

## CHAPTER 27

# Preventing male violence

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### Introduction to Preventing Male Violence

Most violence is men's violence. While most men do not use violence, when violence occurs it is perpetrated largely by men. This is true particularly of violence against women, but also true of violence against men. Reflecting the influence of feminist advocacy and scholarship, there has for several decades been substantial attention to the gendered character and dynamics particularly of men's violence against women, and increasingly of men's violence against other men. In efforts to prevent men's violence, there is an increasing focus on engaging men and boys in prevention.

This chapter provides an outline and assessment of efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of men's violence. It focuses on *primary* prevention efforts in particular—activities which take place before violence has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimization. Because most violence prevention activities aimed self-consciously at men and boys concern forms of violence against women, much of the chapter addresses these, but it also addresses prevention efforts regarding other forms of interpersonal violence perpetrated by men.

### Involving Men in Prevention

While many forms of prevention activity involve men or boys among their target audiences, only some do so in *gender-conscious* ways. That is, only some violence prevention efforts addressing men or boys attend to the gendered identities, practices, and relations of men and boys. Where violence prevention efforts which self-consciously address men or boys have been most developed is in relation to the prevention of men's violence against women—of the forms of violence highlighted by such terms as 'domestic violence', 'family violence', 'intimate partner violence', and 'sexual violence', perpetrated largely by men and often against women.

There are growing efforts to involve boys and men in various capacities in the primary prevention of men's violence against women: as participants in education programmes, as targets of social marketing campaigns, as policymakers and gatekeepers, and as activists and advocates (Flood 2005–2006, 2011). There is a groundswell of community-based prevention activity directed at men and boys, exemplified by the White Ribbon Campaign, with, for example, over 400 events and 250,000 ribbons distributed in the 2012 Australian campaign. There is significant policy support for male involvement in violence prevention, evident in recent plans of action by governments at both Federal and state levels in Australia, and affirmed by overseas governments and international agencies (Flood et al. 2010).

There is an obvious rationale for addressing men in ending violence against women. First and most importantly, efforts to prevent violence against women must address men because largely it is men who perpetrate this violence. Second, constructions of masculinity—the social norms associated with manhood and the social organization of men's lives and relations—play a crucial role in shaping violence against women. Third, and more hopefully, men and boys have a positive role to play in helping to stop violence against women, and they will benefit personally and relationally from this (Expert Group 2003). None of this is to say that efforts to prevent violence against women now should focus primarily on men and boys. There remains a powerful rationale for women-focused and women-only initiatives, and efforts focused on boys and men should complement these.

Much the same rationale can be applied to many other forms of violence. Interpersonal violence in public locations such as streets or pubs is perpetrated largely by men and often against other men and structured in part by dynamics of masculinity and gender (Flood 2007). Male–male violence is shaped by, and itself helps to constitute, social codes and relations of masculinity, across such diverse contexts as wars and civil conflicts, in crime and among gangs, and in prisons, schools, and workplaces (Messerschmidt 1997; Polk 1994).

However, efforts to prevent forms of violence other than those involving men's violence against women have paid far less attention to dynamics of masculinity. In comparison to violence prevention initiatives engaging men and boys in the prevention of violence against women, there are only a small number engaging men and boys in gender-conscious ways in preventing other forms of violence. In a 2007 review by the World Health Organization (2007), only one of 15 programmes addressing gender-based violence included substantial attention to male–male violence, 'Building a Culture of Peace' among marginal men and women in Nicaragua. A later review documents other programmes including an educational programme among young men in Northern Ireland (International Planned Parenthood Federation 2010). Two other initiatives are worth noting. In the Western Balkans, CARE Northwest Balkans has worked with young men aged 13–19 to challenge their attitudes and behaviours regarding both male–female and male–male violence, addressing the culture of violence which is a legacy in part of the Yugoslavian Wars of 1991–2001. In South Africa, Sonke Gender Justice has had a lengthy involvement in advocacy, education, and policy work in prisons, focused on the prevention of male–male sexual violence and HIV transmission. Both the Western Balkans project and the South African prisons work embody the recognition that gender inequalities and narrow

constructions of masculinity fuel both male–male and male–female violence and that tackling them is central to prevention.

