

Allies for Change:

Together against violence and abuse



Working with Boys and Men:
A discussion paper for programmers
and practitioners



Save the Children

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'Unless men's practices, attitudes, and relations change, efforts to promote gender equality will face an uphill struggle.'

(Ruxton, 2004:5)

'Men are the gatekeepers of current gender orders and are potential resistors of change. If we do not effectively reach men and boys, many of our efforts will be either thwarted or simply ignored.'

(Kaufman in Ruxton, 2004:20)

Save the Children fights for children's rights.
We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

Save the Children works for:

- a world which respects and values each child
- a world which listens to children and learns
- a world where all children have hope and opportunity

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Introduction

In recent years most of the children's and women's wellbeing and gender equality programmes have largely focused on women and girls as beneficiaries and agents of change. However, the conceptual shift from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD), which has been taking place since the 1980s, was partly borne out of recognition of the inadequacies of focusing on women and girls in isolation. GAD approaches necessitate a focus on men/boys as well as women/girls. Since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, international programmes have had a broad mandate to serve the needs of women and men of all ages and to address gender inequities. The belief that it is desirable to involve boys and men in efforts towards gender equality is now becoming institutionalised in the philosophies and programmes of the UN and other international and national organisations.

In this context this concept paper is an effort to draw the attention of practitioners to the use of strategies and approaches which involve boys and men in programming from a lifecycle approach and using a socio-ecological gender transformative framework (Heise, 1998). The paper provides some very brief background information regarding possibilities of Save the Children Sweden (SCS) interventions on strengthening and improving children's protection (ending abuse and exploitation), education and health status, and promoting children's rights in the situation of disasters and emergencies, through advocacy, direct support, capacity building, research and awareness-raising in partnership with and through boys and men.

The paper begins with a short outline of the rationale for this inclusion. Then, the bulk of the document examines the practical issues involved in 'mainstreaming boys and men in Save the Children Sweden (SCS) programming' and focuses in particular on strategies for involving, educating and mobilising boys and men.

Background

Advancement of Human Rights and Children's Rights addressing gender inequalities has been on the development agenda and among the goals of Save the Children Sweden (SCS) since the 1970s. To achieve this goal, SCS has demonstrated its commitment to address gender discrimination, children's protection issues, children's education status and their ability to deal with emergencies and disasters. This commitment has been very much practised while working with girls and women – and in partnership with boys and men – to challenge root causes of rights violations such as unequal gender and power relations and hegemonic forms of masculinities.

SCS recognises the stereotypical masculinities as one of the root causes of violence against children, women and other men, exclusion, the spread of HIV/AIDS and weak involvement of men in raising children and taking family responsibilities. SCS also recognises that to achieve gender equality, boys and men need to take on an active role as change agents, and have to be part of the solution from a child rights perspective. To be able to promote gender equality and a society free of violence, both boys and girls have to be involved in programme design, implementation and monitoring processes to address the responsible actors such as family members, community leaders, teachers, religious leaders, governments and the private sector.

With this understanding and commitment, Save the Children has engaged closely with the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children (2006) since the very beginning. The UN Study is intended to lead to the development of strategies aimed at effectively preventing and combating all forms of violence against children, outlining steps to be taken at the

international level and by governments. Save the Children has also developed a global strategy with concrete recommendations on how governments and other key actors can address violence against children. Among the six recommendations made by Save the Children, one of them is the following: *'States should make particular efforts to promote the active involvement of boys and men in ending discrimination and violence against children.'*

This recommendation has been endorsed by the UN Study on Violence against Children. The UN Study has also noted the work being done by Save the Children Sweden in South and Central Asia on issues of masculinities:

'Since 2003, Save the Children Sweden in South and Central Asia has included working with men and boys in its regional strategy, in the belief that many males are uncomfortable with constructs of masculinity which tolerate violence against women and children. Working to support alternative constructs with men and boys as partners is now being explored in the region. Workshops on working with men and boys have been conducted to enlist them in efforts to reduce violence against girls, boys, women and other men ... Country-based workshops have also been held, and in Bangladesh, a non-governmental organization (NGO) network on the issue has been formed. Increasing the focus on the socialization of boys is now seen as the challenge.'

The UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children (2006)

In South and Central Asia, Save the Children's work revolves around actions to promote the involvement of boys and men:

- Questioning narrow definitions and perceptions of gender roles and relations, including different ways of expressing one's masculinity.
- Calling on and organising boys and men – in partnership with girls and women – to take action against violence and abuse and to take initiatives for more equal gender roles and relationships.
- Carrying out or participating in campaigns, such as the White Ribbon Campaign.
- Encouraging boys and men who have developed the positive and protective aspects of their masculinity to support programmes addressing violence and abuse. These boys and men can also become good role models for other boys and men.
- Promoting programmes for men/male youth on parenting and responsible sexual behaviour.
- Stressing the benefits for all members of society when men play a more active role in nurturing their children and reject the culture of violence as a 'proof' of masculinity.

By working with boys and men, SCS aims to provide a safe, secure and enabling environment to girls, women, boys and men to live a healthy violence-free life.

Why boys and men should be addressed

Rationale

It is evident that girls and boys in all societies are expected to behave differently and therefore their process of socialisation is completely different. The institutions responsible for shaping their behaviours, which include family (parents and relatives), print and electronic media (films, songs, cartoons, etc.) religion and education (schools and teachers, peers and friends) convey stereotypical messages meant for both sexes which are very different for girls and boys. In this way children from a very early age learn their gender roles and societal expectations from them. Boys' and girls' roles are usually associated with their respective future social, productive and reproductive roles. Girls are often trained as passive, submissive and emotional human beings, whereas in most cultures boys and men are expected to be physically strong and sexually successful, to be risk-takers and decision-makers, to provide financially for their wives and children.

