interviews and discussions were held with the project's peer educators. This was often in a very informal way during breaks at the training venues. These interactions were carried out on location in each of the three member states and in the local language (which is why it was an asset to have a Dutch and Swedish/English team of evaluators). Also, the evaluators attended the four-day training workshop in Stockholm, which gave them a great opportunity not only to participate but also to enjoy numerous informal talks with the peer educators, to grasp their motivations, approaches, challenges, and so on.

#### FOLLOW-UP OF MONITORING INDICATORS

In the evaluation framework, developed in Phase 1, indicators were listed to monitor the output, deliverables, etc:

- the number of participants they planned to reach; and
- the number of sessions they planned to organise.

These were followed-up in ongoing contact between project management and evaluators.

#### INTERVENTION QUALITY SUPPORT MEETINGS

The purpose of these meetings – which were held virtually – was to provide support to the project team in their activities and contribute quality input overall to this stage of the project. This is an example of the way they “action research” methodology was implemented: results of on-going monitoring activities were provided to the project so that they could be implemented as soon as possible in the project activities, which then allowed the results to have a positive impact on the on-going project work, which then improved what the monitoring detected, and so on in a virtuous cycle.

#### SHARING PHASE

##### FACE-TO-FACE WITH PARTICIPANTS AT EVENTS

The evaluators were expected to participate in two international conferences, occurring 24-26 February 2017, and 12-13 June 2018. During these events, interviews were conducted to explore their views on the quality and impact of the project.

##### FINAL REPORTING

All the material gathered was assembled and organized and presented in this final evaluation report.

##### VALIDATION OF THE REPORT

The evaluation report will be (was) validated during a (virtual) meeting between the evaluators and the project management.

#### INTERVENTION QUALITY SUPPORT MEETINGS

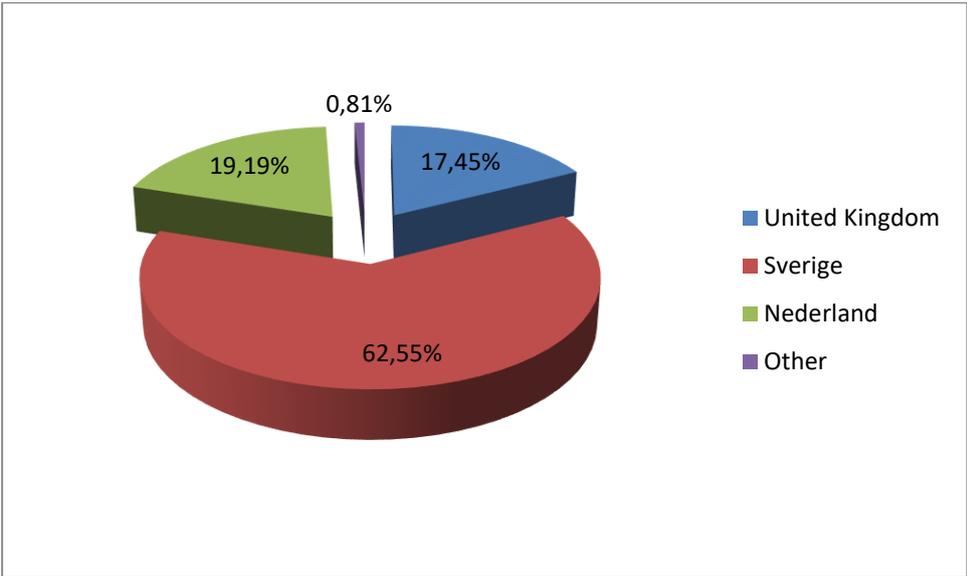
This meeting – held virtually – was to contribute support to the project team in their activities and provide them with quality input at various stages of the project.

# SURVEY OF PARTICIPANTS

Let us first consider the profiles of the participants in the sessions. The sessions were organised by the three partners in their respective countries: Sweden, The Netherlands, and the UK, to varying extents. The graph below shows the division by country.

## QUESTION: COUNTRY WHERE THE SESSION TOOK PLACE

Graph 1: Country where session took place and numbers of questionnaires received from that country.

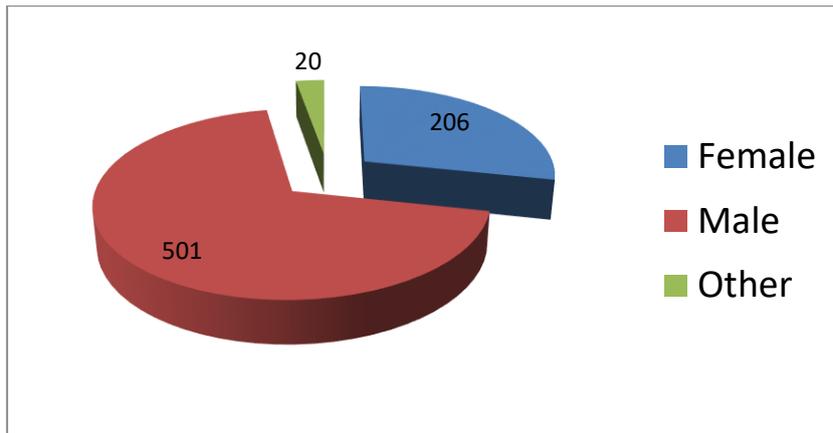


The project specifically targets young men, since they are often and otherwise mostly overlooked as a target group for gender training. Especially their role in gender-based violence urgently needs to be addressed, which is why they are the core target group for this project. However, a significant number of girls participated in the sessions as well, since some sessions were organized in mixed-sex settings, such as schools.

As such this is very interesting, because it gives us the opportunity to compare the opinions of both sexes on the topics, as we have done, where appropriate.

## QUESTION: SEX OF PARTICIPANTS

Graph 2: Sex of participants, all countries.



As the graphs above show, the majority of the participants were male, as planned by the project. The significant participation of females, however, provides a basis for some interesting reflections, which are discussed in the concluding section of this report, below.

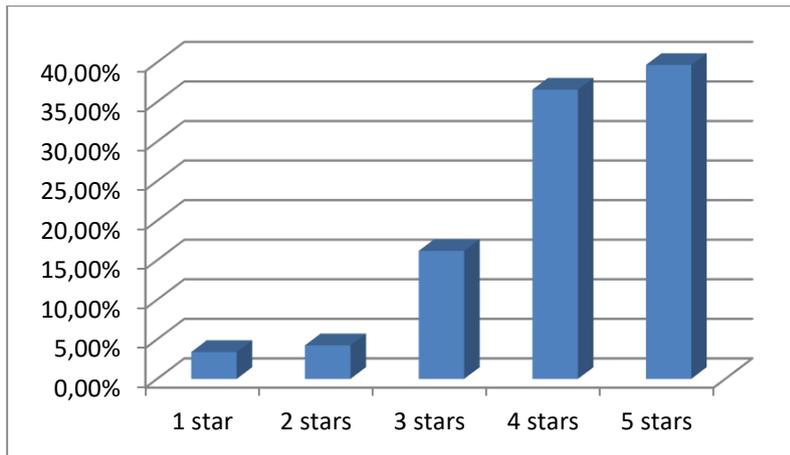
Since the approach to collecting participants was a bit different in each country, we also observe a different division in the sex of the participants in each country:

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Other</b>
United Kingdom	129	1	121	7
The Netherlands	143	71	70	2
Sweden	449	132	306	11

However, this table does not represent the total number of participants reached because both in the UK and the Netherlands, not all participants at all events filled out the questionnaires. Sweden is best covered, in the other 2 countries not all participants filled out the evaluation sheet.

#### QUESTION: DID YOU LIKE THE EVENT?

Graph 5: Did you like the event? All countries.



Overall, it is clear that the sessions were appreciated by most participants. The weighted average score was 4, out of 5, which is very high.

However, a very small minority of participants entirely disliked the sessions and, from their comments on the evaluation sheet, it was clear that they were much opposed to the topics discussed, as well as disagreed with the discussion of those issues. This resulted in some harsh comments, such as “kill gay people.” Clearly, a small minority of participants had radicalized ideas about gender stereotypes and gender-based violence, and their views were not altered by the session.<sup>3</sup> This is normal, however, since a one-time session will never be enough to alter radicalized opinions. Still, it is important, even for these boys, to hear that other boys and men have different opinions, which perhaps in the long run might allow for the opening of a dialogue with them.

#### ***Summary of comments from the female participants:<sup>4</sup>***

Most participants used the word “interesting” to describe what they liked about the event. What they saw as “interesting” was that they saw that others could think the same way as, and others differently from, the way they did, and that they could express such sentiments without feeling a sense of “shame,” as was also specifically expressed. They also stressed that they learned a lot, that they liked the interaction and the fact that it was different from what they were used to (instead of just attending class, they could do this workshop). There were quite a few that said that they liked it when the groups were a mix of boys and girls. The only negative comments voiced were about the duration – some thought the session was too long – while a few mentioned that they felt a bit hesitant at first, but then felt that it went better as the session proceeded.

#### ***Summary of comments from the male participants***

<sup>3</sup> However, this is only based on the questionnaire filled in at the end of the session and does not take into account that they might ponder the topic and eventually change their views at a later stage.

<sup>4</sup> The questionnaires were such that the respondents could add comments to each question, thus making them semi-open questions. A summary of these comments is thus provided in this report for each of these semi-open questions.

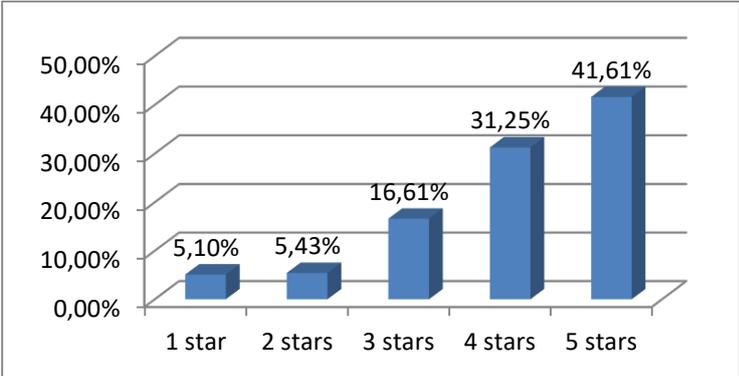
Whereas the girls mostly said the sessions were interesting, the boys mainly commented that it was fun. However, the second-most frequent comment heard was that they also learned a lot and again a minority of them thought the sessions lasted too long. Several boys said that they specifically appreciated that they got a chance to hear what girls think about the topic, a result of the fact that girls were also present.

Several comments were very negative, saying that the image of masculinity presented was overly bad and negative, and that men were only viewed as offenders.

**QUESTION 6: DID THE TOPIC INTEREST YOU?**

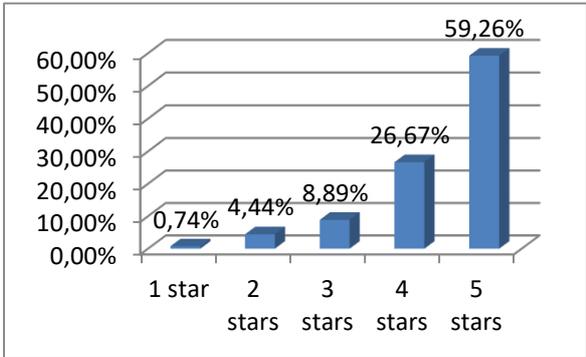
Not only did participants like the event, they also very much appreciated the topic, which received an even higher score, as the graphs below show.

