

MANIFESTO



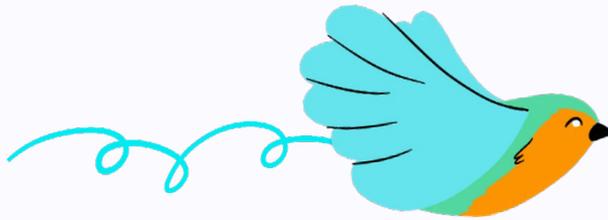
OF

THE

GLOBAL

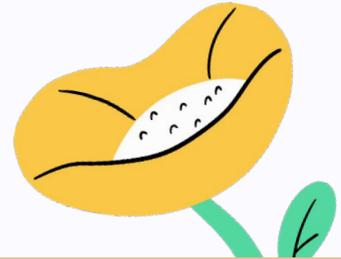
ALLIANCE

FOR



THE

PROTECTION



OF

BOYS



FROM

SEXUAL

VIOLENCE



Introduction

Sexual violence can affect anyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics (SOGIESC), age, nationality, ethnicity, ability/disability, neurodiversity status, immigration status or socio-economic factors, with various intersecting factors defining individual experiences. *Sexual violence perpetrated against children is one of the most significant human rights crises of our time.*¹

In response, the **Global Alliance for the Protection of Boys from Sexual Violence (GAPB)** emerges as a beacon of collaborative action. Rooted in the principles of gender equality, human rights, and international humanitarian law, we stand with the firm belief that gender equity is essential to achieving gender equality and ensuring every child's right to protection and dignity.

As we navigate through the complexities of this global crisis, the imperative for a united, focused response has never been more needed. The GAPB commits to filling this gap by shining a light on the experiences of boy² survivors³ of sexual violence in all their diversity and the challenges they face. Adopting an intersectional lens is crucial to understanding the multiple violations children can face due to a range of different issues, including the above-mentioned intersecting factors and numerous others.

The GAPB is not only a coalition, but a movement towards transformative change, bringing together joint efforts to challenge gender hierarchies and patriarchal norms.

In recognition of the need to acknowledge that boys are victims of sexual violence, the GAPB recognises that violence against women and girls is rooted in patriarchal gender inequalities, hierarchies, power imbalances, and discrimination with unique and intersecting manifestations and implications for women and girls.⁴

The GAPB is committed to addressing sexual violence against boys as a human rights centred child protection issue, including addressing boys' specific risks, without reinforcing male privilege and by challenging rigid gender norms, ensuring accountability to girls and women who continue to be disproportionately affected by sexual violence.

¹ For an up-to-date and comprehensive overview of the situation of sexual violence facing children, including the prevention landscape see: Together for Girls, The Equality Institute and Oak Foundation, [What Works to Prevent Sexual Violence Against Children: Evidence Review](#), 2019.

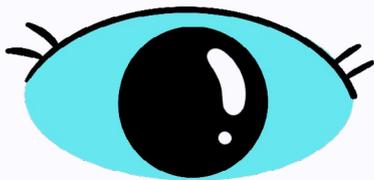
² The term boys refers to children (under 18 years old) identifying themselves as boys, including gender non-conforming, intersex and non-binary children, or children who may identify with the term 'boy' in any other way.

³ The term "survivor" and "victim" are often used interchangeably in humanitarian and development programming. We acknowledge that every individual who has suffered sexual violence has the right to choose their preferred language. However, when applicable, we prefer to use the term "survivor" because it reinforces the person's resilience. At the same time, in psychological and social support settings, we recommend a survivor-centered approach whereby a service provider asks the person how they would like to be identified. See: [Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Interagency Gender-Based Violence Case Management Guidelines](#) (2017).

⁴ Myrtilinen, H., & Schulz, P. (2022). [Broadening the scope but reasserting male privilege? Potential patriarchal pitfalls of inclusive approaches to gender-based violence](#). *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 25(3), 393–413.