These characteristics are referred to as 'gender norms' – the culturally accepted ideas about being a man or woman in a particular society. This leads to reinforcement of patriarchal structures and rule of boys and men in the society. Hence, often boys and men do not consider girls and women as equal human beings, leading to development of patterns of violence, poor health status, and lower socio-economic status of girls and women taking away their opportunities for growth and development as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The society not only permits boys

and men to exercise inequitable values, but allows them to maintain supreme power over women and children. Therefore, when boys and men do not get the benefits, they exercise the given power to achieve their goals.

There is also resistance from some boys and, particularly, from men to attempts to challenge the power they hold. These men perceive gender equality as a threat to their privileges, and hence many programmes focusing on girls and women have not achieved their targets due to the men's non-cooperation. To get the support of men there needs to be a considerable incentive for them to work towards gender equality. Men as a group exercise power over women and other men, and often at an individual level even those men who support the need for gender equality feel powerless.

Boys and men experience violence, too, and few get the support they need to heal from their experience. Therefore, making men more aware of the costs of conventional forms of masculinity, both for themselves and for women and children, is an important step towards challenging gender inequalities.

South Asian society defines 'man' as someone who yields authority, leadership and power, and where their fear of losing the leadership position, being left behind in the race by girls and women, forces boys and men to find ways of controlling them. In such a society, it is ineffective to address the issue of girls and women performing their tough domestic duties, including household chores, upbringing and taking care of their children, while at the same time trying to move towards achieving their rights on the basis of gender equality and equity, without addressing the

gatekeepers and the other half of the population, i.e. boys and men.

Moreover, children cannot be left unaffected in a situation where one of the parents is being suppressed and not heard by the other partner and the society. Children cannot be expected to remain mentally and physically healthy where mothers, the traditional care providers, are suffering from ill-health and are not allowed to go out alone to seek health advice and treatment. It is hard to imagine children getting quality education when mothers are not allowed to be educated. It is impossible to expect children being brought up in such a society to make positive changes in that society. Hence, boys and men need to be motivated and made aware of the advantages of gender equality in all areas of Save the Children's (SC) work – Education, Protection, Health and Emergencies. It is time to act to bring changes in the attitudes and behaviours of men and women at all stages of life, as described in SC's 'Holistic Lifecycle-Based Approach'. This is a way forward to realise children's rights as is their entitlement in the UNCRC.

The link between working with boys and men, and children's overall wellbeing can be illustrated as:

Working with Boys and men → Change in Attitudes and Behaviours → Women's and Girls' Empowerment

Gender Equality and Equity → Developed Society → Better Children's Wellbeing

It is important to understand that it is an uphill struggle to change the mindsets, values, beliefs and stereotypes of a society, so a comprehensive,

intensive and society-specific programming shift will be required to meet the UNCRC objectives. The programmes will need to work at all levels of the society – family, education, academia, religion, media, state-owned institutions, and so on.

Through programmes, boys and men need to learn that a gender-equal and just society has a lot to offer them. For example, gender stereotypes put pressure on them to be ‘strong’ and be the ‘breadwinner’, resulting in increase in the vulnerabilities of boys to become victims of sexual abuse, or economic violence, etc. Traditional images of masculinity also lead boys and young men to engage in activities that jeopardise their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others in the society.

Recent investments by women’s movements in partnership with males on gender equality have raised awareness among boys. However, there are a number of examples where men/boys do not agree with men’s stereotypical role and yet do nothing or have limited knowledge to respond to what is required.

Therefore, in order to address gender-based discrimination and violence against girls and boys, and children’s wellbeing, boys and men need to be perceived as not only perpetrators of violence and discrimination, but also as active agents of change and as partners. Moreover, this partnership is also important from a holistic development approach, focusing on issues of citizenship, education, emergencies and health including adolescent reproductive and sexual health, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, etc.

In short, it is common to treat boys and men as perpetrators and offenders in most of the programming and policy formulation efforts aiming at gender equality. Girls and women in such interventions are considered as survivors or potential victims. However, the need of the hour is that both the sexes should be deemed as partners in achieving the goal of gender equality – while some boys and men are part of the problem, all of them need to become part of the solution.

The detrimental effects of male exclusion and positive effects of male inclusion

There are further reasons to involve boys and men. Excluding boys and men from work on gender relations can provoke male hostility and retaliation. It can leave women and girls with yet more work to do and thus intensify gender inequalities. Women and girls still have to deal with unsympathetic boys and men and patriarchal power relations.

Given that almost all girls/women already interact with boys/men on a daily basis in their households and public lives, involving boys and men can make interventions more relevant and workable. Male inclusion increases males’ responsiveness towards change, can increase males’ belief that they too will gain from gender equality, can engage boys and men directly in the renegotiation of gender relations, and can speak to many boys’ and men’s sense of anxiety and fear as ‘traditional’ masculinities are undermined.

