

GAGE Digest

**Programming  
to promote  
gender-equitable  
masculinities among  
adolescent boys**

Key findings from a  
rigorous review

Rachel Marcus  
December 2018



## Key recommendations for greater programme impact

**Ensure programmes pay greater attention to boys' concerns and priorities.** In particular, build in components that expand boys' and young men's livelihood options. This is both intrinsically important for marginalised boys and young men with few developmental and livelihood opportunities and essential for sustaining commitment to programmes. Building gender equality modules into youth livelihoods programmes is another promising approach.

**Frame programme objectives and messages in aspirational and motivating ways.** In particular, focus on the opportunity to transform society, rather than highlighting problems with dominant norms of masculinity and associated behaviour.

**Build in opportunities for mixed gender discussion and activity.** While male-only spaces can be important for discussing sensitive issues, there is considerable value in some mixed gender activities to enable boys to hear girls' perspectives, particularly in contexts where girls are socialised to defer to boys.

**Build in opportunities for socialising, potentially including residential trips or outings.** These both enable discussion and rapport-building in an informal setting and can help build commitment to a programme and to a set of values among a peer group.

**Ensure facilitators are well trained and have strong commitment to gender equality as well as conflict resolution skills.** This requires sustained investment in refresher training and structured support to facilitators.

**Explore options for scaling.** These may include working in schools, and with existing community-based initiatives, such as faith-based providers and youth organisations, such as the Scouts, which have a long-term presence in communities. Scaling up should also involve stronger efforts to include marginalised groups of boys, such as boys who migrate seasonally, boys with disabilities and sexual and gender minorities.

**Work more systematically with community decision-makers, and public and private stakeholders and institutions** to provide a supportive context for the changes supported by gender-equitable masculinities programmes.

## Overview

Gender-inequitable masculinities are widely recognised as a key set of norms sustaining the disempowerment of women and girls, underpinning inequalities in gender-based access to economic opportunities and decision-making power, as well as practices such as gender-based violence. Dominant forms of masculinity also have a range of negative effects on boys and men, resulting from pressures to appear invulnerable, to be in control of relationships and, particularly among adolescents and young men, to take risks, which can be harmful to their physical health and psychosocial wellbeing (Kato-Wallace et al., 2016). Over the past 20 years, there has been a steady emergence of organisations and programmes working with men to promote gender equality, following pioneering examples such as Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice. The impact of such programmes is well synthesised by, for example, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) (2018) and Edstrom et al. (2015).

Recognition that patterns of gendered behaviour develop in childhood and adolescence has led to a newer set of programmes working with both young and older adolescents. Adolescence, usually defined

as ages 10–19, is often seen as a strategic ‘intervention window’, during which external input can lead to the development of more equitable gender norms and behaviour. This emphasis on working with adolescents reflects both the increased significance of gender norms in adolescence, as young people transition to adult roles, and the importance of peers as an influence on behaviour at a time when these norms have not been yet fully internalised. These programmes aim to build new, more equitable, gender norms among adolescents, with the aim of both promoting change in current behaviour and equipping young people to behave in more gender-equitable ways in adulthood. While such programmes are frequently cited as promising practices, there has been no synthesis of their impact.

GAGE thus undertook a rigorous review synthesising the impacts of 34 such programmes with adolescents in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (Marcus et al., 2018). This digest focuses on findings related to three areas:

- extent of support for gender equality
- gender divisions of labour
- and gender-based violence (GBV).



## Programmes examined in this review

Figure 1 shows the locations of the programmes examined, and the concentration of evidence in relatively few countries. Table 1 outlines key data on the

programmes examined. Box 1 outlines the methodology used for this review.

**Figure 1: Map of programmes examined**



**Table 1: Overview of programmes – key data**

<b>Basic data</b>	36 studies of 34 programmes in 22 countries
<b>Setting</b>	7 school-based programmes 19 community-based programmes 8 programmes in both school and community settings
<b>Age focus</b>	Most programmes targeted a wide range of age groups Half worked with 10–12 year olds alongside other groups Two thirds worked with adolescents aged 14+ The most commonly targeted age group was 15–18, usually in programmes spanning both ends of this range One third included young men aged 20+
<b>Gender mix</b>	One third of programmes worked with boys/young men only 7 worked with boys/men and girls/women together 4 worked with boys/men and girls/women in separate groups 7 had a combination of single- and mixed-gender groups
<b>Target groups</b>	Half the programmes explicitly worked with low-income participants Almost a quarter targeted marginalised caste or ethnic groups None explicitly mentioned efforts to include youth with disabilities or LGBT youth, though 6 evaluations reported on changes in homophobic attitudes and behaviour 3 programmes were in violence-affected areas; 3 others worked with boys and young men at risk of involvement in gangs
<b>Programme duration</b>	Range from 6 weeks to over 2 years
<b>Scale</b>	Two thirds of the programmes reached < 10,000 participants 5 programmes reached > 50,000 participants

### Box 1: Methodology

The review took place over nine months in 2017–2018. It involved a comprehensive search of academic databases, Google and websites of organisations identified as working on gender-equitable masculinities. Key inclusion criteria were programmatic (programmes must work with adolescents aged 10–19); indicator-based (they had to examine change in attitudes or behaviour on at least one of a variety of indicators of gender equality); and methodological. We did not exclude studies without experimental or quasi-experimental designs, but, to be eligible for inclusion, studies had to involve a valid comparison (e.g. pre-test/post-test or between intervention and control groups) or (for qualitative studies) triangulation of findings. Studies were grouped according to their reliability, with approximately a third each considered high, medium and low reliability.