Graph 6: Did the topic interest you? All participants in all countries.

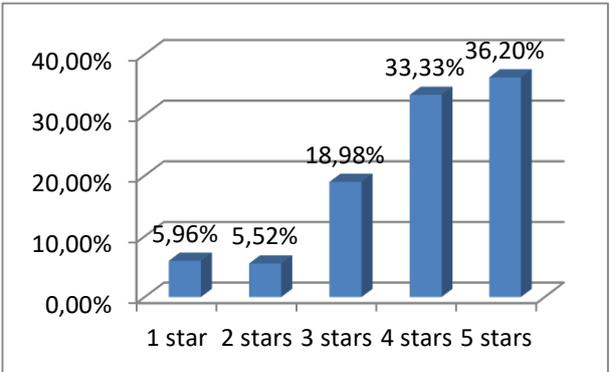


However, when we break these results down by sex, we receive a more nuanced picture:

Graph 8: Responses by **female participants**: Did the topic interest you?



Graph 7: Responses by **male participants**: Did the topic interest you?



These graphs show that both male and female participants liked the topic, but female participants clearly liked it more.

Again, among the male participants, we observe a small minority who is opposed to the topic itself, while this is not so much the case among the female participants.

As such, it is understandable that the female participants might be more interested, because it is well-known that the prime victims of gender-based violence are women and girls, while the overwhelming majority of perpetrators are men. Obviously, being a potential victim will raise more concern and so they are more interested.

***Summary of comments from the female participants:***

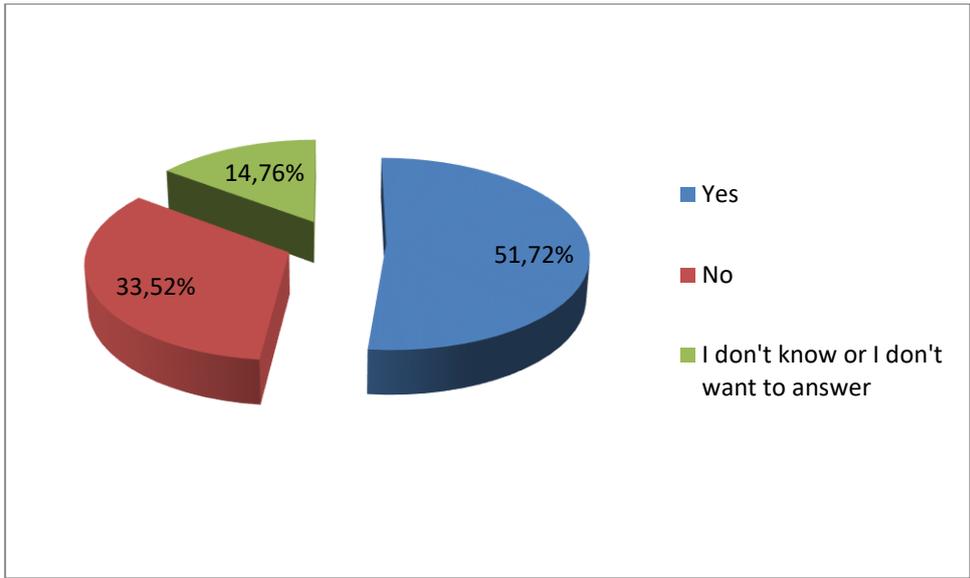
The topic was generally and consistently liked and appreciated. Many of the comments mentioned that the topic is extremely topical and important, and that there's a lot more related to it going on in the schools than people in general (adults) know about. There was some understanding of how the worst violence only deals with a small minority, but that there is still a more widespread, diffuse experience that they themselves recognise. It was once again mentioned that the mix – boys and girls – was appreciated, since they so often just talked about these things amongst themselves, or in segregated school sessions on the topic.

***Summary of comments from the male participants:***

Most boys' comments were that it was interesting because they learned new things, and they know it is an important matter. It is clear that it shifted them a bit out of their comfort zone and it stimulated their thinking about it. Several mentioned that they appreciated hearing about it from a masculine perspective. Again, there were very few negative comments, although there were a few who ridiculed the topic. Two boys stated it was an inappropriate topic to discuss during Ramadan. Some boys just appreciated that due to the session they could skip class.

**QUESTION: ARE YOU EVER CONFRONTED WITH THIS TOPIC IN YOUR LIFE?**

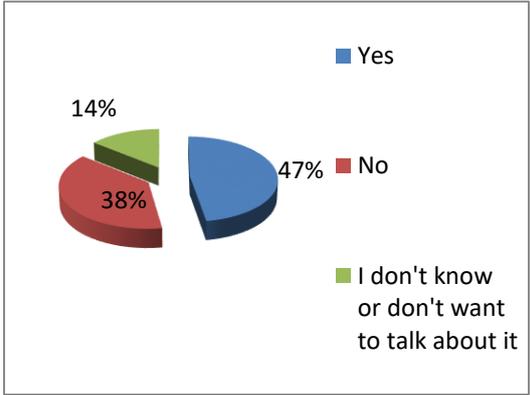
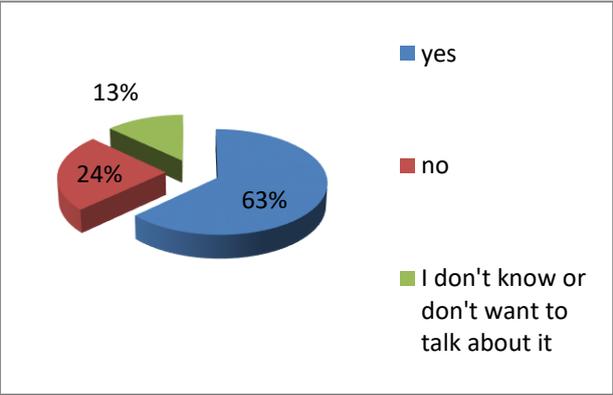
Graph 9: Are you ever confronted with this topic in your life? All participants.



Half of all participants have been confronted with the topic of gender in their lives. Again, we observe a discrepancy when we consider this data according to sex.

Graph 10:  
 Answers from the **female participants**:  
 Were you ever confronted with the topic in your life?

Graph 11:  
 Answers from the **male participants**:  
 Were you ever confronted with the topic in your life?



While two-thirds of the female participants have been confronted, only slightly less than half of male participants reported having been confronted with it. This also affirms the status of women as prime victims of gender-based violence. However, the question did not ask about victimhood, so boys might otherwise have also reported being confronted as witnesses or as perpetrators, but clearly their perceptions of the topic are less prevalent.

In fact, in society at large, this kind of situation is increasingly seen as part of the problem: it highlights the fact that (male) by-standers often don't notice, or don't show that they notice, what is

going on, and thus contribute to the “rape culture” by not confronting their male peers about their behaviour.

**Summary of comments from female participants:**

Most participants did not want to share a personal story in the survey (although there were several participants who shared personal stories during the actual sessions). Nevertheless, one Dutch girl told how she had received inappropriate comments about her being a lesbian, and a Swedish girl related how she recognized the prevalence of role stereotypes even within her own lesbian experience. There were also numerous statements from the Swedish girls regarding their experiences within their heterosexual relationships, and how the workshops really were insightful.

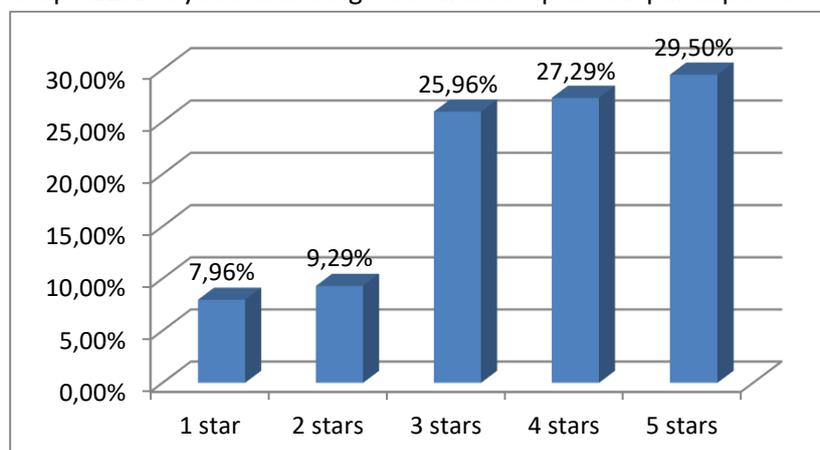
**Summary of comments from male participants:**

Just like the girls, the boys did not share many personal stories of how they were or had been confronted with the topic in their lives. However, the few stories that some of the boys did tell related to instances when other forms of mistreatment were mentioned, which seemed to function for the boys as an entry into the topic, probably since many of them were also too young to have had much direct sexual experience of their own (although probably more than they themselves recognized, or admitted, in any case); the stories involved when they had either been bullied for a variety of personal characteristics, or were treated in a racist way. Since, like sexism, racism is just another form of discrimination like, the experience of racism often functioned to direct the boys towards feeling empathy for girls who were treated in a sexist way. As such, the topic of racism was often also brought up during the sessions, and it was mainly these stories that were shared by boys.

**QUESTION: DID YOU LEARN THINGS THAT WERE HELPFUL?**

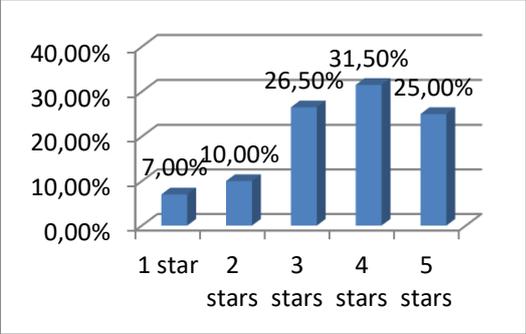
A vast majority of participants reported that they learned things that were helpful.

Graph 12: Did you learn things that were helpful? All participants.

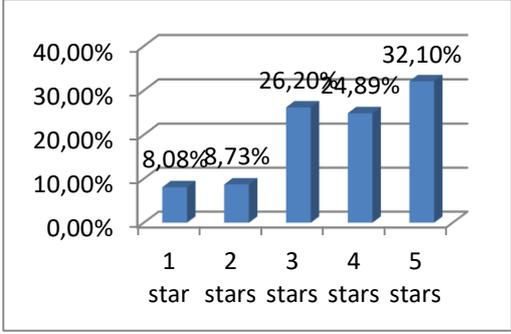


When we look at the breakdown by sex, it seems both boys and girls have learned a lot from the session. With boys giving an even – slightly – higher score than girls.

Graph 13:  
 Answers from the **female participants**:  
 Did you learn things that were helpful?



Graph 14:  
 Answers from the **male participants**:  
 Did you learn things that were helpful?



**Summary of comments from the female participants:**

Most girls thought it useful to find out where they could get help (addresses of organisations, etc.) Also, learning about consent was very useful for them (“how to say ‘no’”). There were many comments about how it was useful to learn about the different ways that boys also experience pressures that they have to struggle with: being macho, rigid norms, peer pressure, physical stereotypes, and so on. They thought it was very useful to experience that it was possible to talk to others about these topics, and not just with other girls, but with boys, too.