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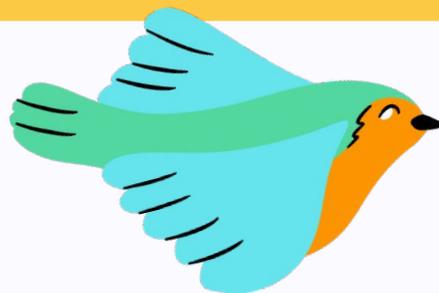
MOVEMENT



TOWARDS

TRANSFORMATIVE

CHANGE



Furthermore, the GAPB is committed to fostering safer communities and reducing levels of gender-based violence against girls and women, and/ including children with diverse SOGIESC. In this regard, the work of the GAPB will represent a complementary resource that supports, aligns, and amplifies the advocacy conducted by the gender-based violence, child protection sectors, as well as all relevant sectors responsible for upholding children's rights.

To address these challenges, the GAPB believes that prevention, mitigation, and response interventions within child protection systems play a pivotal role in deterring the long-term cycle of violence. Within this context, we acknowledge that patriarchal norms that define masculinity perpetuate across all levels of society and adversely affect access and delivery of such interventions for boy survivors. Further, often the entire network of people surrounding boys is conditioned by biases, as families and communities may dismiss potential cases of sexual violence, unable to conceive or accept that boys are vulnerable to sexual violence.

At the organisational level, misconceptions about the magnitude of sexual violence against boys impede the design of interventions and child protection systems that are tailored to boys' risks and experiences of sexual violence. Prevention services are also affected by biases as communities may view adolescent boys, particularly older boys, as perpetrators of sexual violence, rather than victims or survivors, especially in situations of sexual exploitation.

Additionally, widespread biases around sexuality (e.g., men always want sex; women cannot coerce men into

sex because men are the physically stronger sex; if men become aroused during sexual assault, then they enjoyed it; therefore, it is not sexual violence) lead to the oversexualisation and subsequent objectification of boys, reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes and expectations. These factors, coupled with a pervasive culture of silence, make help-seeking behaviours among boys stigmatised and discouraged.

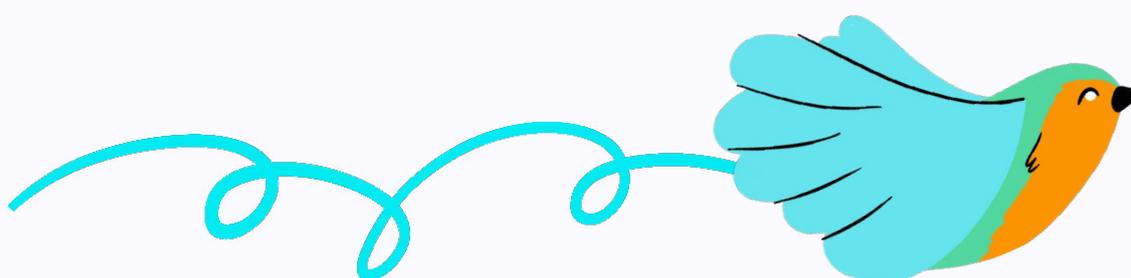
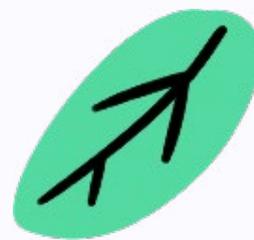
Compounding these biases, mitigation and response interventions are also adversely impacted. Service delivery organisations may lack the knowledge, commitment, and/or resources to identify the unique and intersecting risk factors of sexual violence faced by boys; and therefore, fail to implement mitigation approaches within their broader child protection and gender-based violence programming. Service providers and frontline workers often lack the necessary skills and approaches to recognise the warning signs of sexual violence in boys, often mistaking them for stereotypical behaviours associated with harmful ideas of masculinities (e.g. anger), while referral pathways tailored to the needs and capacities of boy survivors are non-existent in most contexts. Trust-building approaches tailored to boys' needs and capacities are often underutilised, affecting the ability of frontline services and workers to respond using survivor-centred approaches that are in the boys' best interests.



The GAPB recognises that boys are not a homogenous group, and intersecting factors such as age, different abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds and children with diverse SOGIESC should be considered in any learning process or intervention.