Over half the studies made use of the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale, a tool developed by Promundo to assess norms, attitudes and behaviour towards gender equality. This meant there was some commonality between the indicators used across studies (e.g. on attitudes to gender divisions of labour and the acceptability of GBV). Where GEM Scale-based or other quantitative indicators were combined with qualitative insights, this was particularly revealing. Overall, 22 of the 36 studies drew on both qualitative and quantitative data, with 9 using only qualitative and 5 using only quantitative data, and 14 of the 36 made use of experimental or quasi-experimental designs.

#### Limitations

Any rigorous or systematic review is profoundly dependent on the evaluations available: their emphases, the issues and indicators they report on and the extent to which they explore the reasons for their findings. Relatively few of the evaluations examined in this review explored change processes in detail. Good exceptions include the studies of Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore and Parivartan in India (Das et al., 2015; Jejeebhoy et al., 2017), Khanyisa in South Africa (York, 2014) and the Young Men's Initiative (YMI) in the Balkans (Namy et al., 2014, 2015).

For some promising programmes (e.g. the Kenya Scouts Association Gender Equality Badge and Your Moment of Truth, also in Kenya; PATH, 2012; Keller et al., 2015) only short evaluation summaries were available, and it was not possible to obtain longer reports or speak to people involved with the initiatives. Therefore, we know little about what led to the notable changes in attitudes and behaviour observed.

In a few programmes, limited impacts on some indicators were attributed to the timing of the evaluation shortly after key modules were delivered, rather than to programme design or implementation. There may have been insufficient time for participants to put changes into practice or to fully change their attitudes (Namy et al., 2014, 2015; Sosa-Rubi et al., 2016).

Just under half the evaluations (17) were conducted internally, 7 externally and 4 by a mixed internal and external team. In the remainder of studies, the relationship of the evaluators to the programme was unclear. Only three studies were carried out more than a year after respondents stopped participating in a programme – all show both lasting change on some indicators as well as a lack of change on others. There is thus very little evidence about the sustainability of programme impacts.

## What did programmes aim to do, and how?

The programmes examined generally aimed to change boys and young men's knowledge about and attitudes to gender equality, norms of masculinity and behaviours and practices related to these norms. Just over half (18/34) had a primary focus on norms and behaviour related to masculinity; 8 (23%) had a broader focus on gender equality, and worked with both boys and girls; and 6 (17%) were oriented primarily to girls' empowerment, with a relatively small-scale component working with boys. The remainder were youth development programmes (such as sexual and reproductive health programmes) with a gender equality component. Figure 2 outlines some of the key norms of masculinity that these programmes aimed to change.

Figure 2: Norms that examined programmes aimed to change



## Approaches and activities

As Table 2 shows, almost all the programmes reviewed aimed to promote more gender-equitable masculinities through a set of informal education sessions. These aimed to expose participants to new ideas and knowledge, and to provide space to discuss the content covered and issues in participants' lives. Most were described as taking a participatory approach (not all studies described activities in this level of detail), and three quarters thus involved activities to help participants develop more effective communication skills. These included negotiation and dialogue to resolve differences (rather than resorting to violence), speaking in front of a group and communicating with a wider audience through street theatre. While some programmes made use of audio-visual materials to provide new perspectives or in community awareness campaigns, mass and social media were not major elements of any of these programmes.

The most commonly covered topics in gender equality education were general gender equality, GBV, gender

divisions of labour, positive/alternative masculinity and consent in sexual relationships. In 10 programmes, prevention of GBV was a significant focus. Fourteen were part of reproductive health programmes and focused particularly on gender-equitable masculinities in the context of sexual relationships, or provided information on sexual and reproductive health as part of gender equality and life skills education.

Ten programmes used sport as a vehicle for engaging boys and young men in a programme, and integrated gender education sessions into sports training programmes. This approach proved challenging in some initiatives, as sports coaches did not always feel well placed to deliver content on gender equality and some parents (in Argentina and Brazil) objected to the integration of sexual and reproductive health information into football programmes. Beyond health information, which participants widely identified as providing useful new knowledge, strikingly few programmes offered participating boys services or components tailored to their own development. (Five provided enhanced access to sexual and reproductive health services; only one offered any form of economic support – and this was minimal, involving providing information about vocational training opportunities.)

