

BOYS FOR **CHANGE**



MOVING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY



Save the Children

BOYS FOR CHANGE

moving towards gender equality

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

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

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Foreword

An amazing – and positive – change is happening around the world: discussions about gender equality have a new partner, and that partner happens to be half of the human species. For far too long, women and girls stood almost alone as they battled against injustice and the inequality that has limited, hurt, and even destroyed the lives of countless women and girls. Back in the 1980s, small pockets of men in several parts of the world began to raise our voices in support of women, but we remained terribly isolated, failing to make much of an impact either on our brothers or the institutions controlled by men (and also, to be honest, on many of the women we were hoping to support). We suggested three things: First, that it was critical that projects of gender equality and equity address and involve men and boys if these projects were to be successful. (After all, how could we end men's violence against women or men's low participation in child-rearing if we as men didn't reach other men and boys?) And, perhaps more novel, we argued that not only would gender justice benefit the lives of women and girls but, paradoxically, it would benefit the lives of men and boys. Thirdly, we argued that work with men and boys would not be a net drain of resources away from efforts to promote the rights, health, education, and safety of women and girls, but would be of net benefit.

None of these propositions gained much of a wide following. And, at first, nor did our efforts to involve men and boys in struggles for equality. But, working in partnership, we all persisted. It helped to have the United Nations on board. UN pronouncements (from the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, to the commission on the Status of Women in 2003) affirmed at the inter-governmental level the need to engage men and boys as allies in achieving gender equality.

But most importantly, women and girls and NGOs working on their behalf have persisted mightily in their efforts around the world. It is because of this persistence and leadership that we have seen so much positive change in the past two or three decades. It is largely because of this persistence that more and more men have been drawn into these debates and efforts. And there was another group that persisted: those advocating the importance of reaching men and boys.

All this persistence has paid off. We now see organizations, governments, and institutions around the world adopting programs that enlarge the language of gender transformation to include men and boys. That language is still based on the fundamental lessons of feminism: that male-dominated societies have brought many privileges to men and boys and much suffering to women and girls. But the language has been extended both in the strategic sense (that is, we must find ways to reach men and boys) but also in the programmatic sense (that is, because of men's contradictory experiences of power, men and boys stand to gain in fundamental ways as we continue to relinquish and challenge patriarchal power).

Slowly we are affirming that these efforts to engage men and boys work. Men and boys who participate in well-designed efforts to question gender privilege, for example by engaging men as involved fathers or preventing violence against women, or interventions to engage boys and young men in HIV/Aids prevention, are showing impact. A recent global review carried out by the World Health Organization confirmed that programs engaging men and boys from a “gender transformational” perspective – that is seeking to change rigid, inequitable and violence versions of manhood – are the most effective way to reach boys and men. Women’s and girls’ lives improve as a result, and men and boys themselves report benefits. The projects described here present precisely the kind of gender transformational approach.

Save the Children Sweden is among the organizations that is playing a vital role in the enlargement of this discussion, in promoting gender transformation and in taking this challenge into communities around the world. We’ve both been proud to have had opportunities to work with Save the Children. We welcome the publication of this report and the important initiatives that it represents.

Gary Barker
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Executive Director,
Instituto Promundo

Michael Kaufman
Toronto, Canada
Co-founder,
White Ribbon Campaign

Introduction

Involving boys to end violence and discrimination

“Since joining this group, I have been advocating in my school to stop the use of abusive language to girls and women.”

Mohan, 16 year-old boy, India

Save the Children has been working with empowering girls and women for many years. We do that to end gender discrimination and violence and to prevent HIV/Aids. However, the importance of involving boys and men in order to create sustainable changes has become more obvious within Save the Children during these last years. The issue of violence against children is now high on the international and national agendas. A three year process culminated last year in a UN study with recommendations on how to address violence. Save the Children has been actively involved in the study from its very beginning.

In the media and public opinion boys and men are often perceived as perpetrators of violence and blamed for irresponsible sexual relations. One of our key recommendations for influencing the UN study has been “to work with boys and men as partners to address discrimination and violence against girls and boys”. The UN study included this recommendation.

Save the Children believes that it is vital to work from a life cycle approach and to sensitise and involve boys from early age. The way boys and girls are socialised to behave, is rooted in child rearing practices from the day they are born. From an early age, girls and boys imitate the behaviour of family members of the same sex. Boys, who observe fathers and other men in their surroundings being violent towards women, believe that this is a normal male behaviour. But not all boys adopt these gender behaviour practices, and many boys and men take actions to address discrimination and violence against girls and women.

It is, however, important to further scale up these initiatives, by actively integrate the masculinity issue into Save the Children’s existing work. Furthermore we need to promote non governmental organisations (NGOs), UN and other development agencies to allocate resources in supporting boys’ involvement. It is also essential to use learnings from these initiatives to advocate for policy changes.