⁵ The use of the term "male" in this context refers to individuals identifying as male. However, it is important to recognise that the term is rooted in a binary understanding of gender, which may not fully encompass the experiences of all individuals. The term can reinforce patriarchal norms and male privilege, often limiting emotional expression and perpetuating harmful stereotypes. These rigid norms not only limit both men and boys but also contribute to broader societal harm, particularly affecting individuals who do not conform to traditional gender expectations.

The GAPB aims to enhance awareness and expertise in addressing sexual violence against boys worldwide. By strengthening relevant sectors for the protection of boys from sexual violence through the development of prevention, mitigation, and response strategies specific to the issues facing boys, the work of the GAPB aims to complement the vital efforts of the gender-based violence sector. In this respect, it is expected that increased knowledge and capacity to address cases of sexual violence against boys by child protection services and by gender-based violence services where appropriate will also reduce workload on services that are specific to women and girls, as case management in cases involving boys can be particularly long and challenging because of the limited preparedness. The GAPB plans to fortify these efforts by educating media and relevant stakeholders on the risks boys face regarding sexual violence, including dynamics of problematic and abusive sexual behaviour within the local context. It also seeks to work to reduce the tendency to label children who engage in such behaviours solely as perpetrators.





BOYS ARE

NOT A

HOMOGENOUS

GROUP



What do we stand for?

GAPB principles and values

The GAPB envisions a caring, nurturing world where all children have the opportunity to realise their rights and express their authentic selves without fear of violence and stigma. We envision a world with gender equity and equality, where every child's right is safeguarded, and freedom from sexual violence is not just an ideal, but a reality for all. This is the cornerstone of our mission.

Our journey is guided by a set of core values and principles that underpin every facet of our work. Our principles are the foundation upon which we build our strategies, advocate for change, collaborate, and engage with communities worldwide.



At the core, the GAPB commits to:

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.

Child protection and the upholding of child rights serve as our compass, directing our efforts towards a holistic, mutually beneficial, and complementary approach to enhance inclusivity for all children.

Boys, like all children, have a right to live a life free from all forms of violence, and we have a responsibility to ensure boys have access to required means to prevent and respond to violations.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989 which guarantees that children have the right to live free from all types of violence is a foundation of the GAPB's mission and actions. Sexual violence against children is a serious violation of their rights and constitutes a crime under international criminal law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against children are human rights violations and may amount to breaches of international humanitarian law. If committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population, sexual violence can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Boys are children who must be accorded inherent dignity and respect. They have the right to be heard, feel empowered and live their lives free from violence.



SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY.

The GAPB that gender discrimination disproportionately affects women and girls. Gender-based violence is rooted in harmful gender stereotypes and systemic power imbalances that position women, girls, and children as inferior or subordinates in society. Women, girls, and children experience discrimination based on disability, SOGIESC, class, migration status, religion, ethnicity, among other non-dominant identities, facing a disproportionate risk to sexual violence across every context due to their unequal status in society.

The GAPB commits to continuously strengthening coordination and collaboration to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and advocate for increased resources for gender equity interventions.



TRANSFORMING PATRIARCHAL AND HARMFUL GENDER AND SOCIAL NORMS.

The GAPB aims to work with boys as allies and agents of change in transforming patriarchal and harmful gender and social norms and understanding definitions of masculinity that promote gender equality. While there is nothing inherent about being a man that drives violence, the current socially ascribed norms that dictate “masculinity” are undeniably linked with violence across contexts.

Stereotypical definitions of masculinity, as well as deep-seated homophobia, also hinder boys’ help-seeking, making it difficult for boys to speak out against abuse and sexual violence when they experience it.

Such stereotypes around masculinity affect resource allocation, programming priorities, and prioritisation of ‘key populations’ included in prevention, mitigation, and response interventions. As they learn to support and uphold gender equality, boys also experience the positive effects of breaking away from rigid norms that limit their emotional expression and personal growth, ultimately benefiting from a healthier, more balanced approach to gender dynamics. Supporting adolescent boys to critically reflect on the gender and social norms that are the root causes of violence and the gender dynamics that drive it, and to lead shifts in harmful norms within their communities is essential. This will include working with boys as agents of change for gender equality and non-violent behaviour, to address knowledge, attitudes, and norms surrounding sexuality that can lead to sexual violence, and parallelly engaging parents and caregivers and the broader community, to minimise backlash and to support community-wide change. In addition, it will entail advocacy such as intergenerational dialogues and work with duty bearers and youth-led strategies for social change on gender equality.



INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH.

The GAPB aims to employ participatory mixed-methods approaches to understand how gender and social identities can overlap and create compounding experiences of discrimination and oppression affecting boys, girls, including children with disabilities and diverse SOGIESC, among other diversity factors. The GAPB recognises how hegemonic ideas of masculinity exert pressure on boys to comply with gendered expectations in all social spheres, affecting boys from socio-economic groups with less access to resources, boys with disabilities, those with diverse SOGIESC, and those from marginalised groups and communities differently.

The GAPB commits to developing strategies that address all levels of discrimination faced by boys, understanding gendered experiences of violence, and actively fostering the transformation of rigid gender norms and power structures that are rooted in heteropatriarchy and male privilege.



SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH.

The GAPB is committed to use a survivor-centred approach by ethically placing survivors at the centre of its work at all stages and strategic areas through meaningful participation. The GAPB commits to creating a supportive environment in which survivors' perspectives, needs, wishes, experiences, and opinions are centred and prioritised.



PROMOTING LOCALLY-LED EXPERIENCES AND EXPERTISE.

The GAPB recognises the incredible wealth of knowledge and expertise that local and grassroots organisations possess, and the relentless work they carry out daily in their efforts to support children and protect them from sexual violence.

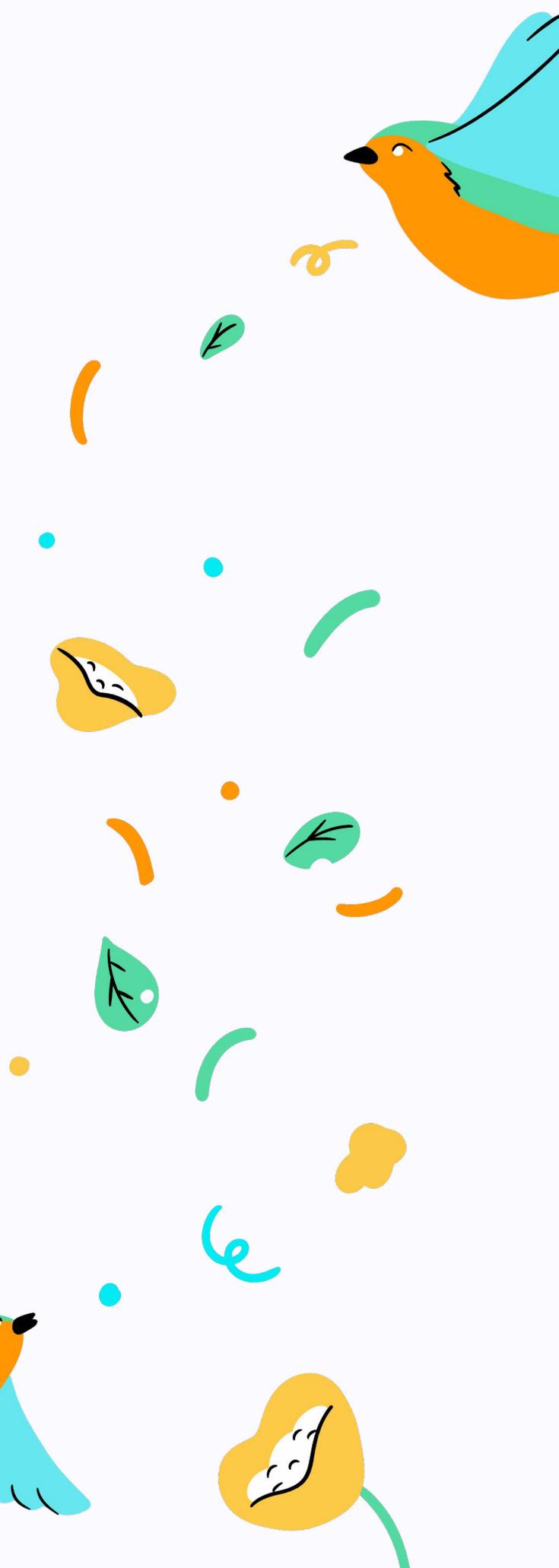
The GAPB values locally-led action and local leadership, striving to enhance the agency and voices of local CSOs, people with lived experiences, and communities, making advocacy efforts more relevant and effective. This ensures sustainability by strengthening their voices and ownership, guaranteeing long-term success. This approach makes the GAPB more efficient and effective by leveraging local resources and knowledge and promotes equity by including its local members in the decision-making process, ensuring they lead the advocacy initiatives. The GAPB aims to highlight practitioner-based knowledge, experiences, and innovation as the key drivers of its actions and as a model for durable solutions. GAPB's commitment to decision-making at local level will be realised by lifting up the voice and technical expertise from local experiences to the global fora, ensuring strategic global advocacy interventions are based on clear evidence and messaging.