Promising examples

There are many promising examples from around the globe where the concept of working with boys and men has benefited not only boys and girls but also the community overall. For example, the Stepping Stones project in South Africa, which uses participatory learning to build more gender-equitable relationships between men and women, found that both men and women reported less substance abuse, less violence and greater communication among couples. Programme H in Brazil has successfully used group education, community-based media and male-friendly health services to promote gender-equitable

attitudes and improve reproductive and sexual health practices.¹ In the United States, a Coaching Boys into Men programme,² which used mentoring approaches and media campaigns to address gender-based violence, resulted in two-thirds of participating fathers reporting that they had talked to their sons – and 63 per cent to their daughters – about the importance of healthy, violence-free relationships (International Centre for Research on Women and Instituto Promundo, 2007). The SCS (2007) publication *Boys for Change* also mentions two SCS-supported projects in Sweden and Africa, which both showed promising results once boys and men were involved as part of the solution.

¹ www.promundo.org.br

² www.endabuse.org

The process of accessing, targeting and engaging with boys and men

Accessing, targeting and engaging with boys and men is certainly easier said than done, and to some extent is different from engaging with girls and women. Often boys and men show reluctance to become part of gender equality activities; however, in many cases they also become champions and agents of change within their own societies when become fully committed. Here are some of the strategies to engage boys and men:

- Accessing men often means going to ‘where they are at’ – that is, undertaking activities in places where they gather and socialise.
- Effective targeting often means using images and materials which appeal directly to them as part of awareness campaigns to raise and generate interest.
- Picking times when they are receptive can be productive – either in terms of their needs and concerns or because they can see a personal purpose or benefit in engagement with a project or practice.
- They respond to incentives, but these need to match their interests and needs. Some boys and men will be interested in engaging in participatory work simply because it appeals to them, but others will want to be invited and all will want a clear and unambiguous statement about what

commitment is required of them and what they stand to gain as a consequence.

- They need to know that their specific contribution, as individuals, will be valued and their confidentiality respected.
- They need to know that they are not being targeted because they are the problem (even if their behaviour is) but because they are part of the solution.

The most important component of any strategy is for the boys and men to believe that they can modify and reshape their behaviours. This strategy will enable boys and men to realise a whole range of new possibilities for masculine identities which they can take on, though for some of them the idea of change

may be threatening and confusing and leave them feeling insecure. At an individual level, boys and men often seem reluctant to display their feelings; they can also be suspicious of authority, put up a front, be reluctant to talk about personal matters, and value their independence. These are potential assets but sometimes seem like barriers to engaging them.

There are various ways through which we can involve boys and men for the development and betterment of children's health, education, safety/security and protection during disasters. First and foremost is assuring them that working on these issues in collaboration with Non Governmental Organisation (NGO), Government Organisation (GO), the media, government and schools would not only benefit children but also benefit the entire society and themselves as well.

Strategy of working with boys and men

Given the deep-rooted socio-cultural factors that perpetuate gender discrimination, framing gender equality issues in the language of human rights and social justice is essential and will enable boys and men to see their engagement in gender issues as an action that helps improve human rights of all, as opposed to diminishing their own privileges. The human rights framework also provides a strong instrument to fight for the equality and social justice of non-heterosexual men and women.

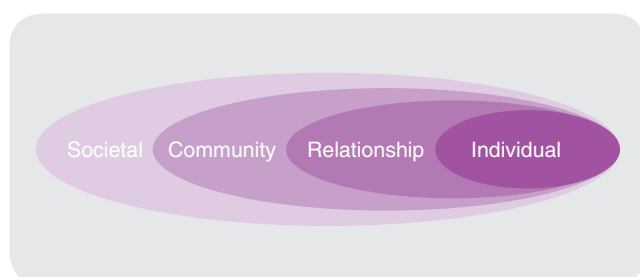
Since gender stereotypes are pervasive and operate throughout a lifetime, a lifecycle-based approach is needed to effect the socialisation of boys and men in relation to the whole range of social arenas: home, education, workplace, economy, sexuality, sexual orientation, health, work/life balance, etc. Lifecycle-based strategies should start with early childhood education and care. Within the home environment, interaction with adults who reinforce broader and alternative roles is critical for gender-sensitive socialisation. Mothers and fathers have a crucial role in educating boys on how to treat their future spouses and female partners. Moving through various phases of adolescence and adulthood, the strategy should take into account age-specific psychosocial needs: self-esteem, school-to-work transition, being single through to parenthood, and so on.

Since values and social norms do not change overnight, a pragmatic and incremental approach is imperative. A comprehensive socio-ecological framework for SC programming can be used to develop a strategy of involving boys and men.

Socio-ecological framework

The involvement of boys and men in any programme requires understanding the circumstances in which these boys and men exist. The following four-level, socio-ecological model is a key to better understanding the context of child protection and violence against children in order to develop potential strategies for prevention. This model considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community and societal factors, and allows programmers and practitioners to address risk and protective factors from multiple domains (Heise, 1998).

It is important to develop comprehensive prevention strategies through a continuum of activities that address all levels of the social ecology. It is important that these activities are developmentally appropriate and are conducted over several life stages. This approach is more likely to address violence across a lifetime than any single intervention or policy change.



- **Individual-level influences** are personal history factors that determine the likelihood of becoming either a survivor of violence or a perpetrator. Examples include attitudes and beliefs towards violence. Prevention strategies at this level are often designed to promote attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that support mutual respect, equality and trust. Specific approaches may include education and life-skills training for boys and men.
- **Relationship-level influences** are factors that increase risk because of relationships with peers and family members. These are a person's closest social circle, and contribute to their range of experience. Prevention strategies at this level may include mentoring and peer programmes designed to promote mutual respect, equality and trust among boys and men.
- The **community level** of the model examines the contexts in which social relationships are embedded – such as schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods – and seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings that are associated with victims or perpetrators of violence. Prevention strategies at this level are typically designed to impact the climate, processes and policies in a given system. Social norm and social marketing campaigns are often used to foster community climates that promote intimate partnerships based on mutual respect, equality and trust among boys and men.
- **Societal-level influences** are larger, macro-level factors, such as gender inequality, religious or cultural belief systems, societal norms, and economic or social policies that influence boys' and men's behaviours and attitudes. Prevention strategies at this level typically involve collaborations by multiple partners to promote social norms, policies and laws that support gender and economic equality.