**Summary of comments from the male participants:**

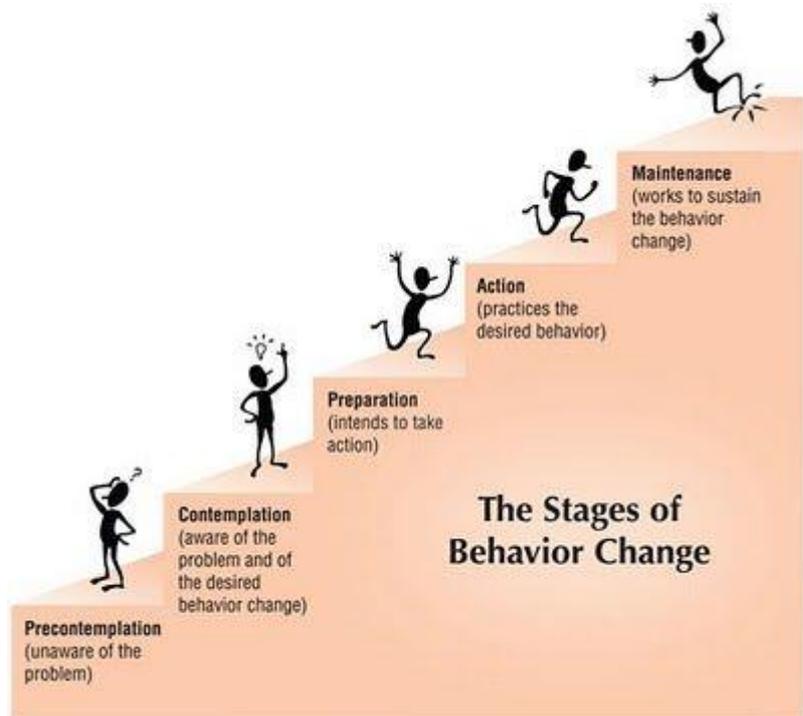
The boys indicated that they learned mostly about how they can relate to women in many different ways: with regards to breaking down stereotypes, opening up a dialogue and consent, and sexuality. Several mentioned that learning about body language was a whole new thing for them; others that they felt strengthened in trusting their own feelings in difficult situations, and that it was “OK to open up and talk about these things.” One boy was relieved that “these meetings weren’t just a bunch of feminazis breaking down the patriarchy.”

## QUESTION 9: TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THIS EVENT CHANGED WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT IT?

This question and the following one try to measure the degree to which the session will lead to real change. As such, change comes about in different stages. The following simple model is proposed here:

- Pre-contemplation: unawareness;
- Contemplation: awareness;
- Preparation: changed thinking/opinion;
- Action: changed behaviour/actions
- Maintenance.

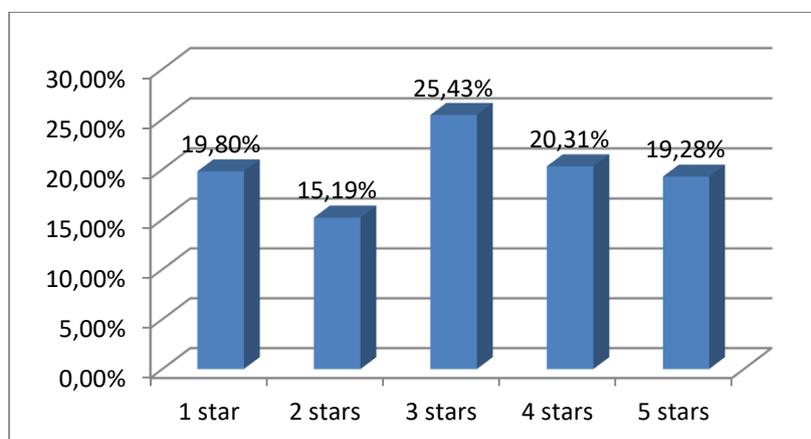
In this model, people might start out not knowing anything about the subject and may not even be aware of their ignorance. Then, the first level of change might occur when people realize that the topic is an issue, but then do nothing more. Hopefully, the session will dig a bit deeper and really change what people think about it. Last, but not least, since the IMAGINE project also wants to see change in the world, this means we want to see that people also change their actions and behaviour.



Sources: Grimley 1997 (75) and Prochaska 1992 (148)

For this reason, we used Question 9 to gauge any change of opinion on the topic, and Question 10 to see if this also leads to changes in the behaviour of the participants.

Graph 15: To what extent has this event changed what you think about it? All participants.

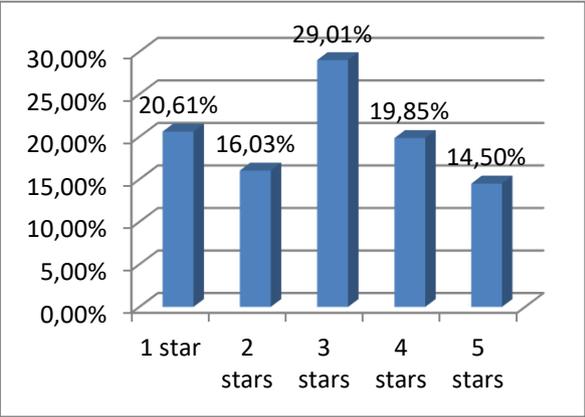


Although more than half of the participants (64%) allocated 3 or more stars in response to this question, it is nevertheless not as positive a response as for the previous questions. There could be several explanations for this; either they think they already have the right opinion, and so no change of opinion is required, because the session just confirmed their “correct” way of thinking; or, they hold a different opinion, and the session did not change that.

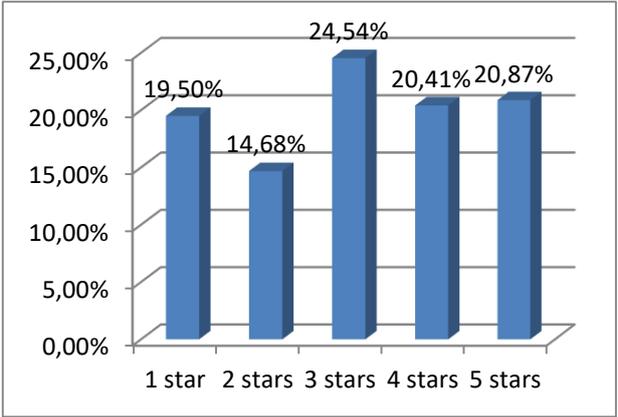
Given the fact that only a very small minority (of mainly boys) stated that they didn’t like the topic and seem to hold radicalized views on the subject, we can assume that most participants who say they haven’t changed their opinion do so because their opinion was already in line with the views expressed in the workshop.

This is what the graphs look like when the sex variable is added:

Graph 16:  
Responses by **female participants**:  
To what extent has this event changed what you think about it?



Graph 17:  
Responses by **male participants**:  
To what extent has this event changed what you think about it?



Here, we observe that almost 62% of female participants allocated 3 or more stars in response to this question, while this is true for 65% of male participants. So, slightly more boys than girls changed their opinion. This might point to the fact that, indeed, girls – being more confronted with the topic – have already more gender-equal opinions on the topic and thus should not change their thinking. Whereas boys, who tend to be more gender-blind (privilege is invisible for those who have it), might be more pushed into leaving their comfort zones and revise their thinking.

**Summary of comments by the female participants:**

The comments were primarily of four main types, in roughly equal proportions: those who said that they felt that they already thought about these matters all the time and considered they were already well-informed; those who said that they learned a lot, generally speaking, and would have lots of new things to think about; those who felt that they learned so much about how boys think, which they didn’t know about before, and that it was a new insight to understand the forces that affect the way they are; and those who gained a sense of empowerment by learning how to set

limits, to think for themselves about what was best (as opposed to giving in to peer pressure and concerns about what boys were thinking about them), and to be able to talk with others about how they thought.

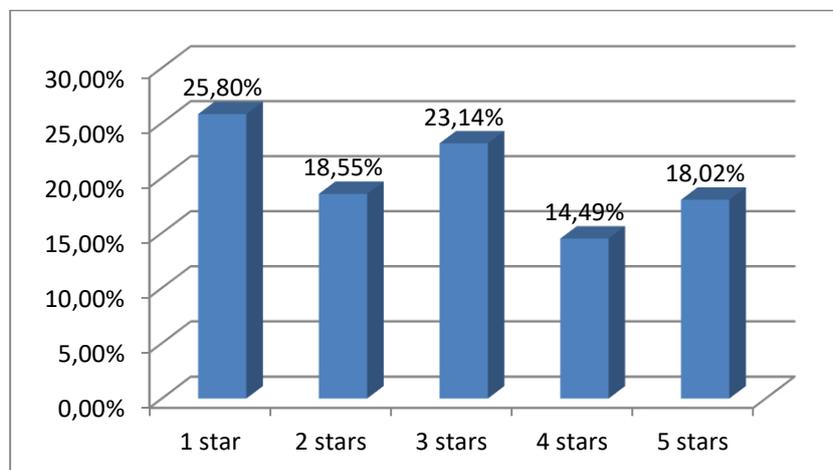
**Summary of comments by male participants:**

Most boys said that they feel better-informed now on “how to treat women,” with consent mentioned several times. However, a few made negative comments, such as: “It hasn’t changed me because I dislike the topic.” There is also a category of boys who say that they already held the acclaimed opinion before the workshop and as such the workshop was just confirming their opinion of it. One boy wrote that especially his father had talked with him a lot about these matters. Being more sensitive to group pressure, and expressing that one thought differently than the group, were both items that were specifically highlighted.

**QUESTION 10: DO YOU THINK THIS EVENT WILL CHANGE YOUR ACTIONS?**

As explained above, this question gauges the ability of the session to change not only opinions, but also the behaviour of participants. Obviously, there can never be certainty about whether they really do change their behaviour once the session is finished, but it is still valuable to ask them what their expectations about their own behaviour are.

Graph 18: Do you think this event will change your actions? All participants.

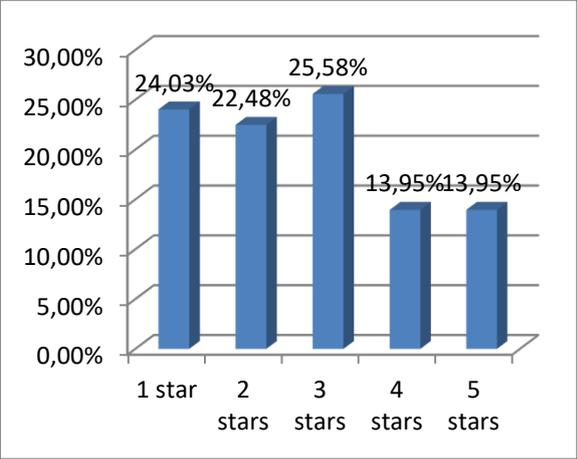


As expected, change comes by degrees, and changing an opinion does not necessarily mean that people will apply that in action. So, here, we observe that about half of the participants (43% score less than 3 stars) claim their actions will not be changed.

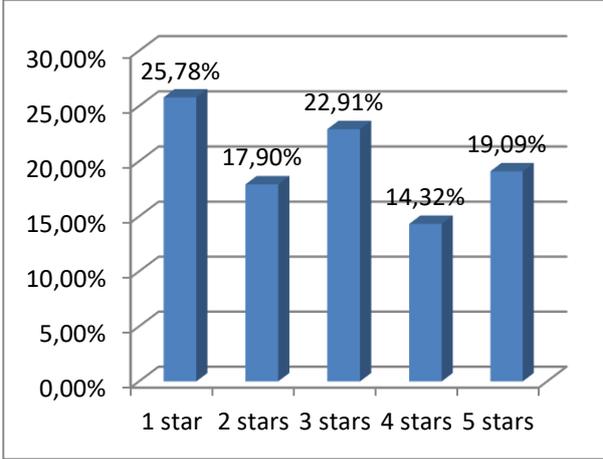
However, another hypothesis can be proposed, and this is that most participants find that their own actions are already correct and in line with the views of the workshop, and so don’t think change is needed. Still, this is problematic, precisely because of the silent majority of by-standers in incidents of gender-based violence, who aggravate the situation by not stepping up for the victim. So, if this is

their behaviour both prior to and after the session, then not much has been gained when it comes to changing behaviour.