EVIDENCE-DRIVEN APPROACH.

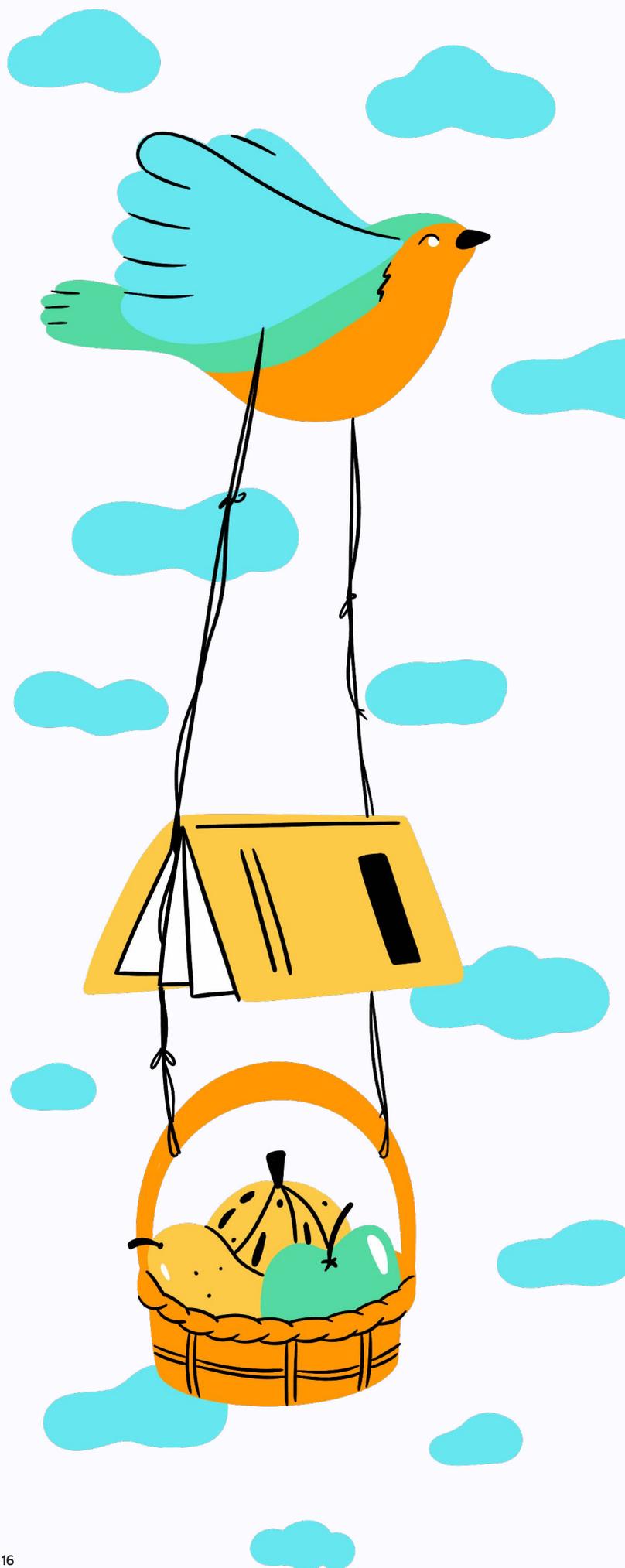
The GAPB aims to implement an evidence-based approach to understanding and combatting sexual violence against boys, bridging existing knowledge gaps and enhancing prevention and intervention strategies. Through member coordination, the GAPB will conduct research to fill critical evidence gaps, such as the lack of comprehensive data on the long-term psychological impacts of sexual violence on boys, and the intersectionality of age, gender, and other factors in relation to boys' experiences of sexual violence, as well as the effectiveness of current prevention and intervention strategies tailored to their unique needs. Understanding the factors associated with sexual violence against boys is crucial not only for protecting children but also for preventing their potential involvement in risky behaviours or perpetration of violence against others.

