

# Fulfilling your AMANAH

## Preventing Gender Based Violence: A Resource for Muslim (trust) Community Organizations

Too often, communities and institutions begin thinking about gender-based violence prevention after an incident has occurred or a complaint or allegation has been made. This can leave many in the community or organization feeling unprepared or unequipped to create spaces that are victim-centric and free of violence.

### **AMANAH at the core**

Prevention is not simply putting policies in place or mandating your staff and volunteers to participate in annual trainings. True prevention requires making changes at a systems level and working toward entire cultural shifts, and reducing the barriers that face victims who want to report, seek healing, and get some semblance of justice. As such, those in formal and informal leadership positions have the unique opportunity to help facilitate these systems level change.

In Islam, Muslims believe that many of the responsibilities and blessings they are given granted are an amanah, or trust, from God. For example, the earth has been given to us as an amanah and must be taken care of. Children have also been entrusted as an are an amanah for their parents, and have certain rights that must be fulfilled. Similarly, those who are the most vulnerable in communities must be cared for with compassion, equity, and justice. In this vein, preventing gender based violence and creating safer spaces that reduce barriers to reporting of violence and abuse is our responsibility. God has entrusted us with this beloved community, and ensuring a violence and abuse free community is an amanah we take seriously.

### **AMANAH Principles**

It is a community's amanah to build spaces that prevent gender-based violence, and be prepared to address gender-based violence in a victim/survivor-centric and timely manner should they occur. As such, there are certain steps that can be taken toward making an organization or community more equipped to address gender-based violence from the systems level, and fulfill this trust through the acronym AMANAH:

#### **AMANAH stands for:**

**A**cquire knowledge

**M**obilize community care funds and resources

**A**lly with trained professionals

**N**ormalize seeking help, information and services

**A**ddress root causes

**H**andle reporting through trauma-informed processes



## **A** Acquire Knowledge

Gender-based violence prevention does not have efficacy without the proper knowledge. As such, the community or organization should seek knowledge on the following: Understanding the full scope of gender-based violence, including definitions, laws regarding mandated reporting, why victims don't tell, the root causes of gender-based violence, and the local resources and social services available in the area.

## **W** Mobilize community care funds and resources

Supporting survivors requires considering all the ways they are impacted and creating spaces in our communities to resource and fund those needs. One way to do that is to mobilize community members to come together and gather all the resources – both monetary and non-monetary – necessary to support survivors, then create a program geared towards disseminating those funds and resources.

## **A** Ally with trained professionals

Collaboration with local agencies with trained professionals in the fields of mental health, gender-based violence, and prevention is imperative to ensure the work is done in a trauma-informed way. Collaboration in this sense does not solely mean “networking,” but working together from the beginning to co-create networks for referral and support systems. Additionally, this arrangement may also benefit the community organization that may not have a budget to hire a full-time staff person with expertise in gender-based violence.

## **N** Normalize seeking information, help, and services

One of the biggest reasons victims do not report is because of the shame and stigma that surrounds gender-based violence, including seeking help for it. The key to normalizing seeking information, help, and services, is to ensure that your community organization has ongoing conversations on sex, healthy relationships, and gender-based violence and to ensure that seeking help is safe and accessible.

## **A** Address the root causes of violence

Violence and abuse do not happen in a vacuum; rather, there are often root causes to the violence that contributed to creating an environment that enabled the abuse to occur. As such, it is important to assess your community or organization and create an action plan for prevention. A comprehensive action plan considers addressing both the root causes of gender-based violence that may be present as well as the barriers to reporting at individual, community, and institutional levels.

## **H** Handle reporting through trauma-informed processes

Given the complex nature of gender-based violence, and the lack of capacity many organizations have when disclosures are brought forward, it is imperative that reporting is handled through streamlined processes that hold confidentiality and timeliness to their highest standards. Such processes also reduce barriers to reporting. The burden of reporting cannot be the sole responsibility of the survivor, but rather organizations bear the responsibility to create structures and processes that reach communities with high likelihood of not reporting.