Save the Children know of a number of projects involving men and adolescent men, but we have seen very few initiatives involving boys for the purpose. In this report we present some powerful program initiatives carried out in Ethiopia, India, Nicaragua, South Africa and Sweden, where we have worked with boys and young men to end violence against girls and boys. A global workshop on the issue was organised in India in February 2007. The examples were presented and discussed during the workshop. We hope they will be a source of inspiration to you working in Save the Children’s local field offices, as our partners or within other NGOs. The boys and men are

within reach in the communities, schools or home settings in which our program and projects operate, but there is poor outreach. The overall aim of this report is to mobilise boys to take action. We need to be very creative to engage them.

Background

Why Save the Children focuses on boys

In all societies girls and boys are treated differently and they are expected to behave differently. Different messages and stereotypes are conveyed to girls and boys through media, religious leaders, parents, school, peers and others. Children learn their gender roles and what is expected from them from an early age. Girl's expected roles and responsibilities are usually associated with their future roles as mothers and wives. Young men often learn that it is considered masculine to be strong and dominant, sexually active, not to show emotions, and to exercise authority over women and children. Boys are often expected to support their parents financially through their lives. As fathers, men usually spend less time with their children than women do. In most societies boys learn from an early age that conflict can be resolved by physical violence and this socialisation encourages violent measures to resolve problems, putting young males at particular risk.

Despite rigid gender socialisations, perception of masculinity differs between societies and within societies and it also changes over time. Men and boys can experience power and powerlessness at the same time – a young person can experience powerlessness in relation to his employer and powerfulness in relation to his sister. The situation also changes throughout the life cycle.

Even though most forms of gender discrimination affect girls and women, international research clearly demonstrate that dominant forms and perceptions of masculinities among young boys become the most impelling force for male risk-taking behaviour including street violence, unsafe sexual practices and misogyny. That is why we want to focus on the boys' perspective in this document. Women and girls can not fight gender discrimination on their own. They need the co-operation from men and boys to reach sustainable changes.

During the last years we have observed a change in attitudes and manners among many boys and men. Some of them do not feel comfortable with the expectations and demands of the dominant ideas of masculinities. Some begin to step forward to join women and girls as allies in working for equity and challenging violence. They want their mothers, sisters or daughters to be safe and have the same opportunities as men have. Many men and boys are also outraged by the epidemic levels of violence against women and girls – and against boys and men.

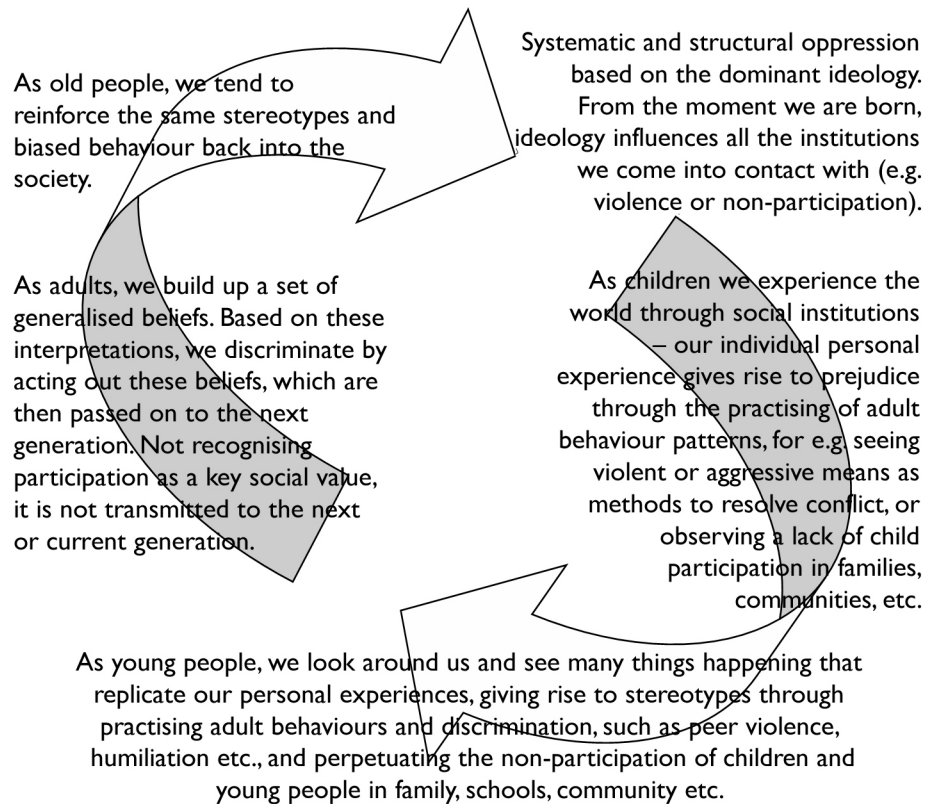
Breaking the cycle of oppression

Children and young persons are born into societies that practice oppression and exclusion. As a result, they learn traditional roles and behaviour at an early age. Boys, for example, learn they should be active, and not cry or show emotion. Family and peer groups often play a crucial role in the socialisation process. Traditional gender roles and relations are also

perpetuated by media, religious and traditional leaders, the private sector through advertisements and stereotyped toys, and educational systems that incorporate gender stereotypes into teaching material. Girls and boys usually receive very different messages in relation to sexuality. Adolescent boys frequently feel pressured to perform while girls learn to be passive. Sex and pregnancy outside marriage is usually viewed as a catastrophe for a girl. In some cultures female virginity is closely linked to male honour. Homosexual relationships are also often viewed negatively.