For programmers and practitioners it is important to identify entry points for working with boys and men at all four levels for sustainable behavioural change. There is a need to look also at the project cycle in order to design suitable activities which help not only in engaging boys and men as partners but also help in monitoring and evaluating the projects for future learning.

According to Evidence from Programme Interventions (World Health Organisation, 2007), research has shown compelling evidence that well-designed programmes with boys and men can lead to behaviour and attitude change. As a result of relatively short-term programmes, boys and men can and do change attitudes and behaviours related to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) behaviour, maternal and child health, their interaction with their children, their use of violence against women, girls and boys, questioning violence with other men, and their health-seeking behaviour. Programmes with boys and men that include discussions of gender and masculinity, with clear efforts to transform such gender norms, are much more effective than programmes that merely acknowledge or mention gender norms and roles.

Moreover, integrated programmes (providing both one-to-one interaction with men together with community mobilisation or media-based messages) have shown the highest rate of effectiveness. This highlights the importance of reaching beyond the individual level to the social context – including relationships, social institutions, gatekeepers, community leaders and the like – in which boys and men live. Hence, if we seek to identify ways to change gender inequities at a society-wide level, understanding the impact of such policy-level changes must be a priority for future research.

There is increasing evidence that gender norms, as well as the social reproduction of these norms in institutions and cultural practices, are directly related to many of men's health-related behaviours. Programme planners and implementers, through using some of the following strategies, can include boys and men in programming around health, education, protection and emergencies; however, the lessons learnt (Esplen, 2006) from existing work are very important to note before planning the interventions.

- **Language that leaves boys and men feeling blamed for things they have not done or for things they were taught to do, or feeling guilty for the violence of other men, will alienate boys and men and promote a backlash (Kaufman, 2004:25).** Rather than blaming men, we need to engage them with positive messages. For example, White Ribbon posters attempt to affirm the positive, reaching out to men with messages like: 'You have the power to end violence against women in your community.'
- **As well as reaching boys and men with positive messages, it is important to identify existing gender-equitable behaviours among boys and men and build upon these.** Those men that stand up as advocates for women are at times ridiculed and are often lonely voices – more efforts should be made to support and connect them (Lang, 2003).
- **Gender training should be carried out to help boys and men realise that it is acceptable not to conform to dominant forms of masculinity.** While we often hold boys

and men responsible for what we see as negative behaviour towards women and girls, some boys and men do this mainly because they fear ridicule if they do not conform, usually from their peers but sometimes from women too. This leaves them feeling vulnerable and isolated, not knowing where to turn to discuss such things. Appropriate gender training could address these issues in such a way as to help men work through their fears, change their behaviour and even perhaps challenge the dominating behaviours of men.

- **Programmes should encourage boys and men to understand the oppressive effects of gender inequality on women and girls.** For example, campaigns should seek to establish links with women's organisations, to support these groups, and to encourage men to listen to women's needs and concerns (Kaufmann, 2004).
- **Interventions that appear to be 'top down' or 'foreign' have a high likelihood of failure.** Instead, programmes should work from the ground up, identifying local traditions, norms and masculine characteristics that are conducive to ending violence (Lang, 2003).
- **Programmes must address boys' and men's particular needs and concerns. Working with youth is crucial.** Adolescence is a time when attitudes and values about 'correct' behaviours are often learned and internalised. It is also the time when young men are most receptive to more equitable versions of masculinity and to more informed perspectives regarding their roles and responsibilities in reproductive health and intimate relationships (Khan et al., 2005). Work

within schools is important, including revising the curriculum to make it more gender-equitable (Morrell, 2003).

- **It is important to identify effective messengers** (Ruxton, 2004). In Pakistan, for example, EngenderHealth trained barbers to provide messages to male clients on family planning and reproductive health (Mehta et al., in Ruxton, 2004). Male youth may be more receptive to messages if they are communicated via celebrities. However, care must be taken to avoid perpetuating 'macho' stereotypes which may further entrench destructive gender norms and hierarchies.
- **Reach men where they are.** Rather than creating new venues within which to engage men, interventions should target the areas where men already congregate – such as at sporting or religious events, or at bars or cafés (Mehta et al., in Ruxton, 2004).
- **Draw on men's sense of responsibility and positive engagement as fathers** (Barker, 2006). This requires that we listen to the voices of fathers, recognise their own needs and interests, and make it clear how men themselves will benefit when they are actively engaged as fathers.
- **Provide spaces where men can meet in private.** This makes it more likely that they will lower their guard and express their anxieties and vulnerabilities.
- **Scale-up and engage the public sector.** Most existing initiatives are being carried out by NGOs, which limits the number of men who

can be reached. Promising examples of engaging the public sector include Men as Partners (MAP) collaboration with the South African armed forces and the police (Barker and Ricardo, 2005).