Graph 19:  
Response by **female participants**:  
Do you think this event will change your actions?



Graph 20:  
Responses by **the male participants**:  
Do you think this event will change your actions?



Here we observe that 62% of female respondents estimate they will change their actions, as opposed to only 56% of the male respondents.

**Summary of comments by the female participants:**

In addition to the two general categories of those who said that they already knew all about this topic and those who felt that they will change their actions “a lot,” there were several other evident themes that were expressed more than once. These include: communicating their boundaries, or limits, much more clearly; being careful with how they spoke to others, to both boys and girls, and being more sensitive about the implications; that because they had gained greater insight into how boys can think, they felt that they were more open to boys’ urges to express their own sensitivities and need for tenderness and love, and to be less “macho”; and to dare to interfere when they witnessed someone else being mistreated.

**Summary of comments from the male respondents:**

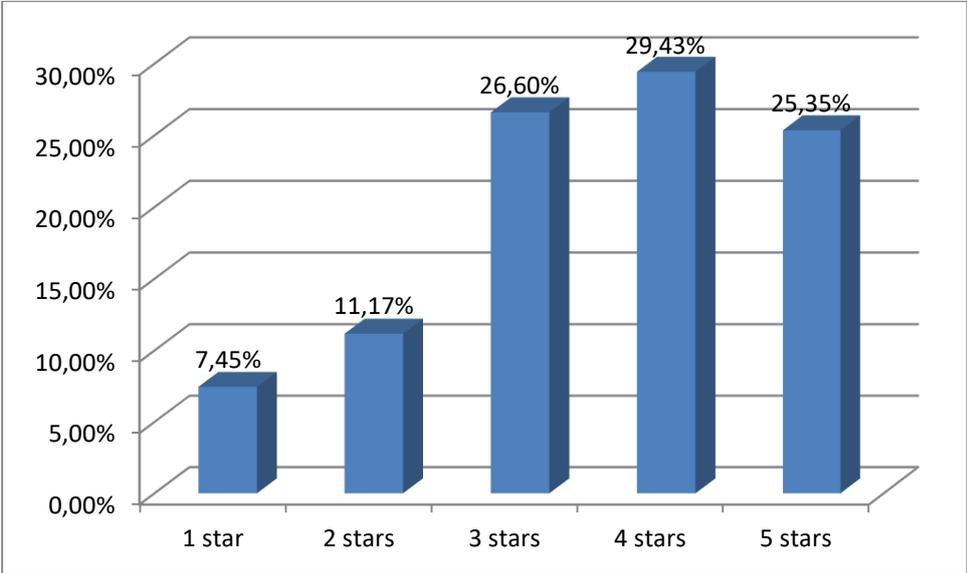
Most boys say the session will not change their actions, because they never did anything wrong. As such they consider their actions to be politically correct according to what they have learned. However, some boys do confirm that the session will still help them to improve their behaviour towards women by being more respectful and daring to intervene when someone was being mistreated.

**QUESTION 11: TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU THINK THIS EVENT HAS CHANGED WHAT OTHERS THINK ABOUT THE TOPIC?**

A very common mistake people make is overestimating the “correctness” of their own opinions and actions and underestimating those of others. This is why we asked the same two previous questions again, but this time not about themselves, but about others.

To apply this more practically: people might want to give politically-correct answers and claim that they’re not going to change, because they consider that their views and actions are already correct. So, if they are then asked about how they perceive the impact of the session on others, we might get a more realistic estimate, since they don’t feel obliged to be politically-correct about others.

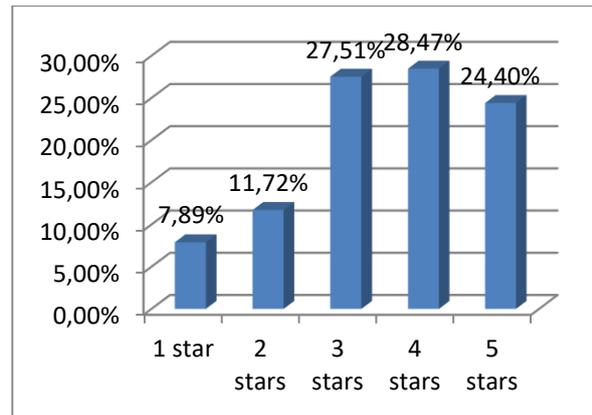
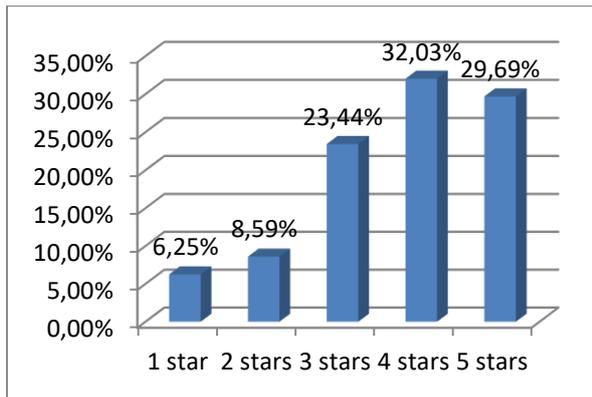
Graph 21: To what extent do you think this event has changed what others think about the topic? All participants.



Here, we observe that 78% of the participants claim the session will change what other participants think about the topic, which is a lot higher than how they perceive their own disposition to change (which was 64% for all participants, and only 62% for females, and 65% for males).

Graph 22:  
**Responses by female participants:**  
 To what extent do you think this event has changed what others think about the topic?

Graph 23:  
**Responses by male participants:**  
 To what extent do you think this event has changed what others think about the topic?



Again, the impact the female participants think this session will have is higher than the impact the male participants think it will have.

**Summary of comments by female participants:**

The comments were mostly divided into those who thought that it would have an impact on the actions (of boys, certainly, but also of girls), and those who thought not, as well as a smaller portion who said they didn't know, or weren't sure. There was little content regarding "how" it would change, although some stated that they felt that both boys and girls would think more than once about consent, and what it would mean in various situations. One person appreciated the example where an adult was shown interfering in an emerging incident and wished that this was more common.

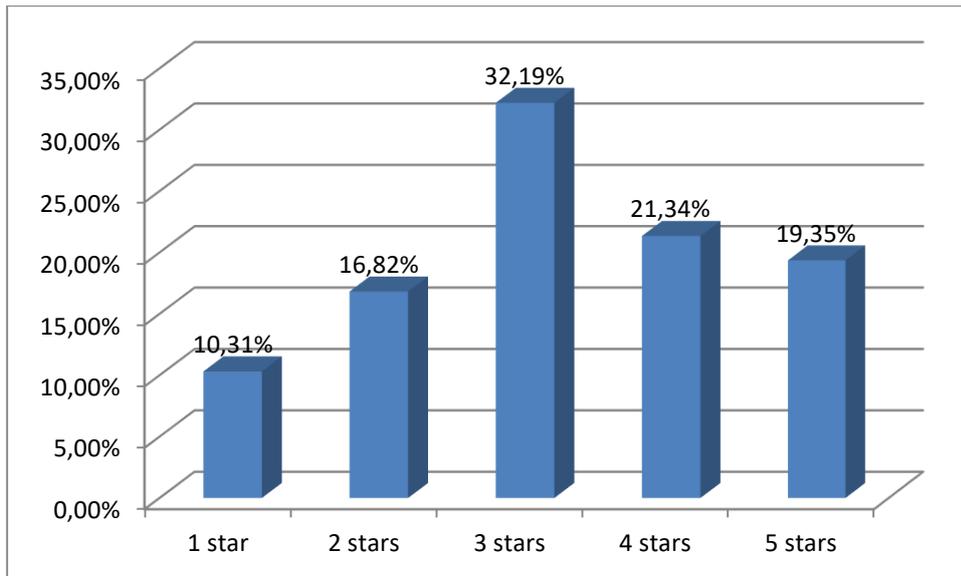
**Summary of comments by the male participants:**

As with the girls, there were many boys who said they don't really know if the sessions will change the way other boys think, but slightly more of the boys thought there was a chance that others would indeed change the way they think, and thus were slightly less negative than the girls. This was a little more obvious in the written comments than in the quantitative data. However, interestingly enough, one boy says: "A lot of guys my age are disrespectful, so they should learn." This is in contrast with the previous question where most boys said their behaviour is already correct and does not need improvement. This resonates with the fact that people are often in denial about their own discriminatory behavior but do notice it when it occurs in other people.

**QUESTION 12: DO YOU THINK IT WILL CHANGE THEIR ACTIONS?**

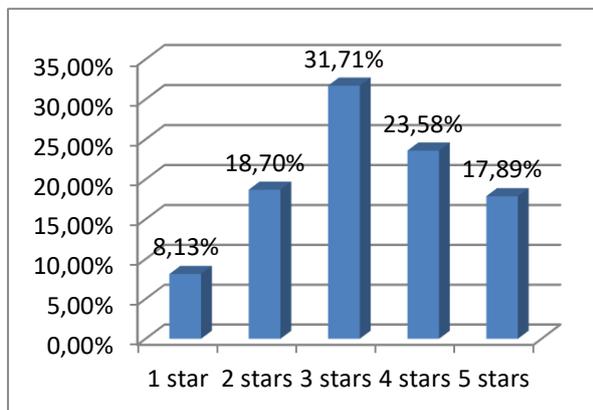
The last question in the survey links to the previous one, in that it measures change, but this time it involves not only the ability to change their opinions, but their behaviour.

Graph 24: Do you think the event will change their actions? All participants.

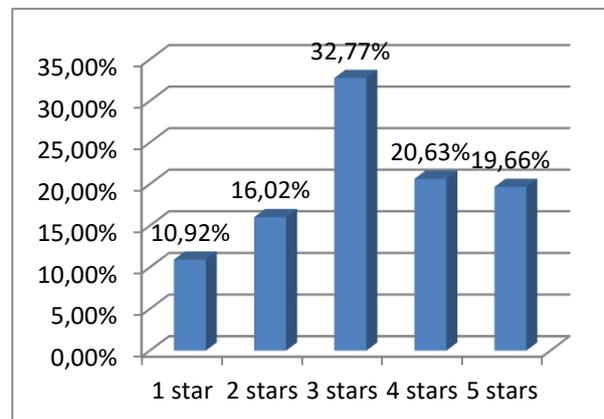


While in this question about 72% of all respondents claimed that other participants will change their actions, when they were asked if their own actions would change, only 62% of the respondents replied positively. Again, the low score on Question 10 might be explained by political correctness (not daring to claim that their actions needed to change), and so the present question might be a more accurate estimate of the real impact of the session.

Graph 25:  
Responses by **female participants**:  
Do you think the event will change their actions?



Graph 26:  
Responses by **male participants**:  
Do you think the event will change their actions?



72 per cent of female respondents think the session will change the actions of other participants, while 73% of male respondents think so, too (scoring 3 stars or higher). Still, this is higher than their low estimate about changing their own actions.