Gender socialization - Life cycle of oppression

We are born into:



Individual acts create and maintain oppression and exclusion

Gender roles and relations, ideas and perceptions are repeated from one generation to another. Societal views and values are internalised, shaping our attitudes, perceptions, behaviour and decisions later in life. Men and women are constrained by these perceptions, which can prevent people from developing to their full potential and making the choices they would like to make. Such perceptions influence the kinds of decisions boys and girls make concerning their own lives, the games they play, the professions they want to pursue or are allowed to choose, and their relationships with each other.

The big question is “Can we break this cycle of exclusion?” and the simple answer is “Yes!”. By addressing the root causes of discrimination and by perpetuating inclusion and respect for every one’s rights as a value, any society can break the cycle. The result is a society characterised by greater equality, respect, and less violence.

When assessing root causes of gender and discrimination, we must identify and address different power structures. For example, these could be patriarchal power structures based on age, caste, class and so on. Save the Children’s programs often address the immediate causes and forget to look at root causes. Investing in children’s and young people’s participation processes will contribute to addressing the root causes of their rights violations.

In order to promote gender and diversity equality and integrate it within our programs, we first have to identify which groups of children and young people are discriminated against in society, who is discriminating against them, and what the underlying causes are. We need to understand how gender and other inequalities recur from one generation to another. We also have to identify and overcome resistance towards change. We should not forget to focus on the positive aspects of social norms and values, and use them to challenge the negative ones.

“Because we are boys we are expected to protect our family honour. This involves us in fighting. But we don’t like it.”

Iqbal, 8 year-old boy, Pakistan

Boys' involvement to reach gender equality – what works?

This chapter highlights activities involving boys and men in five different countries; Ethiopia, Nicaragua, India, South Africa and Sweden. Participants from Save the Children and partner organisation met in India in January 2007 during a two-day workshop on gender discrimination and violence against girls and boys. Practical experiences of working with men and boys and theoretical insights was shared and lively discussed.

The case stories, presented at the workshop, describe how the different project started, which actions were taken and some result and challenges. The next step will be to develop practical guidelines on how to mobilise and involve boys in initiatives against gender discrimination and violence.

Ethiopia

"...being a member of the Boys Group is above all entertaining, educative, a place where one makes a difference. I am very happy that I am part of such a group."

Male Youth, 18 years old, Hiwot Boys' Group

Background

In 2005 Save the Children Sweden established two boys' groups in different vulnerable communities in Addis Ababa. The boys' groups had the specific aim to promote gender equality as a way to tackle the growing threat of HIV/Aids and of gender violence. They plan to work in partnership with boys and young men in an inclusive manner, supporting those who do not wish to act out damaging behaviours in terms of their sexuality and violence and encouraging them to be committed agents of change within their communities.

Actions

The group run by the Integrated Family Service Organization/Eshet Children and Youth Association (IFSO/Eshet) began in 2005 with 100 children and young people both in and out of school and between 10-24 years old. They received four days of training on issues of sexual and reproductive health, HIV/Aids and concepts of gender. A peer discussion group was then formed and met every week in the Eshet compound in a suburb of Addis Ababa. The meetings lasted about two hours and they covered topics such as: Should you have sex before marriage? Do you have to love a girl to have sex with her? What are the different roles allotted to boys and girls?

About 40-50 children and young people attended, most of them in school and most within the age bracket of 14-19. The groups are about two thirds male and one third female. There is a core group from the original

cohort who received training and they also invite friends to attend. In addition they invite their parents to attend for a discussion once a month.

At Hiwot, 40 children and young people were given training similar to that described above and seven peer discussion groups were established. They meet weekly in different venues and are also mostly between 14-19 years old and in school. Here too, the groups are about two thirds male and one third female. New people attend for three months. They discuss issues such as: Does a girl or woman enjoy sex in the same way a boy does? Why can't a boy do domestic work? What happens to girls and boys when they don't conform to gender stereotypes? Is it only boys who abuse drugs? Why should a boy always have to pay for a girl to go out on a date? Who has the right to agree to an abortion – the woman or the man?

Outcome

For the two and a half years these two programs have been running, the boys have been encouraged to speak out about how they feel about gender inequality, gender violence and HIV/Aids. They have gained self-confidence in expressing themselves. They have received the necessary the knowledge and skills needed to act as agents of change within their community. This has fostered tolerance and respect towards other members of the group, even though they may at times disagree with them.

However, some fundamental concepts are missing from the members' thinking and discussion:

At Hiwot in particular, the members appeared to view the groups as a forum for discussion of how boys and young men are discriminated against in society. This lop-sided focus on discrimination against boys and young men needs to be countered with a clear explanation of how the cultural expectations of boys and young men contribute to the transmission of HIV and to gender violence. The group members must also be encouraged not to adopt or act out such damaging cultural norms. Both groups could benefit from more clarity about how discrimination against boys and girls impacts on the transmission of HIV/Aids and gender violence.