- **Better evaluation of existing efforts to engage men is required.** It is essential that we develop ways to measure changes in men's attitudes and behaviours. Such evaluation is vital, both to refine programme approaches and for advocacy purposes – to prove to decision-makers that men's attitudes can change (Barker and Ricardo, 2005).
- **Development institutions should develop work with men by building more equitable institutional cultures and practices.** Senior managers, particularly men, must be encouraged to become visible advocates of gender equality. This is key to changing the attitudes of staff members who may be unsure about new gender policies (Lang, in Ruxton, 2004).
- **Development organisations should lead by example by providing organisational support for family-friendly working practices** – such as generous policies on paternity and maternity leave, flexible working hours for both women and men, and childcare provision (with both male and female staff). This demonstrates that gender-equitable behaviour at the household level is encouraged (Lang, in Ruxton, 2004).

Programming strategies

General strategies

- **Ensure that interventions are comprehensive and intensive** in terms of duration and depth.
- **Support the interventions with culturally sensitive quotes and references.**
- **Work with community gatekeepers** to seek their support.
- **Support boys and men**, and get them organised.
- **Highlight the action men can take**, i.e. explore the concrete actions that boys and men can take to advance children's rights and gender equality. Some of these may include:
 - Making a commitment to specific changes in their families and personal relations
 - Telling other boys and men in their communities about their experiences with the programme
 - Working as peer educators, whether on an informal basis or in a more structured way
 - Presenting the programme to other organisations in their communities
 - Mentoring a young man or a boy
 - Effecting change within their faith-based organisations.

Programming strategies for Education

From birth, boys are socialised into patterns of identity and specific behaviour that will cause some to be violent toward others and most to be ineffective witnesses to this violence. Many boys in their early childhood, due to their socio-cultural environment, start thinking and believing that they are more wise and superior when compared with girls. Violence prevention and education efforts must therefore start early. Schools provide one setting these efforts.

In schools and other educational institutions across the world, every day, boys and young men build relationships based on their notion of what it means to be a 'real' man. They can sometimes put themselves and others at risk and contribute to a variety of devastating public health problems, such as violence, unplanned teen parenthood, and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV infection. Young men also sometimes engage in relationships that can be violent.

The eventual concern of any education programme is the wellbeing and holistic development of the child; and regardless of the institutional setting, the programme needs to embody developmentally appropriate practice which attends to health, nutrition, security and learning. In fact, as long as such a holistic approach is practised, the physical or institutional setting of the programme is of little importance.

The holistic approach should cater to the needs of both school-going children and out-of-school and working children. Out-of-school children's access to the programme interventions can be ensured through door-to-door campaigns, mobile vans, and drop-in or adolescent-friendly centres established in close proximity to their residential and/or work areas. The programmes for such children should not only work with children but also with their employers, parents and peers.

Programmes designed for pre-school-age children should always facilitate the child's preparation for and transition to formal schooling. The programmes should ensure pedagogical continuity between the last year of an early childhood programme and the first year of formal schooling programme.

As children grow, they move from one programme to another that may be named differently or positioned in a different ministry. However, the programmes should maintain between them a pedagogical continuity and integrity. The programmes should also engage and collaborate with fathers along with mothers, for the children's welfare. Programmes should have interventions designed to address fathers' and other key influential persons' capacity-building needs on gender equality and equity so that they give equal importance to the education of girls and boys.

Overlap between differently named programmes for the same age group must be coordinated as much as possible. Such overlap may cause administrative inefficiency and be wasteful of resources.

Programmes designed for adolescents must introduce projects/interventions to help them successfully enter into adulthood as productive and non-stereotypical young persons. The interventions may include: peer education; life-skills learning including negotiation, communication, affirmative behaviour skills, etc.; capacity building of both the parents and other key stakeholders including policy-makers, influential community members, teachers and religious leaders. The different institutions play an important role in developing a positive or negative form of masculinity, and can utilise masculine powers in a positive way to promote gender equality and equity.

School violence prevention programmes for boys must address their apprehensions and ground realities, which centre on feelings of blame for the problem, uncertainty about how to act in intimate relationships, misperceptions and myths about peer sexual activity, fears about what other boys will think, and previous experiences as witnesses or victims of violence. Healthy norms in these areas can be encouraged and supported. Prevention strategies that work with young men include developing empathy for victims, understanding consent, empowering bystanders, and developing awareness of what it means to be male.

Some essential aspects of education programmes include:

- The education programmes must have a system in place to handle reports from children of actual or possible threats to sexual violence, trafficking, etc., from within the school setting and outside.
- All education programmes must train the implementing staff on participatory approaches so that they can encourage boys and men to participate and benefit.
- The need for adult literacy classes, especially for men who are the power holders in the community, should be explored and met.
- Interventions should utilise the energies of boys to ensure that they help to educate their sisters/girls. Boys and young adolescents should be empowered and mobilised to have their say regarding the importance of educating girls and out-of-school children. As boys are often given more attention and care than girls, so they should be equipped with negotiation and other life skills to convince their parents and community people that girls should be educated.
- Children's education programming would be more effective if it included interventions catering to the needs of fathers – especially the uneducated ones – and also the men who are going to become fathers in the future. Such interventions are specially required for those who have never been to school or non-formal education systems. The interventions should not only provide fathers with education which will be helpful for them in their practical life, but should also educate them on parenting skills and the importance of sending both girls and boys to schools. Similar interventions can also serve mothers and other adults.