## Trends in Men's Violence Prevention

Efforts to engage men in the prevention of men's violence against women are marked by several trends: increased regional and global networking, increasing diversity in prevention strategies, an orientation towards 'scaling up', increased engagement in policy, and an increasing emphasis on evaluation.

Increased regional and global networking is visible both in relation to particular campaigns focused on men and in the emergence of regional and international networks and organizations. The White Ribbon Campaign, in which men wear a white ribbon on and around the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November) to show their commitment never to condone nor commit violence against women, is one of the most prominent violence prevention efforts aimed at men.

Regional and international networks focused on men's roles in building gender equality and non-violence has emerged in the last decade. In 2004, a global alliance of non-governmental agencies and United Nations agencies seeking to engage boys and men to achieve gender equality formed, called MenEngage. MenEngage members at the national level include more than 400 non-governmental organizations from sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Asia, and Europe. Another significant regional network is Partners for Prevention (P4P), a UN regional joint programme for gender-based violence prevention in the Asia-Pacific which began in 2008. These multi-country programmes and projects are complemented by substantial websites such as EngagingMen.net and XYonline.net.

There is growing diversity in the strategies used to engage or address men in violence prevention. One can conceptualize prevention strategies in terms of a spectrum organized by scale, with the smallest and most localized strategies at one end and the most large-scale at the other (Davis et al. 2006). Much prevention activity has taken place at the level of community education, involving face-to-face education programmes in schools and universities and communications and social marketing strategies. These are now increasingly complemented by activities at other points on the spectrum, including efforts to engage and mobilize communities, change organizational practices, and influence policies and legislation. In addition, within each level of the spectrum, there is increasing diversity in the strategies used. For example, at the level of community education, there is growing specialization in the adoption of particular approaches such as bystander intervention, social norms approaches, and so on.

Another dimension of this diversity is an expansion in the domains of social life or social practice through which men are engaged in violence prevention. Internationally, men's anti-violence work often is part of wider initiatives regarding men and gender inequalities. Thus one sees efforts in various countries which engage men across such domains as sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and economic inequalities. However, there has been an increase, for example, in efforts to engage men in violence prevention through particular domains such as parenting. The MenCare project is the preeminent example of this.

MenCare is a global campaign to promote men's involvement as equitable, responsive, and non-violent fathers and caregivers. The campaign is coordinated by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke) in collaboration with the MenEngage Alliance. Using media, programme development, and advocacy, the campaign works at multiple levels to engage men as caregivers and as fathers: engaging men as participants in fathers' groups, advocating for progressive family legislation, and encouraging institutions to see engaging men as caregivers as a key dimension of gender equality. The campaign is described as having a preventative effect on men's violence against women by encouraging fathers to treat mothers with respect and care, diminishing the corporal punishment which feeds into cycles of family violence, involving fathers in preventing sexual violence against children, and contributing to boys' adoption of peaceful and progressive masculinities and girls' empowerment (MenCare 2010).

There is growing attention to violence prevention work with men and boys in conflict and post-conflict settings in particular. Recognition of the need for this was exemplified in the 'Advocacy Brief' released by the global network MenEngage and the United Nations Population Fund at the 57th UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2013 (MenEngage and UNFPA 2013b). There are fledgling efforts at gender-conscious violence prevention among men and boys in conflict and post-conflict settings. These include the Young Men Initiative in the Western Balkans, educational programmes engaging men in the prevention of rape as a weapon of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (International Planned Parenthood Federation 2010), and training programmes in Timor-Leste, Sudan, Liberia, and Chad with UN peacekeepers concerning sexual violence. On the other hand, there is only limited recognition of men's potential roles in the prevention of violence in these settings by bodies such as the Security Council (MenEngage and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2013b).

Echoing wider trends in violence prevention, there is some evidence of an increasing orientation towards change efforts addressed to systemic and structural supports for men's violence. As a recent World Health Organization (WHO) report notes:

Most work with men has tended to be local in scale and limited in scope. To be more widely effective—that is, to transform the pervasive gender inequalities that characterize many societies globally—efforts to transform men's behaviour need to be significantly scaled up. (Flood et al. 2010, p. 9)

'Scaling up' here includes the need to address the social and structural determinants of gender inequalities, contribute to the development or consolidation of policies and programmes promoting gender equality and non-violence, scale up existing initiatives already being run by NGOs and other actors, and strengthen policy implementation (Flood et al. 2010).