It seems that the over-sight from the organisers has drifted so that, over time, the discussions have become lacking in structure and a sense of progress. The discussions need to develop ideas week on week to build on the members' learning and understanding. Since the facilitators are excellent, on the whole, they should be trained specifically on new guidelines which would ensure that core ideas are discussed and conclusions reached.

Having a fixed reference library with age-appropriate materials would be very helpful for members to consult in order to widen their information base.

At Hiwot there should be a more structured relationship with the members to ensure that they know how to access further advice, information and if necessary counselling. Both organisations could improve the availability of referral services to their members.

In terms of the the groups' organisation, it would be beneficial, and challenging, to broaden membership to make it a more diverse group involving out of school children and young people.

- Given that many of the in school members already have access to sexual and reproductive health information via Anti-Aids Clubs in their schools, it is necessary that more out of school children are engaged with the boys' groups.
- Younger children should have their own group with age appropriate discussion.

One of the biggest challenges facing the groups is ensuring that the programs attain sustainability.

- More connections and relationships with the relevant duty bearers is needed. Hiwot should establish something similar to the IFSO/Eshet project support group where key duty bearers such as the local health department and local government body meet on a quarterly basis to discuss progress.
- The venues for meeting are insecure. At Eshet, the compound is large and spacious but the rent expensive and it is a struggle to make ends meet year after year. At Hiwot the members meet where they can, for example at cafes. Many of them have been harassed by the police during meetings, since the federal police is suspicious of boys and young men coming together public. There was one incident where a boy was arrested.
- Both monitoring and evaluation are crucial. Having new base-line studies framed around the Gender Equitable Male scale and regular and structured monitoring will ensure that evaluation is useful and successful in the future.

Nicaragua

Background

One important initiative was the formation in 1993 of the Men Against Violence Group in Managua, which for more than 10 years encouraged men to reflect and speak out against violence. Young and adult men met regularly to reflect critically on violence and masculinity in their own lives and relationships and to organise public activities to reach out to other men. This and other national organisations have developed educational materials and organised workshops to raise awareness among men about the costs of a sexist and violent lifestyle, and to propose positive alternatives to manhood.

All these civil society initiatives, sometimes working in alliance with the government, have contributed to the fact that nowadays many young and adult men no longer consider it a compliment to be called a *macho* or *machista*. Quite the contrary, the adjective *machista* is almost an insult, even though many still think and behave according to it. In a similar vein, more adults now say that it's not good to physically punish children, albeit they still practice it.

Actions

Despite the slow response from the children's rights movement – with Save the Children in Nicaragua is one of its main supporters - there are important advances. The organisations have been receptive to a gender equity agenda and there are efforts to integrate this perspective into their very well-developed children's rights approach. One important issue has been to make girls' right to quality education and to protection from violence visible. However, the progress on specific initiatives to involve boys and men has been very limited so far. Some of the few but recognizable projects and activities targeting them are:

- Reflection groups with adolescent men that seek to promote changes in their definition of masculinity, overcome violent attitudes and behaviours, reorient emotional expression and return to tenderness through interactive exercises. The adolescents attend 10 group sessions, each made up of 10 to 15 participants and facilitated by other adolescent and young adult males. This project is implemented by the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Si Mujer and supported by Save the Children Canada.
- Sport groups, tournaments and championships where boys, male adolescents and both male and female young adults not only get training and play football or other sports, but also talk and participate in group discussions around sexuality, health promotion and violence prevention (promoted by the organisation CAPRI, a Save the Children Norway-Nicaragua partner).
- Research on male sex abusers and exploiters and public presentations of the results to different audiences. This study sheds light on the strategies employed by men to get access to and manipulate their victims, as well as the cognitive distortions and discourses they use to justify and minimize their abusive behaviour. The study was carried out by CODENI, the child rights coalition of NGOs, with the support of Save the Children. It served as good evidence when making public demands and proposals to tackle the problem.
- Educational workshops, formal presentations and distribution of educational materials addressing the issue of masculinity, physical and sexual violence, *machismo*, conflict resolution and promotion of men's participation in the work against violence. These activities were attended by teachers, young male gang members and community social workers.
- Advocacy work promoting and contributing to the formulation and future passage of the law and policy on responsible fatherhood.

These initiatives represent a starting point for developing a more explicit and well thought-out strategy to engage men and boys in the efforts to end violence against children and women. It is very important to emphasize male responsibility to contribute to the protection of children and the building of peaceful relationships, without blaming them for all the

violence and abuse. The activities gain more acceptances when awareness raising about the consequences of violence, sexual abuse and exploitation for boys, girls, women and men themselves is combined with help to men and boys to reflect and identify the benefits of overcoming sexist beliefs and behaviours.

In all the work that Save the Children promotes for children's rights and for the prevention of violence, there is a potential to develop new activities and strategies to work with men and boys. Given the advances in the cooperation with the Ministry of Education Save the Children has the potential to influence the curricula towards a more gender-equitable approach. Access to the formal teachers' courses and trainings has increased, creating an opportunity to promote a critical analysis and discussions on gender among educators and to organize classroom activities that promote positive masculinity in male students.

Sometimes, Save the Children's activities and discourses unwittingly reinforce the detachment of men from children and their needs and rights, including their right to be protected from violence. In many community projects only women in their role as mothers are invited to participate. Often our printed materials, posters, TV spots, etc. only depict the traditional binomial women and children.