- A range of key institutions have a role to play in fostering men's contributions to children's education, including governments, the private sector, Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) and trade unions. If programmers work with these institutions and build their understanding of the need for education programmes then it would be possible to get technical and financial assistance from them to make programmes more effective and efficient.
- Capacity building of NGOs working on children's rights would enable programmers to work together with them as partners and as a network. This would enable sharing of resources and learning from others' experience, to contribute to the aim of Education for All. Similarly, working with trade unions would be helpful in making them demand that employers provide education facilities for the children of their employees.
- High-level male officials in education ministries/ departments should be urged to support the preparation of child-centred quality educational policies in which boys and girls receive equal importance. Top-level government officials can certainly support the inclusion of life skills in the school syllabus. Education departments should also be targeted to cater for the needs not only of school-going but also out-of-school and working children.
- Together, governments, the private sector, NGOs and trade unions can help in reducing and eliminating child labour from society.

Programming strategies for Protection

Programmers can strategically design interventions to re-orientate boys on the three words 'Be a man!' The consequences of wrongly perceiving these three words continue to affect not only the lives of boys and men but also of those associated with them. The emotional message which they receive, in this simple phrase, carry equal parts of promise and threat.

Programmers should form strategies to make boys and men unlearn the perceived rules of masculinity. Through programmes, boys and men can learn that they are not going to be the target of brutality and ridicule if they do not follow the stereotype of masculinity. They can learn that prestige and privilege, power and control, have nothing to do with 'being a man' as girls and women can also enjoy these while remaining a girl/woman.

It is also important to note that many boys and men are ready to change their perceptions; however, trust and a safe environment are required in order to work with them on the application of a child rights perspective. The main components of a child rights perspective are to recognise children as rights holders and social actors and to address the root causes of violence against children. While addressing root causes of violence and gender-based violence from a child rights perspective it is essential that we address issues of hegemonic forms of masculinities.

What shapes most children and adolescents, regardless of other circumstances, is the impact on

their lives of the gender-based expectations of their societies. Societies in general treat girls and boys differently and have different expectations of them – how they act, what they should think and want, what choices they should make, and so on. From an early age boys and girls become aware of their sex and soon they learn of different gender roles and gender hierarchies in society. Patriarchal values and power structures result in different socialisation processes for boys and girls and this leads to them adopting different coping mechanisms and manifesting the impact of abuse and trauma in different ways.

Studies have shown that many children who are exposed to violence and have been victims of violence will accept violence against women and children as normal. Children growing up in single-headed households, or living with rejecting or neglecting parents or caregivers, who indulge in substance and alcohol abuse, are at risk of becoming violent adults. Adolescent boys learn that it is considered masculine to be strong and to dominate and to exercise authority over girls, peers and women. Society also accepts and justifies men's violence against children and women by linking it to economic, social and cultural factors. However, there are boys who have witnessed and/or experienced severe violence or discrimination who have decided to take actions against it.

Hence programmes need also to focus on providing boys and men with psychosocial support, so that they can cross psychological and socio-cultural barriers to create a culture which addresses issues

of masculinities. The success indicators in this regard may include the number of men showing the courage to stand and face the dominant culture, saying with determination and pride that they do not want to 'be a man'. They refuse the rigid box of gender conformity. It will be possible in a community where they feel safe and accepted in the infinite variety of their gender nonconformities. It would mean a significant step towards ending the system of patriarchy, wherein the promise of power is leveraged by the threat of violence.

Some essential aspects of protection programmes include:

- The protection programmes must ensure that all boys and men, especially those belonging to religious, ethnic and other minorities or marginalised groups, have been identified, consulted and registered in a non-bureaucratic manner with the free issuing of documents.
- The staff implementing child protection programmes must be appropriately trained on involving boys and men to address and overcome the problems of child protection. Workers' own biases and prejudices against boys and men must be particularly addressed.
- Child protection project/programme staff, including health professionals and protection cluster members, must possess a clear understanding of principles such as confidentiality, rights, choices, and the right to decision-making of the survivor.

- There should be an accessible, transparent, efficient mechanism to report and investigate complaints, especially those related to discriminating against boys and men on the basis of gender, in order to ensure their participation in the entire process of child protection and to prevent abduction and trafficking. It is important that their anonymity and safety is ensured.

Programming strategies for Health

International human rights law recognises that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance, as highlighted in article 25(2) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

'Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.'

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, article 25(2)

This concern for the particular care required for the growth and wellbeing of the child culminated in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC focuses on the whole spectrum of human rights necessary for a child to reach his or her full potential. It calls for an improvement in the global situation of children, with emphasis on their education and development in conditions of peace and security.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action set out roles and responsibilities:

'Changes in men's and women's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are necessary conditions for achieving the harmonious partnership of men and women. Men play a key role in bringing about gender equality since, in most societies, men exercise preponderant power in nearly every sphere of life, ranging from personal decisions regarding the size of families to the policy and programme decisions taken at all levels of Government. It is essential to improve communication between men and women on issues of sexuality and reproductive health, and the understanding of their joint responsibilities, so that men and women are equal partners in public and private life.'

ICPD Programme of Action, Para 4.24

In addition, the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) provided a foundation for including men in efforts to improve the status of women, including reproductive and sexual health.

The ICPD spelled out what needs to be done:

'Special efforts should be made to emphasize men's shared responsibility and promote their active involvement in responsible parenthood, sexual and reproductive behaviour ... Male responsibilities in family life must be included in the education of children from the earliest ages. Special emphasis should be placed on the prevention of violence against women.'