**Summary of comments by female participants:**

The girls were more uncertain in their written comments about the possibility of changed behaviour than they were about the possibility of changes in thinking. It seems that they are aware that especially the boys may continue to be highly alert and responsive to the pressure from their peers and the information from which they have constructed their idea of role models. Most responses were of the type, "Not sure, but I think so," "Not sure, but probably not," or "I hope so, but I'm not sure." Wherever they landed on the spectrum from positive to negative, their uncertainty dominates.

***Summary of comments by male participants:***

Also, for this question, the opinions are diverse. Some boys are convinced that things will change, others highly doubt it, or are straightforwardly pessimistic about our society's ever being able to change when it comes to gender stereotypes. For many, a general air of uncertainty prevails.

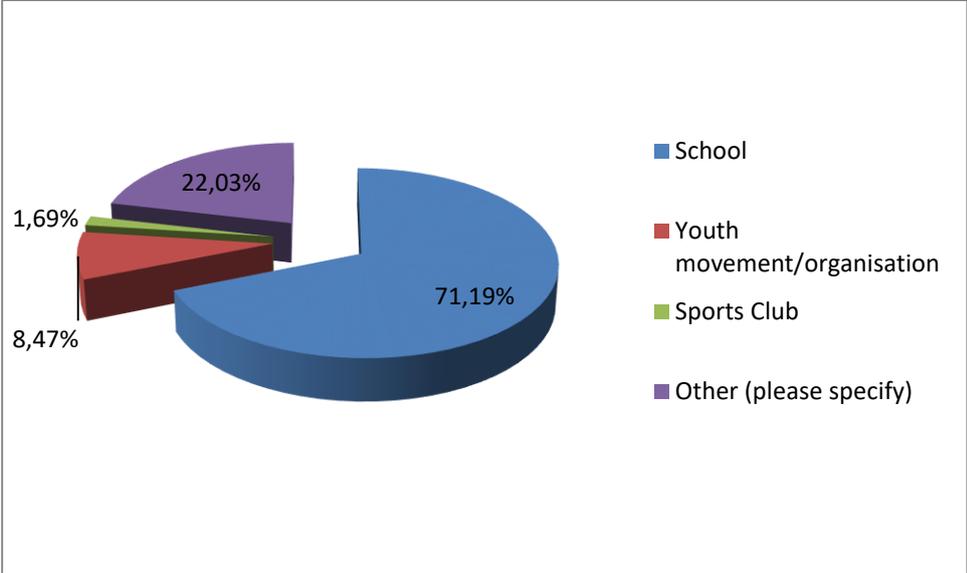
# SURVEY OF THE PEER EDUCATORS

The peer educators in the Imagine project are the young men who received training in how to conduct the sessions described above. As such, their views on the sessions are also very valuable.

This analysis is based on surveys received from 40 sessions (31 from sessions in Sweden, 9 from the Netherlands), filled in by 22 different peer educators.<sup>5</sup>

The sessions were organized in a variety of settings where young men and boys get together. As the graph below shows, most sessions took place in school settings.

Graph 36: setting where session took place.



The groups ranged widely in numbers of participants. The biggest events had 100 participants and the smallest, 6. However, most were around an average of 23 participants. Obviously, the size of the group will highly influence the method and the content of what you can do. Also, the level of intimacy reached will be different in a large or small group.

In almost all settings, there were more boys than girls. This was, first of all, because boys were the main focus of the project, but it was also due to the fact that some settings did not allow sex segregation. Schools, for example, provided the sessions to a whole class, so if there were girls in those classes, they would attend.

Most sessions had participants in the age range of 15 to 18, but some had younger participants (from 12 onwards) or older (up to 24).

With regards to the content of their sessions, most listed the following modules:

- norms (or masculine norms);

<sup>5</sup> Many sessions were done by pairs of trainers/peer educators; afterwards; only one of them filled in the questionnaire (as we only needed one reply per session, not per trainer). So, the actual number of trainers/peer educators involved was higher.

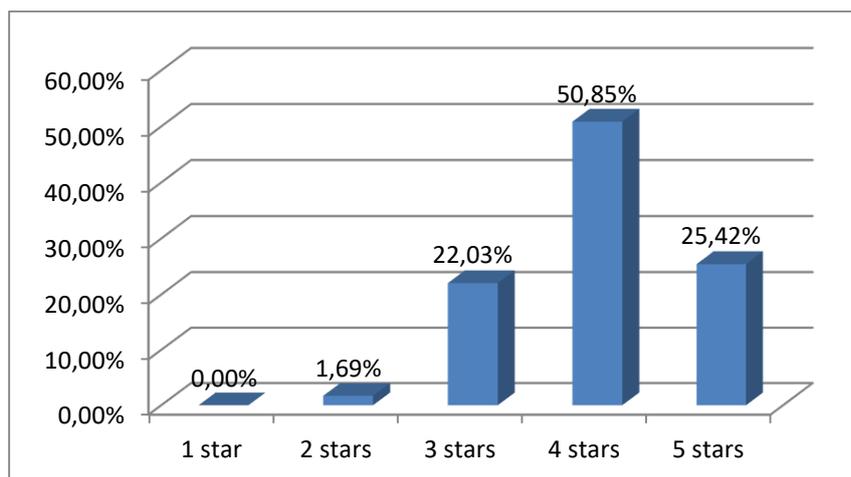
- consent and respecting boundaries;
- gender stereotyping;
- sexual violence and harassment.

The materials most often used were:

- videos;
- whiteboard/flipcharts;
- presentation (Power Point);
- Post-it notes.

There was complete consensus among the peer educators that these different materials really helped during the sessions. The video was specifically useful when introducing a topic. For example, when working on “consent,” it was helpful to show a video about it, then reflect with the group on their own experiences or thoughts.

Overall, the peer educators are all happy with the sessions:



Graph 37: The weighted average is 4 stars, which is just the same as how happy the participants were with the sessions.

When asked, the peer educators commented that the best part was (in summary):

It is clear that what was most appreciated was those moments when the participants were really engaged in the topic, by discussing it, telling stories about their own experiences, etc. However, interestingly enough, these moments of interaction were reached through a wide variety of interventions. It could be a video shown, but also things that happened or were present then and there in the room (such as the presence of a female participant who was wearing short pants). Also, testimonies by the peer educators themselves often led to moments of connection and understanding with the participants. The discussions of violence were the most dynamic of all, with the participants becoming intensively engaged, obviously able to relate the discussion to their own everyday experience. They seemed to have a breakthrough when material derived from studies of perpetrators was related, giving them the insider perspective, which seemed to surprise them (this

involved the issue of consent and why rapists, for example, are so often unwilling to see their own role clearly).

What they found most difficult was:

Getting all the participants to be tolerant of other opinions was listed as quite difficult. Also, creating a safe space where the participants could allow themselves to be vulnerable and share their experiences was not easy. The size of the group was listed as making the previous two points even more difficult. This was also the case for other conditions, such as the limited time of access to rooms, or that the rooms were too small. The presence of teachers in the rooms, as they often were, was also inhibiting, even if well-meaning.

Once the discussions got going, some peer educators also found it quite hard to move toward actions, i.e., what the boys themselves could do to avoid sexual harassment. Often, participants would agree that something was a problem but deny that they have any role to play. There were different kinds of disturbances: some groups were extremely quiet, while others were too rowdy, and competitiveness and peer pressure seemed to be part of the dynamic, in many cases. Much of the content and material for the presentations tended to become too academic and abstract all too easily, which obviously left the groups bored, or distracted. Ethnic norms were occasionally a problem, such as when, in one session, homosexuality was mentioned and several boys left the room; in other cases, insensitive comments were frequent.

What the peer educators would like to change next time would be:

- to have more time for the sessions or to do more sessions with the same group;
- to prepare the sessions in advance with the teacher and/or school, so as to better link up with the level of the students;
- to learn how to manage small conflicts that arise among participants and enhance tolerance, without accepting sexist or racist remarks;
- better time management: slowing down and even skipping parts if need be, to gain more depth; and quality over quantity, regof topics, in other words;
- smaller groups.
- go with 2 peer educators.
- generally, it seems best to tell teachers that they shouldn't be present and, if they absolutely must, them explain their presence to the participants.
- regarding the sections of the time allotted, it would be better to have more things that weren't dependent on oral communication, or exchange, but instead involved other kinds of activities (e.g. of the "musical chairs" type, card-based activities.

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this project received a very positive evaluation by the different actors involved (peer educators and participants). The overwhelming majority of participants gave the event and the topic a high score and also pointed out that the topic was relevant in their lives.

Also, the peer educators perceived the sessions and the project as a positive experience, albeit very challenging at times, since most of them were just volunteers and new in leading such sessions. However, for all of them it was a very enriching experience.

There were several innovative approaches tried out in this project and, most importantly was the perspective itself, of having a project on gender equality by men for men. Precisely this aspect was very positively evaluated by the participants, who often expressed being “relieved” at having been understood, or who dared to open their eyes to the reality of gender inequality and stereotypes because the message was brought by men.

However, a project by men for men does not need to be exclusively with men. This project shows that there is no problem in having mixed groups as well, since the women who attended were seen as an added value (their testimonies, perspectives, ideas) by the men, and vice versa.

At the same time, the project did face some challenges, mostly on an organisational scale: working with volunteers is not always so easy and, on top of that, the UK partner had to change mid-project. Those challenges were met with a pragmatic flexibility on all sides, whereby the motivation to really stand for their commitment was ever present.

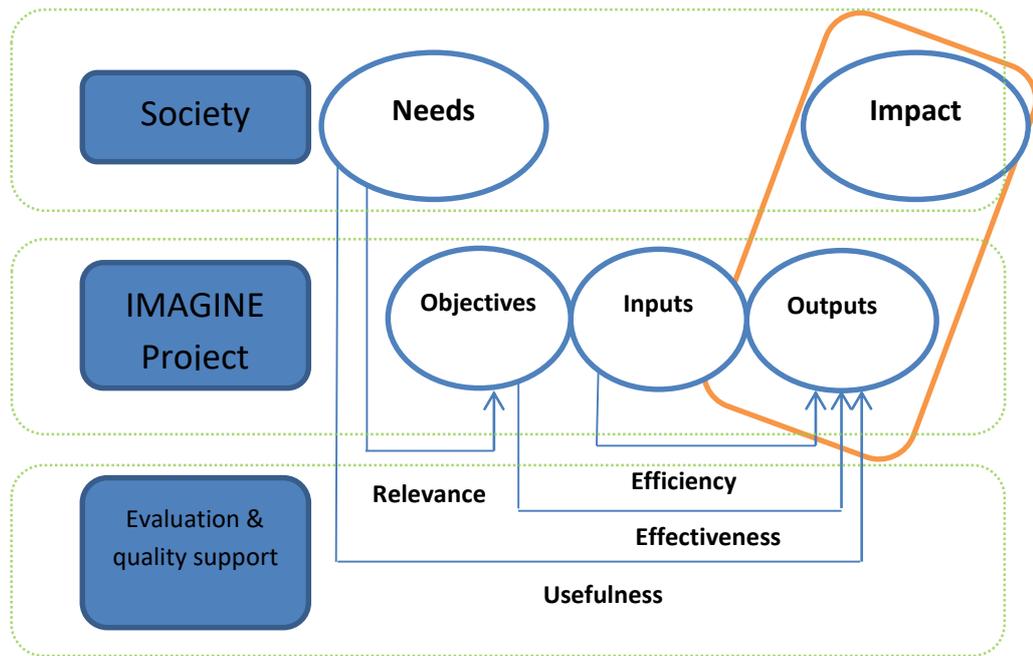
Digging a bit deeper into the participants’ view of the project, we do notice differences between the boys and girls attending the sessions. One outstanding difference is their personal experience with gender-based violence or harassment in their lives: girls report this much more often than boys. Also, participants in Sweden report this much more often, which most likely does not have to mean that it happens more in Sweden, but rather that there is under-reporting in the other two countries.