Outcome

There have been some efforts to involve fathers in the activities concerning their children's needs (school education for instance), but they either say they don't have time due to work duties or that they don't feel comfortable in what they perceive as a woman's space. Thus very few men show up and a vicious circle is created in which men seem not to respond to invitations to take part in children's social projects and organizations give up trying to engage them.

It is necessary to develop male friendly approaches to engage men and to understand their fears of being feminized by participating in what they perceive as women's work.. The activities have to be adapted according to men's schedules. Save the Children have to create alliances with organizations with expertise in gender issues and masculinity.

The gender perspective issue is not yet fully integrated into the agenda of children's rights organisations. Save the Children need to create a "critical mass" of people, both from within the organisation and from partners, who could get training on gender issues.

Numerous information, education and communication materials such as manuals, guidebooks, films, study reports and articles have been produced in Latin America, analysing the work with men and boys on reforming stereotyped male identities, and violent and unhealthy beliefs and practices.

In the workshops participatory methods were used, such as role play, individual and group responses to gender norm questionnaires, graphical techniques and video forums to elicit discussions and reflections. Two films were shown: *What do we (men) win with changing?*, produced by a Mexican

NGO, La Vida de Juan from Promundo Brazil and one produced by a Nicaraguan NGO (Puntos de Encuentro) about how *machismo* is present in dating. The reflection groups with adolescent men have used the guidebook *Real Men or the Truth about Men*, a reflection guide for men that centres on gender and masculinity, produced by CID-CIIR and the Association of Men Against Violence from Nicaragua.

India

"It is difficult to speak about these things at home. My sisters make fun of me when I say I will help in the kitchen. Even my mother laughs at me."

A 10 year old boy in a school in Gorakhpur

Background

Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW) is a network of individuals and organisations that functions as a large grass roots campaign, active in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal. More than 175 individuals and 100 organisations are members of MASVAW. These men and boys have decided to bring about a change within themselves and in others in order to remove gender injustice.

The MASVAW campaign offers a chance for boys and men to raise their voices publicly against violence, against women and gender inequality. This is done through agitations, campaigns, media reactions, public debates, discussions, workshops and seminars. Today MASVAW is a watchdog, working with the police, doctors, lawyers, boys and men in universities, schools and the media. Over a hundred watch groups have been organised in villages across Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal. These groups intervene in instances of violence within the village, provide support to victims, and ensure that local schools and colleges become violence-free zones.

Actions

MASVAW organises annual campaigns at the grass root level, for example during the Sixteen Days of Activism and International Women's Day celebrations. The campaigns include intense rallies, demonstrations, slogan shouting, candle marches, programs at universities and schools, wall writing and pamphlet distribution. Their aim is to change social norms. The campaigns are undertaken with active support of the local media.

The issues raised by MASVAW are often sensitive, requiring the use of appropriate tools targeting different age groups. Therefore, MASVAW invests many resources in developing and adapting tools for change. The most popular is using the traditional snakes and ladders game to introduce discussions on gender and violence with boys and men. Such innovative points of entry to reach out to a wide target group is MASVAW's strength.

Outcome

"The incidence of eve teasing has reduced in the campus (after MASVAW became active here).

Earlier no girls used to come here to study. Today so many of us study here.”

Girls at KVP University, engaged in MASVAW's initiatives at the campus

Many feminists believe that movements with boys and men would pull resources away from the movement of women's empowerment. In order to address this, MASVAW regularly holds meetings with women organisations. This has resulted in an understanding and a partnership between MASVAW and local NGOs working on female empowerment, helping them to achieve their common objectives faster.

Together with their supporters, MASVAW is trying to answer the question of what works in working with boys and men. As the campaign has gained momentum MASVAW has refined the strategies, broadened its target base and incorporated the learning. Today, MASVAW's success is attributed to its growing group of believers, who have joined the movement in firm belief in gender equality, demonstrated by practical application in their own life. In return, MASVAW promises them support, too, in venting their own frustrations and sentiments, support in gaining recognition that not all boys and men favour violence and gender inequality. The promise is of a world that is gender equal and benefits men as much as women.

But convincing men to give up their leadership position is far from easy. In a society, ridden with rigid gender norms, notions of gender equality evoke intense ridicule and shame. It is only from a strong conviction in its work, that MASVAW can help boys and men deal with such criticism. Encouraging boys and men to sustain the momentum, not to give up and to remove complacency is important. Above all, boys and men need to be helped to strike a balance between public action and private change. The former being relatively easy, a change within oneself requires much more introspection and commitment.

“Initially MASVAW came to our school every two weeks and held discussions, but we didn't pay much attention. We used to treat these group discussions like a free period, happy we didn't have to study. But over a period of time we thought, these people are working so hard on this issue, there must be something to it, we must try and listen...

Today, if we have any free time we use it for discussions on gender equality and violence against women and girls.

From our class four of us came to learn about the issues MASVAW was raising. We needed to show that all boys are not violent, and that is why we formed a group. Because of some men, all men cannot be labelled as violent. Later, joined by three more friends, we spoke to other boys and encouraged them to speak to MASVAW about their doubts. We were given MASVAW's registration form and the Snakes and Ladders

game. They told us how to use it. Through the game we hold discussions with other boys.