ICPD Programme of Action, Para 4.27

Some essential aspects of health programmes include:

- In order to ensure that health services are accessible to all men, women, children and youth

and the disabled, the community must exercise its influence – especially those men who enjoy decision and policy-making powers, and who have knowledge about health services including basic health units, hospitals, medical camps, etc.

- Boys' and men's inability to access health facilities and information due to their duties as their family's bread winners, or any other duty given to them on the basis of their gender, must be addressed so that they not only get themselves treated but also obtain treatment for their dependents, including young boys, girls and women. One way of doing this is to make opening times of health services providers suitable for them, ensuring that they do not clash with job, business and school/college times.
- Men, especially husbands and influential members of the community, must be consulted and their knowledge increased about providing SRH services to women and young girls. It is important that they be involved in order to promote the services and eliminate unjustified objections against them.
- Boys, men, girls and women should be able to access information about contraception in privacy and with confidentiality assured. Men should be encouraged to consult their female partners regarding when to become pregnant, and how many children to have, rather than making them pregnant without considering their psychological and physical health.
- Men should be provided with knowledge of and access to health services where they can take pregnant partners for regular checkups and in the case of obstetric emergencies or other health problems, so that the women remain healthy and give birth to healthy children. It is important that the men should stop their partners from going to traditional birth attendants for their baby's delivery; rather, they should consult professionals/experts for the purpose.
- Boys and men should be engaged in developing culturally appropriate material on menstruation for young girls and women. This will enhance their ownership in the entire process. They should also be sensitised on the importance of involving girls and women in its distribution.
- Health staff should be sensitised to the varying needs and situations of boys and men and how these might impact their ability to participate in and benefit from different health-related facilities – especially nutrition and prevention of diseases.
- All health programmes should make psychosocial support initiatives available to the community to meet special and varying needs of men, boys, women and girls.
- Health programming must ensure the provision of psychiatric and psychological support for all, and especially for those boys and men who may develop post-traumatic stress disorder or depression. This support is also required during reshaping of violent behaviours.

Programming strategies for Emergencies

It is important that the causes of vulnerability of children in emergencies –whether rapid-onset disasters or longer term crises such as war and conflict – are fully discussed in the community and addressed in the emergency action plan, including gender issues as one of key elements that determine vulnerability. All three dimensions of vulnerability, i.e. susceptibility to hazard, possibility of suffering damage and recovery capacity, are affected by gender patterns of access and control over resources, gender roles and responsibilities, norms, and so on.

Boys and men should be made aware of various children-related and gender-related concerns which need to be properly addressed in the community-based emergency management policy documents. Separate and combined discussion with men's and women's groups should be made obligatory, so that each actor can understand the others' needs, concerns and issues.

Boys, men, girls and women should be trained and engaged in different emergency management activities including developing risk maps, designing community emergency plans, setting up early warning systems, and implementing response, mitigation and risk reduction plans. Their empowerment would not only make a conducive environment for the disaster management but would also help in identifying specific needs of the communities. The engagement of boys and men would be particularly beneficial in mobilising them to let their female partners be a part of the entire process.

The training modules should articulate that children and women are usually affected more than men, because during and after a crisis it is harder for them to continue their routine activities of schooling, playing, socialising, obtaining drinking water, cooking, collecting fuel, caring for family members, and so on. This is due to their limited access to and control over resources, information and participation in decision-making, in spite of the important role they may play in emergency preparedness and recovery.

Some essential aspects of emergency management programmes include:

- Parents, teachers and those in authority should be engaged in emergency management programmes/training so that they support the involvement of boys as well as girls and women in the process. The training should encourage emergency action plans which clearly mention that children and women will be given priority in evacuation and shelter placement.
- The unique needs of boys and men in emergencies should be addressed, when they can no longer fulfil their traditional role as breadwinners. They can be trained in communication so that they offer a potential role as a resource or receiver and disseminator of information.
- Initiatives should be taken on the basis of a rights-based approach which brings forward the right of children and youth to be protected from hazards and vulnerabilities through their

participation in emergency-related decisions and efforts. Training on risk reduction and mitigation should be carried out for boys and men through tools such as: participatory vulnerability assessment; risk vulnerability and capacity mapping; preparation of community plans; and coordination and mobilisation of groups with municipal governments, schools and civil society organisations (CSOs).

- Support should be provided for micro-projects designed and implemented by youth groups seeking to raise awareness about risk reduction, and to strengthen inter-institutional networks to ensure children's and women's voice in other disaster prevention and emergency management projects.
- The educational system can be used as a locus of support for children's, youth's and women's roles in risk communication, awareness raising, advocacy and risk reduction activities. Emergency management programmes should be mainstreamed into the school infrastructure, and integrated into teacher training and the school curriculum. Complementary projects on environmental management and risk reduction should be implemented.
- School-based emergency committees should be made functional in vulnerable communities. Both boys and girls should be empowered to take the lead in strengthening of risk management actions

such as managing evacuation centres, protecting river banks, protecting their families and communities, and implementing environmental management projects.

- Boys' ability to act as informants within unofficial communication networks, which evolve within a community setting as the need arises, should be utilised. This is particularly important in communities with high poverty indices (i.e. where parents are illiterate, do not have the time to attend training/meetings, share a strong sense of apathy or subordination, or do not have access to information sources), where children and youth can and do play a major role as interpreters and relayers of messages to their households and communities.
- The programming must involve an advocacy component on promoting the importance of children's, youth's, men's and women's participation amongst policymakers and other national and international actors (NGOs, GOs, the media, academics, etc.).
- The relief-providing staff should be sensitised to the varying needs and situations of boys and men and how these might impact their ability to participate in and benefit from different protection facilities, including the relief operations generally and shelter, health and nutrition specifically. Gender orientation with a special focus on gender-based violence can be helpful in this regard.