Another difference between male and female participants is that girls have higher hopes for the impact a session will have. They think the topic is more seriously prevalent in society and that things need to change. Also, female participants reported more often that they thought the sessions were “interesting,” while the boys said they were mostly “fun.” This also illustrates the urgency often felt among women (definitely during the #MeToo era) that things should change, whereas for most men it is not high on their priority list.

Still, both among the male and female participants, there is a majority who say that at least their perspective on the topic has changed.

## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The following visualisation depicts an evaluation framework for projects such as IMAGINE. This shows the link between relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and usefulness.



**Relevance:** relevance links the perceived needs in society with the objectives of the project. With regard to the needs, it is clear that this project could not have come at a better time, with Europe and the world being swept by the wave of the #MeToo movement, and sexual violence and harassment being more on the agenda than in the last decades. This was confirmed by both surveys (the participants’ and the peer educators’), since only very exceptionally did a participant doubt the relevance of the topic.

**Efficiency:** efficiency looks at the link between the input into the project (EU funds, the commitment of the three partners, other resources) and the output (mainly training of peer educators, the sessions themselves, and the educational material).

As mentioned before, working with volunteers is not always easy, since they also have other commitments and were themselves quite young (thus, an unavoidable lack of experience), so this made it challenging to get all the sessions organised. For example, making sure that all questionnaires were filled at the end of the sessions and other more “administrative” chores are more easily forgotten by volunteers.

Also, the organisations where the events were held (youth clubs, schools, etc) collaborated on a voluntary basis and this takes time and persuasion. In both Sweden and the Netherlands, for example, sessions were completely set up at a school and for a youth group, respectively, and they cancelled only a few minutes before the start. Such things are disappointing for the volunteers involved, and frustrating for evaluators who travel to the venue to perform their duty.

Last but not least, due to unforeseen circumstances, the UK partner changed mid-project. This resulted in substantial administrative and organisational challenges, with an inevitable delay in some aspects, and an extra pressure to catch up by the end of the project.

**Effectiveness:** implies the link between the objectives and the output; so: “Did we do what we said we would do?” In its simplest form, effectiveness can be estimated by looking at the goals put forward, as shown in the following table.

Country	N° of sessions planned	N° of sessions done	N° of participants planned	N° of participants who attended
Sweden	?	40	?	?(466 filled in the survey)
UK	?	7	?	492 attended (130 filled in the survey)
The Netherlands	?	57	?	?(143 filled in the survey)

...

**Usefulness:** Usefulness measures the overall link between needs and output. Looking at the positive evaluation of the project, both by the peer educators and the participants, linked to the fact that they value the topic as very relevant, it can be concluded that the project was highly useful. Interestingly enough, it was certainly useful for the participants but surely not less so for the peer educators – who were themselves indirect target groups in this project. It was clear from the (in)formal interviews with the peer educators that this project made them develop appreciable new competences, and “shook up their lives.”

Last, but not least, there remains the aspect of **impact**. Impact is the hardest to measure among all evaluation variables. This is because the real impact can only be measured after the project has finished, by going back after some time to the participants and finding out how the session(s) changed their lives. Practically speaking, this is hardly ever possible. So, also in this project, we tried to have an indirect measure of impact by asking the participants and peer educators at the end of the event how they estimated both their thinking and behaviour would change. All of the peer educators reported a deep impact of the project on their lives, both in terms of thinking and behaviour. The impact on the participants is certainly less – simply by the fact that they were also involved for just 1 or 2 sessions – but nevertheless the majority of them reported that their thinking had changed and most likely their behaviour would change, as well.

Yet, the approach of having just one session (or at best two, in a few cases) with the same group obviously has its limitations. The construction and re-enforcement of gender stereotypes is so pervasively present in our societies that a one-session-event can never suffice to change a person’s perceptions. More work will be needed. But that doesn’t mean that planting this first seed has been useless.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section some recommendations are provided for the benefit of future projects. These are the lessons learned, obstacles overcome, and challenges turned into successes. They can be valuable tips and tricks for other projects.

- **The most important recommendation is that it works great to have a project on gender equality by men for men.**  
The male perspective in the gender equality debate is highly appreciated and welcomed by both men and women.
- However, that **the presence of even a few female peers** in the groups has a decidedly positive effect on groups of *young males in these ages* is worth remembering, *even if* it may be counter-productive, and therefore not recommended, for older age groups.
- **Change takes time and a safe space to happen.**  
Often, a one-time session is not enough to provide that. So, to have a real impact on the behaviour of the participants, it would be better to work with only a limited number of boys/groups, but then have **a long-term commitment of several consecutive sessions with them.**
- **Try to get a detailed profile of the target audience beforehand to estimate their level of development and skills.**  
The boys are often not in possession of the basic skills needed to embark on such potentially sensitive and emotional sessions.
- **Try to situate the target group on the “levels of resistance scale”** (see paper on “resistance” in Annex2 ).  
This allows an estimate of what the best entry level to the training is and what impact can be expected for the session. Participants come to the meetings with often too highly-varied states of readiness and experience to be able to receive the main points of the sessions.
- **If metaphors are used, they should be very close to the actual daily lives of the boys, i.e. not too abstract.**  
Highly-informed and well-prepared trainers arrive with a battery of studies in their toolboxes, with a degree of abstraction that is often far-removed from the experience of the boys. Although the use of abstract models and metaphorical examples have their place, they must be used with great care. If an abstract image or model is used, just show it briefly, and then move on. The participants will be too keyed up to settle down into a calm, cool, analytical mode. Conversely, the use of examples that are similar to their own experience can be expertly implemented by the trainers.

- **Try to slow down the pace of the training if it feels too chaotic.**  
Rather, it's better to go deeply into one item than hurrying through three. A strong result from the evaluation is that time for discussion, whether between boys in pairs, in groups, between boys and girls, with the trainers, or without their teachers present – whatever the mode – is precious, highly appreciated, and useful. Quality over quantity was another guiding image that arose again and again, among trainers and participants, in their responses.
- **Find links between their own experiences of discrimination and the experience of gender-based violence.**  
Other dimensions, such as those involving ethnic, religious, cultural, physiological, and economic considerations, to say nothing of the most simplistic bullying experiences, if used as a starting point, may provide a more readily-accessible entry-point for the participants.
- **When meeting difficult audiences, make sure that two trainers are present and are prepared to relieve each other.**  
As one leads the activities, the other can observe from the sidelines, take notes, act as the person looking after the technical aides and so on. Difficult groups are demanding, and just shifting one's focus from one side of the room to another may mean missing important interactions that help the facilitator to understand the dynamics in the room.
- **Consider the role that the teacher has, or will have, either before or during a session, or both.** Discuss with her, beforehand, what her role could be (giving preparatory talks that help to bring the boys to the same level of entry, for example, and in providing a more detailed profile of what the trainers can expect, as mentioned above). Also consider whether or not the teacher should be present during the actual sessions, since their presence may have a tangible effect.
- **Consider the placement of participants in the room allocated to the sessions.**  
This is worth reconsidering, in order to overcome their shyness and concern with image. It may be that reverting to the more conventional seating, in rows, for at least some part of a session, may provide a certain security and familiarity, as well as deflecting the persistent staring of their peers, that will encourage them to be more focused on the work of the session itself. This recommendation is directed at sessions with these age groups; with young adults, one would want to achieve what circles are good at – breaking down the barriers between interaction that are prevalent otherwise;
- **Trainers can try to think more about their own placement and movement within the sessions venue.**  
Their dynamics have a major effect on the group dynamics, and hence the quality of the participation;

➤ **Respect and fuel the learning curve.**

it was impressive how, over the mere 3-month period when most of the sessions took place, the trainers were seen to greatly improve the technique and style of their interventions. They solved the issue of trying to cram in too many points into a short session by being more selective and restrictive, and found the right level of “just enough” (Swedish “lagom”). At the same time, that process of selection was admittedly one-sided in choosing more traditional “teaching” modes and by-passing the great diversity of non-traditional exercises available in the IMAGINE toolbox, with their particular value in shifting participants into another mind-space, or “emo-mode.”

## ANNEX1: LISTS OF WORKSHOPS CONDUCTED

### UNITED KINGDOM:

Imagine Whitefield school, 22<sup>nd</sup> May and 13th June 2017 (workshop over 2 dates with same boys)  
80 boys - ages to be confirmed

St Dunstons College )(Independent), 14<sup>th</sup>May 2018  
54 boys aged 12-13

Vyne Community School, 25<sup>th</sup>Jan 2018  
70 Boys aged 13-14

City of London School, 5<sup>th</sup>July 2017  
75 boys - ages to be confirmed

Dragon School (Independent), 29th June  
75 boys aged 12-13

City Of London, 4th July 2018  
138 boys

## SWEDEN: 40 SESSIONS

<b>Peabskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 170327</li> <li>• Antonio</li> <li>• 2 st</li> </ul>	<b>MÄN-Skåne</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 170506</li> <li>• CarlJohan &amp; Makz</li> </ul>	<b>Tjörn, Kultur och fritidscentra</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 170510</li> <li>• Michael</li> </ul>
<b>Tjörn, Kultur och fritidscentra</b> 170517 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael</li> </ul>	<b>Korsavadskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 170524</li> <li>• CarlJohan</li> </ul>	<b>Tjörn, Kultur och fritidscentra</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 170531</li> <li>• Michael</li> </ul>
<b>Kristofferskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 170605</li> <li>• Makz &amp; Johan</li> </ul>	<b>Uppsala Ungdomens hus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 171007</li> <li>• Antonio</li> </ul>	<b>Victum Gymnasium</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 171109</li> <li>• Michael &amp; CarlJohan</li> </ul>
<b>Carlgrenska Waldorfgymnasiet</b> 171114 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Johan &amp; Robert</li> </ul>	<b>Lidingö HVB-hem</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 171115</li> <li>• Johan &amp; Torulf</li> </ul>	<b>Emanuelskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 171123</li> <li>• CarlJohan &amp; Agge (MÄN Malmö)</li> </ul>
<b>Munkebäcksgymnasiet</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 171201</li> <li>• Michael &amp; Johan Eriksson (MÄN gbg)</li> <li>• 2 st</li> </ul>	<b>Risbroskolan</b> (Osäker på namnet men orten var Fagersta) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 171208</li> <li>• Makz &amp; Antonio</li> <li>• 2 st</li> </ul>	<b>Spånga gymnasium</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 171212</li> <li>• Antonio &amp; Johan</li> <li>• 2 st</li> </ul>
<b>Sjöängsskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 171212</li> <li>• Florence &amp; Shahab</li> </ul>	<b>Sjöängsskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 171219</li> <li>• Florence &amp; Shahab</li> </ul>	<b>Aranäsgymnasiet</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180110</li> <li>• Micael &amp; CarlJohan</li> <li>• 2 st</li> </ul>
<b>Yrkesgymnasiet</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180205</li> <li>• Antonio</li> <li>• 2 st</li> </ul>	<b>Kristofferskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180131</li> <li>• Florence &amp; Makz</li> <li>• 2 st</li> </ul>	<b>Kristofferskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180201</li> <li>• Florence</li> </ul>
<b>Kristofferskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180207</li> <li>• Florence &amp; Makz</li> <li>• 2 st</li> </ul>	<b>Kristofferskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180208</li> <li>• Florence</li> <li>• 2st</li> </ul>	<b>Kristofferskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180209</li> <li>• Florence &amp; Makz</li> <li>• 2 st</li> </ul>
<b>Kristofferskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180212</li> <li>• Makz &amp; Florence</li> </ul>	<b>Kristofferskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180214</li> <li>• Florence</li> </ul>	<b>Kristofferskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180221</li> <li>• Florence &amp; Makz</li> </ul>
<b>Nacka gymnasium</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180223</li> <li>• Florence</li> </ul>	<b>Smedhagsskolan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180306</li> <li>• Johan &amp; Florence</li> </ul>	<b>Orminge Boo folkets hus fritidsgård</b> 180314 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Torulf &amp; Florence</li> </ul>