The generation of evidence must incorporate the perspectives of boys to develop effective policies that truly meet their needs. Children have the right to live their lives free from violence, as well as the right to express their opinions and be heard in the best ways to protect and support them.



ADVOCATING FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.

The GAPB will advocate for **more funding**, allocation of resources and direct services to support survivors and survivor-led organisations, increased funding for sectors working to prevent child sexual violence including gender-based violence, child protection, mental health and psychosocial support services, education, and dedicated new funding mechanism in the field of prevention, mitigation, and response to sexual violence against boys. The focus is not on reallocating funds from already underfunded sectors, such as gender-based violence sector, but on addressing the systemic violence and the transformation of rigid gender norms that impacts both boys and girls. The goal is to increase overall resources, ensuring that boys and girls receive the support they need. We aim to create a balanced system that strengthens services for all survivors, regardless of gender.





What are our objectives?

Through evidence-generation, advocacy, and the promotion of effective locally developed prevention, mitigation, and response strategies, we aim to influence systemic change in all relevant sectors to ensure that all boys are protected from sexual violence.

The GAPB objectives are to:

DEEPEN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

of the different complexities of sexual violence perpetrated against boys to inform prevention, mitigation, and response strategies and practice, through evidence-based and locally-led approaches. This means that the GAPB wants to support practitioners, service providers, decision-makers and donors to understand the different nuances and manifestations of sexual violence against boys in a given context, including risk factors, and its impact and consequences, through formative, exploratory research.

INTEGRATE THE ISSUE

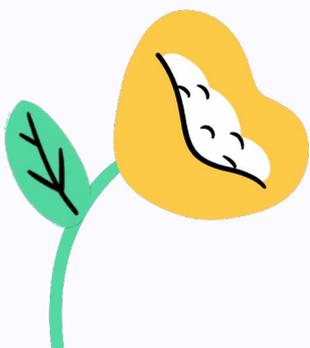
of sexual violence against boys into the work of relevant sectors for the protection of children from sexual violence through strategic global advocacy on the issue. The GAPB works towards transforming the capacity of child protection stakeholders to understand and address the issue. The GAPB wants to promote locally-led, evidence-based research and practices, and provide a platform where all concerned stakeholders can access knowledge and solution-oriented tools and approaches.

DECONSTRUCT RIGID GENDER NORMS AND IDEAS OF MASCULINITIES,

taking into consideration diversity and intersectionality in the experiences of children, to shift the narrative about boy survivorhood and **challenge harmful biases and stereotypes** on this issue. The GAPB aims to create, disseminate and amplify resources, research and campaigns that intentionally challenge misconceptions about boys and sexual violence and harmful ideas about boys' survivorhood, with a specific focus on challenging stereotypes affecting boys from marginalised communities, while ensuring accountability to women and girls.

FOSTER SOCIETIES AND CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

that promote gender equity, with a child-centred, survivor-centred, trauma-informed, and rights-based approach that also factors in cultural aspects, supporting gender transformative approaches contributing to the overall reduction of instances of gender-based violence against women and girls. This means that the GAPB will join forces in mobilising and advocating for decision-makers and donors to increase funding for interventions that aim at challenging male privilege, heteronormative frameworks and power dynamics that negatively affect women and children.





How do we want to achieve this?

Bolstered by a multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary membership, we will adopt an evidence-based, intersectional, locally-driven, dynamic, and multifaceted approach, embracing innovative solutions and research initiatives to deepen our understanding of sexual violence against boys and how to best prevent, mitigate, and respond to sexual violence against boys. Advocacy campaigns and collaborative efforts are integral to our methodology, aiming to mobilise a broad spectrum of stakeholders towards a common goal. By embracing a localised approach, we seek to work hand in hand with national actors and civil society organisations to design messages and interventions that resonate with their specific contexts and the lived experiences of boys in all their diversity.