Today we are a group of nine boys. We speak to other boys, taking guidance from MASVAW staff. We also speak at our coaching classes, so that we can reach out to adolescents from other schools as well. We realise we couldn't have done this alone. MASVAW provides us with an affiliation which motivates and supports us.

The biggest change we see in ourselves is that now we know what abuse means. The way we define abuse has changed itself. Today, we feel so connected to this work, that we know we will continue to spread the message when we go to university. This work won't stop when we finish school."

Md. Anas adds: "I used to think badly about the concept of having a girlfriend. Now in the monthly meetings we discuss what it means to have a girlfriend. Now I understand it is a mental relationship, too."

"We used to think, women are inferior, but not now.", points out Ashutosh.

"Earlier we were indifferent, if eve-teasing happened in front of us, we ignored it. But now we try to speak to the guy if he is alone and not in a group." says Sri Prakash.

Md. Anas, 16, Ashutosh Bhatt, 17 and Sri Prakash, 18 share their experiences of being connected to and working with MASVAW.

All three are studying in class 12 at Lucknow Inter College:

Southern India

"I was thinking that women and girls alone should do household work and boys and men have no role in it. After attending sessions with EKTA my perception has changed about women. Now I help my mother in household work and also encouraging other boys to do."

Sakthi Ganesh, a boy from Southern India

Background

EKTA (meaning unity) started as a capacity building training centre for women and girls 1990 in Madurai, in Tamil Nadu, Southern India.

In 1994 EKTA organised a conference for 250 young women students'. They urged EKTA to initiate a process of reflection on gender and masculinities with male students, so that the goal of gender equality could be achieved.

EKTA took this advice and started a series of programs, for males as well as females. After talking with male students it was realized that the construction of dominant masculinities also put the male students under

pressure from their parents (to top the class or earn income soon), teachers (who took recourse to corporal punishment more than with girls) and peers (to have girl friends). Thus began the realization within EKTA that they needed to work with adolescent boys on gender, child rights and masculinities, and to focus on them as potential perpetrators, as well as victims of violation of their rights.

EKTA started small discussion groups in the year of 2000 with adolescent boys about the problems they faced due to their gender and adolescent age identity, their perceptions on violence against women and girls and on violence in general. Today nearly 750 boys and as many girls participate every year in the program.

In 2006, EKTA began to collaborate with Save the Children Sweden, to strengthen and expand its work with adolescent boys and girls. This strengthened EKTA's ability to integrate both a child rights perspective and a gender perspective into its work with adolescent boys and girls.

The specific objectives of its program on gender, child rights, and masculinities with adolescent boys were defined as follows:

- To raise awareness amongst adolescent boys and girls about their rights in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- To raise awareness amongst adolescent boys and girls on their role in eliminating violence in general, and gender based violence against girls and women in particular.
- To strengthen adolescent boys' and girl's life skills, including the ability to negotiate alternative ways of being boys.

At an organisational level, EKTA team members attended regional workshops on masculinities and child rights, to broaden their own perspectives on these issues, as well as gain knowledge of techniques and methods of working with adolescent boys.

Actions

Small group discussions, poster competitions, 16-day activism and White Ribbon campaign continued in 2006. During the years the perspectives on child rights and masculinities and gender and violence has been better integrated. Health and education has also been given emphasis. In addition certain new tools, techniques and methods of working with adolescent boys were adopted:

- Organising two seminars per year on above themes for large groups of adolescent boys and girls.
- Holding life-skill education programs with adolescent boys and girls covering their responsibilities and rights, positive methods of interaction with the opposite sex, negotiating their interests with parents and teachers, and looking after their health and furthering their education.
- Holding quiz programs, and public speeches on topics related to child rights, gender and masculinities.

- Interactions between teachers, parents and adolescent male students on problems that adolescent boys face with parents (restrictions) and teachers (corporal punishment), and vice versa.
- Showing mainstream films and initiating subsequent discussions on violent behaviour on the part of men and boys, gender-discrimination, and discrimination against children seen in the films.
- Bringing adolescent boys and girls in to school committees in order to reduce drop outs and monitor progress in education and to reduce violence amongst boys.
- Bringing adolescent boys and girls in to the Advisory Committee of EKTA that reviews the program with adolescents.

Outcome

While there is no comparison of attitudes of adolescent boys in schools covered by the program of EKTA and other schools or of out of school children, discussions with participating adolescent boys and girls and duty bearers reveal several positive outcomes.

- Corporal punishment, which was particularly targeted by adolescent boys, has reduced in the schools covered through the program. It is now legally banned in Tamil Nadu.
- There is lesser violence amongst boys themselves, and differences are resolved more often through negotiations. Several of the boys, though not all, are performing better.
- According to the parents and teachers, health and personal hygiene amongst adolescent boys has improved.
- According to parents, adolescent boys were helping their mothers at home more often and valued such work.
- According to the adolescent boys, parents who have attended the program are listening to them more than before.
- According to adolescent girls, boys spend less time gazing at obscene posters, and tease them less.
- EKTA staff could see adolescent boys and girls mixing more freely. On the whole, norms of hegemonic masculinity are slowly breaking.