## NEDERLAND

Organisatie	Datum
ROC Westpoort, klas 1A	22 mei t/m 19 juni
ROC Westpoort, klas 1B	12 juni t/m 26 juni
ROC Westpoort, Klas 2A	13 juni t/m 26 juni
ROC Westpoort, Klas 2B	14 juni t/m 26 juni
ROC Westpoort, Klas 4	15 juni t/m 26 juni
ROC Zuid-oost	16-mei-17
De sprong, klas 1A	20-jun.-17
De sprong, klas 1B	20-jun.-17
De sprong, klas 2A	21-jun.-17
De sprong, klas 2B	21-jun.-17
De sprong, klas 3A	22-jun.-17
De sprong, klas 3B	22-jun.-17
De sprong, klas 4A	23-jun.-17
De sprong, klas 4B	23-jun.-17
Hogeschool Amsterdam, CMV	11-mei-17
Plan Nederland, Groep 1	22-apr.-17
Plan Nederland, Groep 2	22-apr.-17
Plan Nederland, Groep 3	22-apr.-17
Chicks on a mission	6-sep.-17
Happy Activism festival	17-sep.-17
NH Jong x NRC	14-sep.-17
Festival Slotervaart	23-sep.-17
ROC Amersfoort	27-sep.-17
King for a day (Diversion)	27-okt.-17
Implacement Amsterdam	15-nov.-17
Gender Equality Conference (UVA)	22-nov.-17
Implacement Amsterdam (Daadkracht)	12-dec.-17
Implacement Amsterdam (Notweg)	12-apr.-17
Implacement Amsterdam (Werkenbach bijlmer)	12-dec.-17
Implacement Amsterdam (Notweg)	13-dec.-17
Implacement Amsterdam (Daadkracht)	13-dec.-17
Implacement Amsterdam (Vrouw & Vaart)	14-dec.-17
Implacement Amsterdam (Notweg)	15-dec.-17
Implacement Amsterdam (Daadkracht)	15-dec.-17
Implacement Amsterdam (Notweg)	19-dec.-17

Implacement Amsterdam (Vrouw & Vaart)	10-jan.-18
Montfort College (Roermond)	22-dec.-17
Montfort College (Roermond)	22-dec.-17
Montfort College (Roermond)	22-dec.-17
ROC Amersfoort	24-jan.-18
ROC Amersfoort	25-jan.-18
Jeugddebat Amsterdam Oost	25-jan.-18
Olympia College 4DB	7 feb t/m 21 feb 2018
Olympia College 4PB	7 feb t/m 21 feb 2018
Young Mindzz (Dock Amsterdam)	12-feb.-18
Melanchtonschool Rotterdam (3A)	13-feb.-18
Melanchtonschool Rotterdam (3B)	14-feb.-18
ROC Tilburg	28-feb.-18
De Tickel (DOCK Amsterdam)	15-mrt.-18
De Hongingraat (DOCK Amsterdam)	22-mrt.-18
SIW Internationale Vrijwilligersprojecten	20-apr.-18
ROC Westpoort	19-apr.-18
ROC Westport	24-apr.-18
AIM & Amsterdam United	15-mei-18

# RESISTANCE TO GENDER EQUALITY IN BOYS AND MEN: ACTIVATION OF OFTEN PASSIVE AUDIENCES

Katrien Van der Heyden

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Lately, society at large has been confronted with gender-based violence, and is slowly emerging from a time when it was made invisible, to a situation where it has become a topic of heated debate on social media, a theme to tackle in schools and a concern of parents. Sometimes, people have become involved (as a victim, bystander or perpetrator) in an incident of sexual violence or harassment that makes them realise that something should be done . . .

Whatever the reason might be, embarking on the endeavour of making society gender equal for both girls and boys, men and women, puts you on a journey of profound change and discovery that might have some treacherous bends and curves along the route. How about the challenge of getting everybody on board in this process, also those who might feel threatened by every step you take?

This essay looks at this challenge: how to tackle resistance towards gender equality at large and more specifically gender based violence, especially when working with (young) men.

The essay is based on observations in The Netherlands, in Amsterdam, in the context of the Imagine project. This project aims to fight gender-based violence by conducting workshops with boys and young men in settings like high schools, sports clubs, etc.

The authors of this evaluation report are interacting with the Imagine project as evaluators, with the explicit understanding that their evaluation efforts are to provide recurrent, ongoing feedback to the project's leaders, organizers and trainers. This makes evaluation a constructive activity, what we call *action evaluation*, where the feedback induces voluntary change, which in turn improves the quality of the interactions, and thereby improves the evaluation observations, which then feeds back as yet more constructive input.

As part of this process of action evaluation, Imagine's leaders have asked for an interim contribution from the evaluators, a request that, in itself, shows a positive, constructive approach to gender training as a process of social learning. The request for this interim input has generated a creative reply. Its form is intended to add yet another resource to those already in the Imagine project's repertoire. Although this essay is primarily a sketch of a conceptual framework that underlies any project where changing attitudes and behaviour are the objective, it is meant to provide a basis for discussing how its identification of levels of resistance may directly impact on the planning, preparation, and carrying out of training of young men and boys. Its final section moves from the more conceptual discussion of the previous sections to provide direct, observation-based reflections on the training that has been observed so far.

## 2. LEVELS OF RESISTANCE

Resistance can present itself in many different disguises and learning to recognize the types of resistance is a first step towards knowing what actions to take to counter the paralyzing effect resistance can have on change.

A comprehensive and clarifying way of looking at resistance was developed by Schiff (1975) and is still valid for application to the topic of gender equality today. Schiff points to the fact that resistance comes on 4 levels: each one is followed by the next in chronological order and dissolving resistance on level one most likely only means that resistance will present itself again on level 2. As such, it is important to tackle resistance one level after another, in order to build the right foundation, engagement and ownership necessary for personal change.

In the following sections, each level of resistance is discussed and applied to the case of gender equality and the fight against sexual violence and harassment. In this text, we talk about “gender-based violence” as encompassing both sexual harassment, sexual violence towards women and violence towards LGBTQI people.

### 2.1. FACTS

The first level of resistance is often on the level of plain fact. People will deny that there are gender issues or more specifically gender-based violence, claiming all has been resolved. Often there is agreement that there used to be a problem, historically, but now – they claim – all has been solved. (Men used to be macho, but not anymore, not here and now). As such, the problem is situated in another time frame or another culture.

A variant on this resistance is to minimize the situation. So, they agree that some women might experience some harassment- but only slightly, and it is not a priority. To those men, admitting that this is happening on a systematic level would mean going along with what they see as the hysterical exaggeration and disproportionate presentation of reality that females construct. The balance between men claiming that women exaggerate and women claiming that men make this reality invisible by denying it, is a delicate one, but can be tackled with plain facts and figures.

Another way in which resistance at this level can present itself is by joking about the topic. This can be done by making inappropriate or sexist remarks or by ridiculing the trainer/teacher or a friend who is bringing up the topic. This last fear – of being laughed at – is very prevalent among women and precisely serves as a symptom of the systematic way in which women’s concerns are ignored or neglected. Often, women fear “victim-blaming,” the mechanism that ridicules a victim who dares to speak out against a discriminatory or hurtful behaviour that is accepted in her (sub)culture as “normal.” Victim-blaming is a form of “gender-policing,” whereby people who dare to show non-stereotypical behaviour are stigmatized and pushed back into their stereotyped roles. However, victim-blaming can also happen towards men who turn to other men and confront them about their sexist behaviour.

The fear of victim-blaming is real and should be taken seriously. It is important at this stage to protect the potential victims by showing them how to deal with it: build alliances, put complaint procedures in place, react when you notice it being used on others, etc . . .

The approach needed to fight this first level of resistance is to **present facts**. Show data on different forms of gender-based violence. It is even better to show a historical analysis to show how and if it changed over time. Also, the difference between (sub)cultures can be talked about, to underline the fact that it is culturally constructed and not biologically pre-disposed.

Last, but not least, it is important not only to show figures, but also testimonies, stories, etc . . .

## 2.2. PROBLEM

When the facts are established and it has been shown to be not just a (sub)culture problem that will resolve itself automatically, the resistance often moves to a next level: the level of the problem. This means that people might agree with the facts, but not see why these facts pose a problem. Typically, at this stage they will ask questions like: “Why would we need gender equality?” “What is wrong with men and women being different?” “Why can’t they take a joke?” “How can I ever find a lover if I can’t make a remark about the sexuality of women?” “That’s not harassment, that’s flirting.” “She asked for it. She actually enjoys it.” “It’s a compliment and she should be happy with it.”

Often, these remarks are based on a perspective that gives men and women a biologically determined or “natural” inclination towards certain characteristics, competences, talents and interests. This essentialist approach towards masculinity and femininity leads to the legitimization of not only differences between men and women but also inequalities. For example, it is often claimed that women are more submissive and men have a predator instinct and so their behaviour is inspired by their “natural” inclinations to be submissive (and enjoying it) or predatory, rather than women and men showing this behaviour as a way of coping with strong expectations from society about their sexual roles. This results in an inequality in (sexual) relationships and puts (most often) women at risk.

Blaming the individual for the negative outcome of the behaviour they have shown (“she was asking for it”), rather than taking up a societal responsibility to tackle the challenge of fighting harmful gender stereotypes, is often the way our society deals with gender-based violence.

So, in the second stage of resistance it is important to show why it is problematic and harmful if women and men embark on gender-based violent behaviour. This is not due to a biological pre-disposition, but rather to an inability to develop his/her full potential, to use their talent and competence in developing caring and loving relationships, and instead being pushed from a very young age onwards into stereotypical harmful behaviour. The reason why this is problematic is foremost ethical: equality is a cornerstone of our modern society and so we should never condone that situations where men and women are treated unequally is being legitimized by cultural stereotypes. But there are also psychological reasons why this is problematic. A body of research shows that the short- and long-term effects of gender-based violence are very negative and serious and can lead to life-long mental illness. Rather than men and women growing up to be caring individuals in healthy relationships, unlocking the full potential of each individual, they are now too often limiting their development to fit into stereotypical boxes. And, last but not least, there are also considerable economic costs of gender-based violence.

One way of getting boys on board and breaking through this level of resistance is by asking them about other forms of discrimination that they might have encountered in their own lives. For example, boys with a migrant background might relate to a story of being scrutinized and watched more closely by shop detectives when entering a store, based on ethnic profiling assumptions. They know how painful this feels, and relating to that experience might help them to see the analogy to how it must feel for women to be cat-called on a street or inappropriately touched at a party, just because they are women, and therefore assumed to be sexually available. When working on this level, it is important to make the connection to emotions and boundaries.