- Emergency management programmes must introduce interventions to promote greater awareness of the value of listening to boys, girls and women, amongst the community and household settings.
- Programmes on emergency management should give the resources and the opportunity for children to take action. Children, with their immense creativity and energy, can become catalysts of simple yet significant strategies to make their communities safer.
- The interventions should be designed so that children are directly involved in the emergency management work in order to give them a better sense of community and civic consciousness while they are still young.

Key recommendations for programme designers and implementers

- Invest in changing social norms around masculinity that undermine men's and women's health.
- Seek out and build partnerships among organisations that work primarily with women and girls and organisations working with boys and men.
- Establish programme links with concurrent social movements for social justice.
- Develop thoughtful and clear language to promote gender equality between men and women, boys and girls.
- Identify and promote specific technologies that help expand men's and women's options for protecting themselves and relating to their sexual partners.
- Support expansion of the professional cadre of workers who are able to take this approach forward.
- Provide support for dissemination of the best models to organisations which have the capacity to scale them up, and to governments for policy development.
- Support programmes and researchers to continuously identify, evaluate and prioritise viable and diverse programmatic models.

- Explore the root causes behind the problems, not just consider surface issues. For example, when it is found that young men and young women have very different attitudes or views on an issue, then go into the detailed reasons for this so as to identify what exactly is required to be designed and implemented to meet their needs and gain gender equality.
- Make sure that the work is embedded in the relevant literature. It is important to invest time in looking at what is already known about the issue around which the work is taking place and appropriate methods of working with regard to boys and young men.
- Ensure that recruitment and engagement processes are clearly described and that they reflect what is known about working with specific groups of boys and men. Since recruiting and engaging boys and men in community initiatives can be difficult, it helps to flag this up and detail what steps are to be taken to meet these challenges.
- Ensure that the aims and objectives of the participatory activity are clear and concrete.
- Provide a detailed description of the processes involved in the implementation of the practice. The lack of acknowledgement in the literature about what is involved in working with boys and men means that there is a need to assume that funders, commissioners, partners in projects and other key stakeholders are not aware of what works and what does not work well with boys and men.
- Be clear about the intended outcomes of the programme and put in place monitoring and evaluation strategies. Also encourage and enable professionals and young people to engage in critical reflection on the programme's strengths and weakness.
- Be aware that, by and large, boys and men say that they do not like sitting down and talking but they do like activities which involve doing things and which offer an opportunity for learning or present them with a challenge. They are also often reluctant to focus on personal matters and views if there is an opportunity to address a wider 'problem'. They are not engaged so much by processes per se as by processes which can be seen to be making a difference either to their own lives or those of others whom they know.
- Methods of working should be stimulating and interesting and if possible involve a challenge which boys and men can rise to.
- Be flexible – if one approach or method does not work then be prepared to change it.

UNCRC on working with boys and men

- **Article 3**

2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.
- **Article 5**

States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognised in the present Convention.

Articles 3 and 5 clearly state that not only women (mothers) but both the parents have rights and duties towards taking care of children, so all child wellbeing programmes should work with both men and women.

- **Article 4**

States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States

Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.

Article 4 talks about economic, social and cultural rights. In this regard boys and men are the most dominant stakeholders in the society, so they should be engaged in all the child welfare programmes.

- **Article 9**

1. States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where the parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child's place of residence.
2. In any proceedings pursuant to paragraph 1 of the present article, all interested parties shall be given an opportunity to participate in the proceedings and make their views known.
3. States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests.

- **Article 18**

1. States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.
2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.
3. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from childcare services and facilities for which they are eligible.

Articles 9 and 18 again emphasise the importance of the role of both parents in children's wellbeing. Thus both are required to be consulted and engaged in children's welfare programmes even if the parents are separated from each other. The article also gives the right to children to choose either of his or her parents to live with.

- **Article 12**

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 12 is further evidence of the importance of working with young boys regarding their wellbeing so that they can raise their concerns and propose solutions to their problems.

- **Article 13**

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

- **Article 14**

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Articles 13 and 14 clearly highlight the child's right to express his or her viewpoint and to think freely, and

also to receive and pass on information and ideas of all kinds without any discrimination and by any means. It is impossible to act on these articles without working with boys so that they can be heard.

- **Article 24**

1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.
2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures:
 - (a) To diminish infant and child mortality
 - (b) To ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care
 - (c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution
 - (d) To ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers
 - (e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are

informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents

- (f) To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.

Article 24 focuses on the education of parents on children's physical, mental and overall wellbeing, which is possible only by involving both fathers and mothers in childcare programmes. Programmes/interventions for mothers only would not serve this purpose.

- **Article 31**

1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Article 31 stresses the need for children to participate in recreational, cultural and artistic activities. This objective can be achieved by engaging boys in such activities right from their earliest childhood so that a positive change can be brought in society by changing the mindset of the new generation.

- **Article 37**

States Parties shall ensure that:

- (a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age.
- (b) No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.
- (c) Every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age. In particular, every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so and shall have the right to maintain contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits, save in exceptional circumstances.
- (d) Every child deprived of his or her liberty shall have the right to prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance, as well as the right to challenge the legality of the deprivation of his or her liberty before a court or other competent, independent and impartial authority, and to a prompt decision on any such action.

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