Working with men and boys on alternative masculinities has been a challenge. At the field level, absence of role models in Tamil cinema, theatre and sports, of men and male youth who adopt alternative behaviour has posed a constraint. Absence of Tamil videos or CDs on alternative masculinities is another constraint. Many existing ones are in English, Hindi, Newari or Bengali. Another issue has been the conservative culture, in which open discussion on attitudes on homosexuality amongst adolescents is a problem. It is still viewed as an abnormality that needs to be corrected.

Sweden

“In Brorsan I have learnt more about how to treat others well and with respect. I have fun in my Brorsan-group, and I have made new friends.”

Markus, 14 years, Haninge

Background

Brorsan (in English: Bro’ or Brother) is a gender equality program targeting boys of ages 13 to 15 years. The program is run in junior high schools and at after school youth centres in Haninge, a municipality south of Stockholm in Sweden.

The program was initiated as a complement to an already existing program in Haninge based on girls’ groups, which had been launched at an earlier stage with the aim to empower and raise gender awareness among girls. Although important results were achieved with the girls’ group program it became clear that dominance patterns among boys in large remained unchallenged with this single-sex approach. Based on the insight that gender is a social construction, and that this also must apply for masculinities, a boys’ group program was designed and launched to promote change among boys.

The Brorsan program is based on an understanding of how norms and practices from dominant masculinity influence the boys’ self-images, images of others and related behaviours. The program is designed as a process, encompassing several meetings over a period of time. The objective of the process is to contradict dominant masculinity among the boys, intellectually as well as emotionally.

Actions

A Brorsan boys’ group consists of 12 boys as a maximum. The group meets once a week for about 2 hours. It is lead by two facilitators, male staff members of the school or the youth centre. Key components of Brorsan are the facilitator training program and the continuous coaching and self-reflection sessions provided to the facilitators as they lead the boys’ groups.

The meetings in the boys’ groups contain the following components

- information and theory on gender and masculinities
- group exercises on values, attitudes and opinions
- open self-reflection, using methods that promote attentive listening and equal time sharing
- play time

The aim of the process is to create an atmosphere of safety to allow openness and true relationships between the members of the group. Understanding how dominant masculinity separates boys from each other, and threatens them when they show vulnerability is critical when leading this process.

The following subjects are addressed in the program

- Identity, getting to know oneself
- Relationships to girls and boys
- Violence (using a wide definition)
- Power and gender, including sexism and homophobia
- Love and sexuality
- Body ideals

Outcome

The facilitators find the work in the boys' groups very rewarding. Several witness that they have never before spoken seriously and respectfully with other men and boys about the issues brought up in the program. This pattern among adult men clearly shows the necessity of the training and coaching program that facilitators must take in order to be part of Brorsan. In fact, the facilitators' level of relaxed attention and their awareness of their personal relationship to dominant masculinity sets the limit of how far a boys' group can go. Some of the positive changes are:

- Several facilitators report an increasing pull or demand from the program participants as the program execution proceeds.
- Teachers and pupils have reported significant changes in classroom atmosphere, with more cooperation and attention from the boys.
- There are several accounts of decreased levels of bullying against girls and boys in school yards.
- A few boys' groups have been able to solve conflicts without violence between boys, others have reported that boys who previously have been very silent and regarded as low-status boys have become more active and involved socially with the rest of the group.

Of course, difficulties and challenges have also been reported. After recruiting a group of boys, one pair of facilitators had difficulties in getting the group started. Some of the boys wouldn't show up, there were difficulties getting a group dialogue started, the atmosphere wasn't friendly etc. After a while, the facilitators announced that they had decided not to go on. At this point the boys themselves strongly requested the facilitators not to give up. As the group went on, it turned out that two of the boys were involved in a conflict with each other, which divided the group into two. As the conflict was dealt with, the relationship between the two boys in question started to change, and gradually developed into friendship. When asked how this was possible, the group answered that they had not ever before been provided with the kind of forum and resource that they experienced in Brorsan. Adults had never reached out to them in this way.

South Africa

Background

Save the Children has supported the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa since 2003 to promote positive fatherhood. The Fatherhood

Project highlights the role of men as caregivers using various forms of media.

The project is motivated by three converging issues related to men and children in South Africa:

- The very high rates of child sexual abuse, most of which is perpetrated by men.
- The absence of men from households and low levels of father support for children's care.
- The increased need of child care as a result of death and family disruption due to the Aids epidemic.

A fundamental aim is to conduct research, stimulate collaboration and the gathering of new knowledge about fatherhood and men and children. Key areas of interest are

- to find out more about the struggles of young black South African men in fulfilling their roles as fathers,
- to document alternative constructions of male caregivers,
- to find out how men are managing care-giving in a HIV/Aids context,
- how men can positively contribute to caring.

Research on men as fathers will also seek to examine barriers and opportunities for fathers to take responsibility.

The aims of the advocacy platform created for the project were to:

- Generate public discourse about men and fatherhood.
- Prompt increased funding by national and international donors for the inclusion of men in programs to support children.
- Encourage organisations to include men in program activities.