The Mobilising Men programme, developed by the Institute for Development Studies since 2009, is a strong example of the shift from a focus on changing individual men's attitudes and behaviours to an emphasis on the need to change systemic and structural gender inequalities (Greig and Edström 2012). In India, Kenya, and Uganda, activists in the programme have, for example, lobbied local governments to enforce domestic violence laws, addressed the failure of authorities on college campuses to adopt adequate institutional processes for addressing sexual harassment, worked to improve the coordination of services for victims

and survivors of violence, and conducted human rights work with refugees, asylum seekers, and marginalized communities (Greig & Edström 2012).

One aspect of this increasing focus on shifting institutional relations is an increased engagement with public policy. The WHO report urges that we 'mainstream' men into policies addressing gender, health, and violence. To strengthen the use of government policies to engage men in preventing men's violence and building gender equalities, the report calls for involving affected communities, building institutional capacity and expertise, and strengthening civil society capacity to monitor policy compliance and implementation (Flood et al. 2010).

Two significant examples of such approaches include the work of Sonke Gender Justice and Partners for Prevention (P4P). Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke) is a South African NGO working across Africa to strengthen government, civil society, and citizen capacity to support men and boys to take action to promote gender equality, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS. Among other efforts, Sonke works to hold the South African government accountable for the adoption and implementation of appropriate policies regarding gender-based violence (Sonke 2009). Similarly, P4P, based in the Asia-Pacific, supports research on men, gender-based violence, and policy; engages in awareness-building and advocacy with decision makers; and builds capacity for policy research and advocacy. This emphasis on engagement in public policy was visible most recently at the 57th UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York, in March 2013. The global network MenEngage launched a '10 Point Call for Action', emphasizing ten concrete steps that the UN and national governments should take immediately to engage men and boys in preventing violence against women.

Finally, there is an increasing emphasis on evaluation. As is the case in the violence prevention field and associated fields more generally, there is an increasingly pervasive expectation that prevention efforts will be complemented by examination of their effectiveness.

It is possible that similar trends are under way in relation to prevention efforts addressing other forms of men's violence, although this field is far less well developed.

## The Effectiveness of Violence Prevention Efforts among Men

Evidence is emerging that violence prevention efforts among men and boys can make a difference, and that if done well they can shift the attitudes among boys and men that lead to physical and sexual violence. They may even shift behaviours, reducing males' actual perpetration of violence.

However, it has to be conceded that evaluations of violence prevention are often either absent or lacking. Most primary prevention efforts have not been evaluated, including those engaging men in prevention (Flood 2005–2006). Where impact evaluations *have* been done, often they are limited in methodological terms (Flood 2011). Nevertheless, there is a growing evidence base for the effectiveness of violence prevention strategies among men and boys. There is an increasing body of evidence that well-designed interventions can make a difference to males' violence-related attitudes and behaviours. With regard to the

range of forms of violence by men, this evidence is most well established for interventions addressing men's violence against women.

An international review by the World Health Organization (2007), titled *Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender-Based Inequity in Health*, documents 58 interventions with evaluations. It reports that well-designed programmes *do* show evidence of leading to change in behaviour and attitudes (WHO 2007). Programmes which are gender-transformative—which seek to transform gender roles and promote more gender-equitable relationships between men and women—had a higher level of effectiveness, as did programmes which were integrated within community outreach, mobilization and mass-media campaigns and thus reached beyond individuals to their social contexts (WHO 2007). A follow-up review documents 12 further programmes or interventions promoting gender equality and positive masculinities: most were effective, with gender-transformative programmes more effective than others (International Planned Parenthood Federation 2010), although the standards used for 'effectiveness' were relatively low.

In engaging men and boys in violence prevention, the largest body of evidence for effectiveness concerns education programmes addressing domestic and sexual violence and delivered in schools and universities. This partly reflects the fact that such programmes are a common form of violence prevention. Another strategy, social marketing or media campaigning, also has a sizeable body of evidence. What are some examples of violence prevention efforts among men and boys that have been shown to make a positive difference?