The GAPB aims to increase the coherence of evidence-based child protection advocacy efforts that learn from and promote local knowledge, experience, and innovation through:

Coordinated and coherent advocacy at the international level, bringing a common voice to international spaces of the child protection sector and in line with the advocacy efforts by the gender-based violence sector.

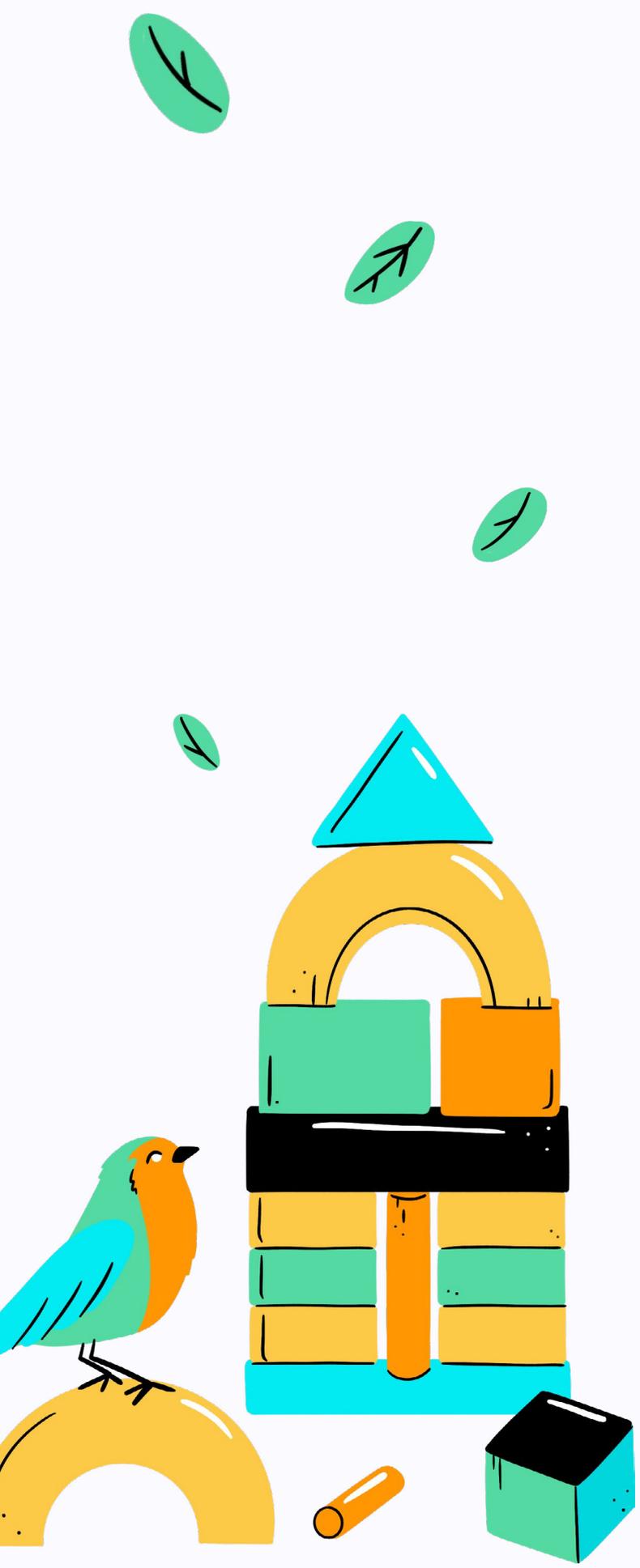
International advocacy based on locally developed practices, research, and expertise, including the active involvement of local civil society organisations in international and regional advocacy spaces and the subsequent collaboration with national advocacy efforts, as part of a mutual learning effort.