Actions

The project aimed to achieve these objectives through a travelling photo exhibition of about 150 photographs, with media coverage and associated events arranged in collaborations with local organisations. The photographs presented images of fatherhood as seen through the lenses of professional photographers, students and children. Alongside these images were the words of children talking about fathers and men talking about the way they see themselves.

The intention was to use the photographs in a variety of ways to traverse and exploit a continuum of communicative settings in order to try and maximize the impact of messages promoting men's care and protection of children. It was also to construct a positive image of fatherhood through the provision of opportunities to identify with archetypical images of love, protection and emotional engagement with children.

The project depended on collaborations with partners in the cities where the exhibitions were held, to create a participatory communication approach. The local partners were requested to arrange lectures, seminars,

workshops and performance events focusing on fatherhood to coincide with the exhibition.

Outcome

The Fatherhood Project's exhibition traveled to a number of venues around South Africa in 2004 and 2005. The exhibition stimulated debate and discussion amongst a large number of men in South Africa who have begun to discuss their role as men and fathers. It also resulted in a book on fatherhood: *Men and Fatherhood in South Africa in 2005*, by professors Linda Richter and Robert Morell.

The book endeavours to provide answers to some of the most difficult questions about fatherhood in South Africa. Who is a father? What does it mean to be a father? Is it important for fathers to do more for children in a world that assumes that mothers take the primary parenting role? Do different people understand fatherhood in different ways? What evidence is there of new fatherhood styles emerging in South Africa?

The authors have argued that men can make a major contribution to the health of South African society by caring for children and producing a new generation of South Africans for whom men will be significant by their positive presence rather than by their absence or their abuse.

Conclusions and recommendations

"I know we are doing a wonderful job. We have become so popular in the community due to what we do but we need to do more."

17 year-old boy from one of the boys' groups in Addis Ababa.

The case stories in this report shows that we are indeed taking small steps towards gender equality. But they also show the difficulties boys and men meet when they want to change their behaviour and attitudes and fight inequalities. However there are strong child rights and social economical arguments in favour of working with boys and men to challenge root causes of violence against children.

Save the Children focuses on the participation of girls and boys as part of an overall strategy. The purpose of children's participation is to empower them as individuals and as members of civil society, giving them a genuine opportunity to express their views and to be involved in decisions and actions.

If boys grow up with affectionate parents and relatives, build close relationships with fathers and other male figures - non-violent models who do not reinforce sexist values - and are encouraged to share equal responsibility in what were previously considered female duties, then new generations of non-violent and egalitarian adults can flourish.

Below are Save the Children's conclusions and recommendations for initiating programs on working with boys and men:

- We need to work from a life cycle approach and do more work with younger boys from various backgrounds in order to promote gender equality and non-violence. It is important to work with all age groups.
- We need to influence other networks of human rights and women's rights organisations to incorporate gender based violence against children as well as programs working with boys and men.
- It is important to link working with boys and men on gender equality to all other work (health, disaster risk management, education, non-violence, HIV/AIDS, reproductive and sexual health, non-discrimination, child participation, water and sanitation, adult support and father hood, etc).
- It is important to develop age specific tools and methodologies for working with boys at different ages. The tools need to be developed together with boys from various cultural backgrounds and focus on the positive messages that change is possible and that it has positive effects on the lives of boys.
- It is essential to focus the work with adolescent boys on sexuality and gender equality bringing in their active participation and responsiveness. Save the Children, with its strong focus on child

participation and outreach grassroots work with boys from various age groups is in a very strong position to take this work forward.

- We need to take this work forward at individual, peer, community, organisational and policy level:
- It is important to link any work we do with our personal life situation. We can start with mobilising and inspiring our sons and other young boys we meet at a regular basis to take actions against gender discrimination. At the same time we need to revise our own attitudes, beliefs and practices relating to gender.
- At a community level our organisations need to take concrete actions to revise our programs to ensure a stronger focus on working with boys from various age groups. We need to find men and boys who already behave the way in which we want more men and boys to behave, and engage them in support to programs addressing violence and abuse. These men and boys can also become good role models for other men and boys. We should also share and analyse good practices of working with boys and men to promote gender equality and to prevent gender based violence and abuse.
- From a policy level it is important to advocate the governments and other key decision makers to make laws against gender based violence and/or to implement the laws. Concrete actions need to be taken for developing programs which mobilises young boys to take actions. For example in the education section we need to increase the knowledge on gender issues among professionals and in the school curriculum. It is important to promote educational material for men, boys, women and girls on gender and reproductive health issues and on the unacceptability of violence and abuse.
- Our own organisations should revise policies and programs to ensure that we address gender inequalities and attitudes which perpetuate gender stereotypes. We need policies which promotes paternity leave and promotes education on child development and gender socialisation – providing concrete tools on how to promote a positive non-violent and gender sensitive socialisation.

Finally we all need to stress the benefits for all members in society of men playing a more active role in nurturing our children and abandoning the culture of violence as a proof of masculinity. We must continue and strengthen our work with girls on assertiveness and participation to transform gender relation in close cooperation with the women's movement.

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