### Community Education

Violence prevention education programmes can have positive effects on participants' attitudes towards and participation in violence. For example, male school and university students who have attended rape education sessions show less adherence to rape myths, express less rape-supportive attitudes, and/or report greater victim empathy than those in control groups. Some programmes have reduced men's reported likelihood to rape, while some have reduced men's actual perpetration of sexual aggression. To give some examples:

- ◆ In Brazil and Mexico, young men exposed to weekly educational workshops and a social marketing campaign showed improved attitudes towards violence against women and other issues (Pulerwitz et al. 2006).
- ◆ In India, young men in the intervention sites showed declines in their support for gender-inequitable norms and in self-reported violence against a partner relative to a comparison group (Verma et al. 2008).
- ◆ In South Africa, men who participated in workshops run by the Men As Partners project were less likely than non-participants to believe that it is acceptable to beat their wives or rape sex workers (White et al. 2003).
- ◆ In the United States, among adult men in a multi-module education programme, five months after the programme, while some men had 'rebounded', others continued to show improvement on attitudinal and behavioural measures (Heppner et al. 1999).

Not all evaluation results are positive. Existing evaluations show that not all educational interventions are effective, the magnitude of change in attitudes often is small, changes often 'rebound' to pre-intervention levels 1 or 2 months after the intervention and some even become worse, and improvements in men's violence-supportive attitudes do not necessarily lead to reductions in their perpetration of violence.

Nevertheless, it is possible to produce lasting change in attitudes and behaviours. For example, evaluations of the Safe Dates programme among American adolescents found that 4 years after the programme, adolescents who had received the programme continued to report less physical and sexual dating violence perpetration and victimization than those who had not (Foshee et al. 2004).

### Communication and Social Marketing

There is evidence that social marketing campaigns can produce positive change in the attitudes and behaviours associated with men's perpetration of violence against women (Donovan and Vlais 2005). For example,

- ◆ Men Can Stop Rape's 'My strength is not for hurting' campaign uses media materials, in tandem with schools-based Men of Strength (MOST) Clubs for young men and other strategies, to build norms of sexual consent, respect, and non-violence. An evaluation of the Californian campaign documents that students exposed to the campaign had slightly more respectful and equitable attitudes, while schools with MOST Clubs had more favourable social climates (Kim and White 2008).
- ◆ In Nicaragua, a mass media campaign among heterosexual men aged 20–39 generated increased support for the ideas that men can prevent gender-based violence and that men's violence affects community development (Solórzano et al. 2000).

Two further communication-based strategies include 'social norms' and 'bystander intervention' approaches. 'Social norms' campaigns seek to close the gap between men's perceptions of other men's agreement with violence-supportive and sexist norms and the actual extent of this agreement. Bystander approaches focus on the ways in which individuals who are neither the perpetrators nor victims of violence can intervene, in order to prevent and reduce harm to others. Again, such strategies can be effective among men:

- ◆ After a recent social norms initiative on a U.S. university campus, college males reduced their overestimation of other males' sexist beliefs and comfort with sexism (Kilmartin et al. 2008).
- ◆ Experimental evaluations among U.S. undergraduates show that approaching men (and women) as potential bystanders or witnesses to behaviours related to sexual violence can improve attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour (Banyard et al. 2007).

There are other strategies which have strong rationales for use in violence prevention among men and boys, such as community development and community mobilization. While they have been implemented only rarely and evaluated even less often, their powerful rationale makes them critical elements in future violence prevention efforts. Community mobilization strategies can catalyse broader social change by shifting social norms and power relations (Flood 2011). There are only a handful of studies globally

of men's involvements in community-based violence prevention, all but one from North America, and none involve impact evaluation (Casey and Smith 2010).

Gender-conscious programmes focused on or addressing men's violence against other men have been evaluated even less often. In the Young Men's Initiative in the Western Balkans discussed earlier, there are tentative findings of positive shifts in gender attitudes, reductions in bullying behaviour, and reductions in ethnic-based prejudices among the boys and young men who took part (MenEngage and UNFPA 2013b). Various other programmes do address male–male violence and other forms of interpersonal violence, as already noted, but robust evidence of their effectiveness is limited.

### Challenges

Violence prevention efforts aimed at men and boys have a powerful rationale, are on the public agenda, and are being adopted and funded increasingly widely. There is growing experience regarding gender-conscious prevention work among men and boys, and a growing body of evidence testifying to its effectiveness if done well. At the same time, there are important limitations and challenges. I briefly highlight four.