Creating an **open-access online resource hub of knowledge**, resources, tools, and data on the different manifestations, dynamics, challenges, and consequences of sexual violence against boys in all their diversity – across different settings and environments to serve as a consolidated hub for good practice in addressing sexual violence against boys by bringing together tools, resources and data from diverse settings for easy reference and use.

The learning from and **promotion of local practices** for the delivery of prevention, mitigation, and response services to boys affected by sexual violence, supporting peer-to-peer learning and capacity strengthening.

The dissemination of **common advocacy messages**, through joint campaigning and activities, as well as support for targeted advocacy actions that challenge patriarchal norms and misconceptions adversely affecting boys at risk of and exposed to sexual violence.

The **systematic dissemination of new and existing knowledge**, data, and resources that support all relevant sectors for the protection of boys and other stakeholders in clearly understanding and addressing the issue of sexual violence against boys, in cooperation with other relevant stakeholders in order to avoid duplication of efforts.



The GAPB is committed to work in **collaboration and partnerships** with all international, regional, and national relevant stakeholders that uphold the totality of its principles and values, with particular attention to the principle of gender equity and the active dismantling of patriarchal systems.

Collaboration and joint learning are the lifeline of the GAPB. We extend an open invitation to all stakeholders to lend their support and expertise. From survivors and policymakers to service providers and the wider community, every voice matters, and every hand extended in partnership brings us closer to our goal. Our engagement strategy is designed to foster strong, meaningful collaborations at all levels that amplify our impact and drive forward our shared vision.

The GAPB aims to collaborate with all organisations and bodies that share our values and principles. It aims to amplify knowledge and efforts made by our members, while providing tools to clarify the messages around the complexities of the different forms of sexual violence against boys. It aims also to improve the language of the different messages to ensure that the advocacy carried out remains evidence-based, cohesive, inclusive, relevant, and up to date with possible emerging issues and concerns.

It strives to ensure that its mission remains relevant, complementary and intersectional by nature. The GAPB specifically invites organisations with knowledge, expertise, tools and resources that allow for its members to adopt an intersectional lens that promotes gender-transformative approaches in child protection interventions.

How can you be a part of this?

The GAPB calls upon its members and the broader community to join us and cooperate in this critical mission, continuing the efforts to protect boys and all children from any form of sexual violence. The situation's urgency demands not just awareness, but a commitment to sustained, effective action that transcends boundaries and unites us in a common purpose.

Through the centralisation and dissemination of all relevant resources, the GAPB is a space where practitioners, researchers, policy and decision-makers, and donors, among others, can easily access information, research and information on practice to inform programmes that address the specific needs and capacities of boys in all their diversity.

Joining the GAPB therefore means being part of a global movement that amplifies locally developed experiences and learnings, provides expertise and resources on the different dimensions of sexual violence against boys, and supports efforts at the international level to strengthen the call for additional resources for all child survivors and children at risk of sexual violence.

Joining the GAPB also means sharing its principles and values, always upholding an approach that respects both child rights and gender equity. In this sense, the GAPB is a space where members can influence the use of language and the adjustment of

approaches to ensure that the advocacy carried out does not reinforce male privilege, but rather calls for initiatives aimed at achieving transformative change for all children exposed to sexual violence.

In closing, the Global Alliance for the Protection of Boys from Sexual Violence reiterates its unwavering dedication to eradicating sexual violence against all children.

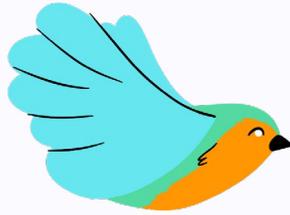
Our Manifesto is more than a statement of intent; it is a declaration of our collective resolve to create a world where every child, free from harm, can look towards a future filled with hope and possibility. We believe that the work of the GAPB is not only urgent but also timely.

The GAPB builds on the learnings and daily efforts of practitioners, researchers, and other child protection stakeholders and honours the dignity and rights of every child affected by sexual violence.

To join or talk with us, email us at contact@wearegapb.org, or scan the following QR code.



United, we have the power to halt sexual violence and foster a transformative change. Let's work together to build a world where every child lives free from violence and exploitation.



A COMMITMENT

TO SUSTAINED,

EFFECTIVE

ACTION

THAT

TRANSCENDS

BOUNDARIES