Once the conviction has taken hold that indeed there is still gender-based violence and that – yes – this is problematic, chances are that people move to the next level of resistance: changeability.

### 2.3. CHANGEABILITY

Often people feel overpowered by the realisation of how pervasive and deep gender stereotypes run through our societies, behaviours, institutions, relationships. People quickly conclude: “There is nothing we can do about it and if we do, it’s just a drop in the ocean.” Interestingly enough, people are also much better at pinpointing the responsibility of others than having a clear view of what they themselves can do.

So, at this point, typical remarks will be: “But it’s the parents/schools/media/ who should break the stereotypes. We can’t really do anything.” Blaming others and being blind to your own responsibility is a dangerous trap that leads to despair and passivity. It might help to point out that others’ responsibility is interesting to ponder, but unless we have a clear mandate to change those concerned, it will not lead to actual change. It is therefore a “red zone” (no-go zone). However, concentrating on the “green zone” – the space where our responsibility is real, can lead to actions and actual change. Thus, the first step in this stage is to make the “marge de manoeuvre” – the room for manoeuvre – visible to the audience: what they can do, rather than what others should do.

Secondly, it is very helpful to present good practice examples of similar situations. Showing what others did and how this led to successful change is important in convincing people that progress can be made, also in their limited area of society.

Another way in which resistance might present itself at this level is via fear of reverse discrimination. This is very typically voiced by people in a privileged position – which is invisible to them – but who at the same time are highly sensitive to any form of discrimination directed at them. Most of the time, when it comes to gender equality, it will be men who are in the privileged position. Privilege has a tendency of being invisible for those who have it. They are so accustomed to it, that they start seeing it as “their birth-right” and taking it away as discrimination. In this view, equality is often looked at as a scarce commodity, or like a pie with finite borders: if you need to share a piece of pie with others, it means less pie for you. However, equal rights for others does not mean less pie for you. It’s not pie. Gender equality is precisely about stepping out of that zero-sum game mentality and embracing the win-win situations created by making room for diversity. For example, in couples where there is more gender equality, both partners report better sex lives. Also, being respectful in how you treat women will obviously increase the chance that you will also be treated respectfully by them. Challenging the unwritten rule that you can prove your masculinity by cat-calling women might not only improve your relationship with these women but might also lift your relationship with other men to a new level of intimacy. In other words, when tackling this level of resistance, it is important to stay away from the zero-sum game trap and show the win-win of gender equality.

However, this might still lead to the next and last level of resistance: one’s own changeability. People will eventually doubt their capacity to apply the good practice examples to their own context.

### 2.4. OWN CAPACITY

At this point you have convinced people that there is gender inequality and gender-based violence; they are also aware of why this is a problem, you have presented them with good-practice examples of what can be done, but they will claim that they lack the resources and know-how to “try this at home.” Making real change means daring to engage yourself, stepping out of the comfort zone, moving it up the priority list, “being the change you want to see.”

Unfortunately, gender sensitivity training often has little impact on this last stage, thereby completely nullifying the visible impact of the training. People might be convinced up to stage 3 (changeability) but return to their homes and streets after the training and never put any of the things learned into practice. That being said, an important warning should be added here. Victim-blaming is a reality and a serious risk for any men or women who try to break down gender stereotypes. The harmful gender-policing methods (including violence) men use on each other and on women to get them back into their usual or previous gender roles mean that anybody taking a clear stance against gender-based violence is at risk of turning their peer group against themselves.

When working with men and especially boys, special care needs to be applied in working on this issue to warn them of the risk and to give them tips and tricks in how to deal with it. Also, in certain male (sub)cultures, the hierarchical order – the pecking order – is often very important. Key actors in top or gate-keeping positions have a vastly greater influence on group culture than anybody dangling at the bottom of the line. The position they hold in the power pyramid will define the amount of risk they can realistically take to challenge gender-based violence. Working directly with the key actors and leaders will therefore increase the impact.

On a personal level, the way to overcome this last stage of resistance is by brainstorming on actions to take. It might involve role-play, to try out new forms of communication.

### 3. IF ALL ELSE FAILS...

As presented above, resistance can present itself on many levels. As a summary of the above-mentioned points, we provide the following matrix of resistance:

	<b>Resistance levels</b>	<b>How resistance presents itself</b>	<b>What to do</b>
	1. Facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neglecting that gender-based violence (still) exists</li> <li>• Claiming it's historical or only in certain cultures but not in their own</li> <li>• Minimising the facts</li> <li>• Victim-blaming or fear of victim-blaming: Joking about the topic, sexist remarks</li> </ul>	Present facts and figures, testimonies, that are preferably research-based.
	2. Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claiming the outcome of gender-based violence is the result of a biological pre-disposition and thereby refuting that these individuals' behaviour is driven by societal expectations about their gender roles.</li> <li>• Invisibility of ethical harm of gender stereotypes</li> <li>• Invisibility of psychological cost of gender-based violence.</li> <li>• General minimization of the effects and putting it low on any priority list (saying there are more urgent matters to tackle).</li> </ul>	Training on unconscious bias. Show research on psychological costs. Present ethical arguments.
	3. Changeability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over-estimate the impact others can have and under-estimate their own responsibility.</li> <li>• Feelings of despair and passivity</li> <li>• Fear of reverse discrimination and victim-blaming</li> </ul>	Help group move from "red zone" to "green zone." Present good practice cases and examples.
	4. Own capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of interest and/or power in the group</li> </ul>	Translate good practice cases to fit their context and brainstorm on other innovative actions. Practice new behaviour in safe settings.

As indicated by the blue arrow going downwards on the left side of the matrix, it should be noted that resistance often presents itself in the exact order of the resistance levels. Therefore, the most important mistake often made when dealing with resistance is when people are called-upon to "take action" (a call situated on level 4: their own capacity), while in their own convictions they are situated on level zero. People will never be inclined to take action to solve a problem, if they don't know the facts, let alone when these are problematic.

This is why it is important that if you want to lay the foundation for making significant changes with regard to gender-based violence, the approach and procedures should include steps that tackle each of the levels of resistance in their chronological order.

#### 4. CONSEQUENCES FOR DOING TRAINING ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

If you are conducting a training, it is good to start with explaining the basic concepts, giving people the right vocabulary to talk about gender equality and gender-based violence. Most importantly, knowing the distinction between gender and sex and de-constructing the conviction that all differences are biologically-based (“testosterone-trap”) and therefore unchangeable. Then present some facts and figures showing the current remaining gender inequalities or occurrence of gender-based violence in the context in which they live and work/study.

As a second level, you can then explain that differences are ok, but not inequalities. So, in cases where M/F differences lead to inequalities (violence, etc...) this is harmful and problematic. Again, showing figures and research on the matter is important. Moving then to the third level, it is time to bring in some good practice cases of actions taken by other people or groups in a context that can be compared to their own.

Only when all of these steps have been taken, can you move to the level of activating the audience to take actions themselves.

However, and unfortunately, it should also be noted that there is no magic formula for changing people’s minds when it comes to deeply-entrenched gender convictions. When worldviews are shaken too harshly and suddenly, it can raise resistance to change. On the other hand, if only stirred superficially, people can easily neglect what they have heard and move back to business as usual. The right amount of provocation for one person might prove lethal for another and so there is never a guarantee that a training provides the right dosage for getting everybody on board and willing to change.

Still, the chances of getting everybody onboard are greatly increased if the training is conducted in a participatory manner. People should be able to think out loud, voice concerns or disagreement, exchange anecdotes or fears and build on new ideas together. In that sense, participatory facilitation techniques need to be as much about a competence that is present in a gender trainer as about training abilities.

Last, but not least: seeds take time to germinate. A one-time training will hardly ever bear immediate results; it can only do so if it is thoroughly embedded in a longer-term procedure and action plan on the topic. Messages tend to be better remembered when repeated over and over again. So, design a bigger picture and keep that in mind. Make the vision and long-term objectives clear to all concerned.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

In view of the levels of resistance described above, the conclusion is that great care has to be taken when making a realistic assessment of the potential impact of a training on gender-based violence. This has to do with the fact that the starting position of the participants might differ a lot. For example, if you are working with 14-year-old boys coming from low educational backgrounds, where a hyper-masculine culture (or even a

rape culture), is part of the culture they grew up in, then your starting point is level zero and a training might just get some of the participants into level 1. That is, if you're lucky.

However, if you work with a group of young adults who have been hearing about the topic, who are activists for gender equality already, then obviously going through levels 1, 2 and 3 will be a walk in the park and you can generously spend time working on their personal commitment.

This means that in order to make a fair judgment on impact, the starting point needs to be compared to the results. Any improvement at all is OK, no matter how low the starting level was.

As such the following one-liner is applicable here: it is not about the top, it is about the climbing.

## ANNEX 3: EVALUATION TEAM

The evaluation was carried out by a 2-person team: Katrien Van der Heyden, living in Belgium (close to NL and the UK), and (Flemish) Dutch/English/French-speaking; and Richard Langlais, living in Sweden, and Swedish/English/French-speaking. Both have experience in gender and evaluation, but Katrien Van der Heyden has gender as her core topic, while Richard Langlais is more specialised in monitoring and evaluation. Both have a long experience in working in EU-level projects and are thus very compatible and well situated to evaluate this project. Brief descriptions of their expertise follow, with more detailed CVs following in Annex 3.

Katrien Van der Heyden (Belgium) had the overall responsibility for the evaluation. She is a sociologist, psychotherapist, and expert in gender, equal opportunities, development, and diversity, with a Masters in Gender Studies. Her most recent publication (2018) is *Is Bont en Blauw een Mannen Kleur?* [Are Black and Blue Men's Colours?], published by Witsand Uitgevers. She has 20 years of career experience, covering field work with rural development projects in Africa, as an independent consultant in the field of gender and diversity, and as a researcher at the University of Antwerp. Her specialist fields are health, gender analysis, (qualitative) research and strategy (gender mainstreaming at project and institutional levels, strategic planning), training and facilitation of workshops, and management and evaluation of projects. She has worked for bilateral cooperation organisations (BTC), international NGOs (Medicus Mundi), and several Belgian, Flemish, and local administrative departments. Recent involvements include the evaluation of several SH&SV-related projects, such as the Men Speak Out project (Daphne), and evaluation of the End FGM Network-Europe.

Richard Langlais (Sweden), is a specialist in integrative, transdisciplinary projects, developed during three decades of work with various themes of sustainable development on four continents. The study of multi-level interaction, from the perspective of gender and conflict, between individuals, groups, cultures and nations, and between society and the rest of nature, are at the core of his work. His PhD (Göteborg University) in human ecology was a deep study of aboriginal Inuit autonomy processes in Arctic Canada and Greenland, and their significance for international security after the Cold War. That was preceded by a two-year study (including six months on foot in remote regions of Tibet) of ethnic relations between Tibetan nomadic highlanders and Chinese settlers. Most recently, he was co-leader of the NATO assessment of implementation of UNSCR 1325 on the security of women and girls, boys and men, in peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo, and was principal investigator of a project on engendered approaches to climate change in Swedish municipalities, funded by the Swedish Research Council – Vetenskapsrådet – among other gender-related activities. He is also on the Advisory Board of the EU DG-Justice project, Baltic Gender.