First, much of the work engaging men and boys in violence prevention is conceptually simplistic. Much is not informed by contemporary scholarship either on interpersonal violence and its prevention or on men and masculinities. This causes a number of problems. Many interventions fall short of the elements identified as 'best practice' in prevention (Flood et al. 2009). Many lack a theory of change—of how the strategies they use will lead to intended effects. They do not necessarily address relevant predictors or causal factors for violence or its antecedents. Their actual activities may not generate the intended change, because they are too short, one-dimensional, or limited in other ways.

The violence prevention field's lack of engagement with scholarship on men, masculinities, and gender also causes problems. In many projects boys and men are addressed as a homogeneous group, all sharing the same relationships to violence against women. There has been little attention to how men's lives (like women's) are shaped by multiple forms of social difference including ethnicity, class, age, and sexuality (Heppner et al. 1999). The field has been marked by a focus on individual attitudes, whereas the evidence is that violence *and* non-violence are shaped at least as much by collective relations (among peers for example) and by contextual and institutional factors (local cultures and contexts and their features) (Flood and Pease 2009).

Second, the growing focus on engaging men and boys in prevention is politically delicate and, in some instances, dangerous. Mobilizing men to end violence against women and gender inequalities involves mobilizing members of a privileged group to dismantle that same privilege (Flood 2004). In practice, a number of problems have been visible in violence prevention efforts focused on or led by men. In some instances, funding or resources for these have been at the expense of, or in competition with, women-only and women-focused programmes. Not all 'work with men' shares a feminist-informed commitment to gender justice, and some is motivated instead by problematic understandings of men or boys as victims (Pease 2008). 'Work with men' sometimes has ceased to be the strategy and has become the goal, perceived

as an end in itself rather than as one means of pursuing violence prevention and gender equality. More widely, a focus on 'working with men' or 'male involvement' can omit or marginalize the pressing need to address unequal *relations* of gender between men and women.

Third, there is much which is unknown about the effectiveness of violence prevention efforts among men and boys. First, few programmes have been evaluated, so that the evidence base as a whole is weak. Then there are other questions. Are some strategies more effective among some groups of men or boys than others, and why? For example, there is evidence that rape prevention efforts among men are less effective among those men at higher risk of perpetrating sexual coercion (Stephens and George 2009). What are the mediators of change, those factors which influence whether and how change occurs? What factors sustain men's and boys' involvement in and commitment to prevention activities? How do the contextual features and dynamics of organizations, communities, and cultures influence efforts to engage men and boys in violence prevention? How is men's and boys' participation in the prevention of violence against women shaped by the wider dynamics of gender and sexuality and other forms of social difference? Given the evidence that culturally relevant interventions are more effective than 'colour-blind' ones (Heppner et al. 1999), to what extent are programmes or interventions transferable across cultural and national boundaries?

Finally, among efforts to address men, masculinities, and gender in preventing men's violence, there has been a profound neglect of men's violence against other men. There are two sides to this. On the one hand, activities aimed at the prevention or reduction of violent and criminal behaviour which largely involve male-male violence—gun violence, public assaults, and so on—are usually gender-blind. On the other, gender-sensitive programmes focused on men's violence against women often have neglected the links or similarities between this and men's violence against men. Still, there are small signs of dialogue or rapprochement across these.

In preventing men's violence, there is both good news and bad news. Men's violence-supportive and gender-inequitable attitudes are declining around the globe, albeit unevenly, and there are signs of positive shifts in men's familial, social, and economic relations with women (MenEngage and UNFPA 2013a). There are signs of increased momentum and mobilization in men's violence prevention: increased public advocacy, a growing range of male-focused interventions, and increased policy support (Flood 2010). There is a growing evidence base for violence prevention among men and boys. There is bad news too. Men's violence against women is rooted in entrenched gender inequalities which are hard to change. Many men are resistant to violence prevention campaigns and educational interventions. Some efforts among men or boys produce neutral or negative impacts. Few men actually take up the cause of preventing violence against women, and those who do sometimes are complicit with gender inequalities. Nevertheless, men have a vital and positive role to play in ending men's violence.

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# Oxford Textbook of Violence Prevention

## Epidemiology, Evidence, and Policy

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,  
United Kingdom

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First Edition published in 2015

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press  
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014937975

ISBN 978-0-19-967872-3

Printed in China by  
C&C Offset Printing Co. Ltd

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