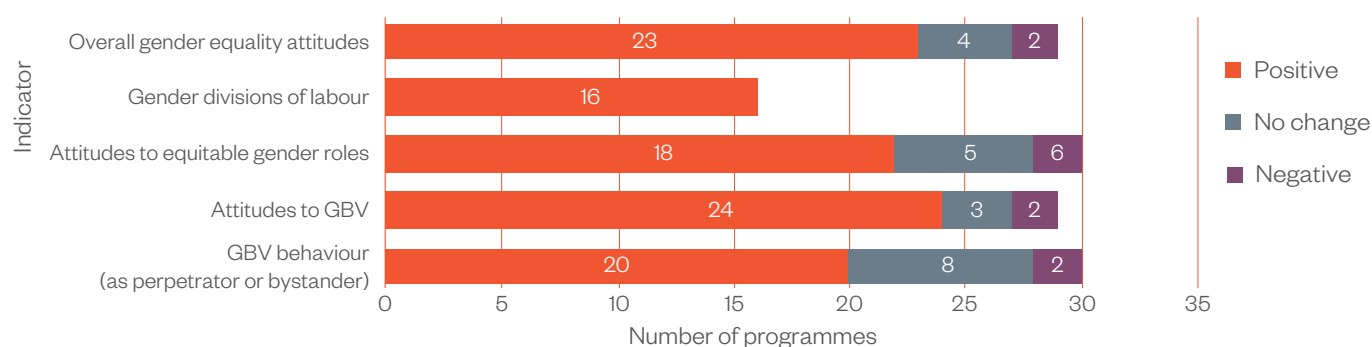
**Table 2: Programme activities**

Activities offered	Number of programmes
Gender equality education	33
Health education	27
Communication skills training	26
Sport	10
Outings and residential activities	4
Youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services	5
Vocational training	1

## Key findings

Figure 3 summarises the main findings of this review.<sup>1</sup> It shows that the majority of changes (79% in total) recorded were positive, though for most indicators there were some programmes that had led to little change and/or where evaluations found evidence of more inequitable attitudes or behaviour. In some programmes, reported

**Figure 5: Overview of changes – boys' relationships with girls and women**



<sup>1</sup> For more detail and discussion of evidence on some additional outcomes (e.g. attitudes towards girls' education and mobility, and evidence of impact on boys' health knowledge and psychosocial wellbeing), please see Marcus et al. (2018).

attitude changes were as large as 30 percentage points, though reported changes were normally less dramatic. Behaviour changes tended to lag behind reported attitude change, though on some issues (such as taking on household chores) differences were small. Many of the settings where these programmes took place had deeply entrenched patriarchal norms; in some, violent masculinities were a survival strategy in the face of pervasive insecurity and limited options for low-income young men. These challenging contexts help explain limited change in some areas; the striking successes of some of the programmes examined are all the more impressive, given these challenging contexts.

## Changes in overall attitudes to gender equality

*'The study shows a significant transformation in the perception of gender roles from pre to post intervention, moving from that of male domination and female inferiority to a more equality based, democratic view' (York, 2014: 64, reporting on Khanyisa in South Africa).*

Shifts to more equitable overall gender attitudes were recorded in two thirds of programmes; two evaluations recorded a 28–31 percentage point increase in the proportion of participants with highly equitable gender attitudes, and another four recorded increases of between 10 and 25 percentage points. These programmes are so diverse in geographical location, age groups targeted, programme focus and duration that there are no common obvious factors underlying their effectiveness; the large-scale changes observed may reflect good programme design and delivery, or high levels of individual attendance, but the evaluations provide little insight into the aspects that led to these significant changes or the quality of facilitation.

Where changes were small or attitudes did not change, this generally reflected very sticky patriarchal norms and/or a strong sense that the current order was natural or God-given. Even so, in many of these cases, through reflective processes boys and young men were able to develop a stronger understanding of the socially constructed nature of masculinity and to start to challenge beliefs they had previously taken for granted. The personal challenges inherent in reconsidering taken-for-granted beliefs should not be underestimated: for example, for some participants in the Conscientizing

Male Adolescents (CMA) programme in southern Nigeria, the dissonance between what they believed their religion to tell them about gender relations and the role of women, and what they were learning in CMA, led them to drop out (Girard, 2003). By contrast, the evaluation of Humqadam in Pakistan found that, by endline, participants were better able to distinguish between *'what society/religion thinks [i.e. prevailing social norms] and what their view is. This was often accompanied by questioning or criticizing these values and norms'* (Rozaan, 2012: 6).

It is important to be realistic about the depth of change that programmes of the kind examined in this review are likely to be able to catalyse. One evaluation speculated that some of the apparent positive change might have reflected boys learning the 'right answers' after attending sessions, as girls' comments indicated that they still perceived girls as inferior (Miske Witt & Associates, 2011). An evaluation of Stepping Stones in South Africa indicates that participants were not necessarily challenging fundamental gender inequalities, rights and norms, but rather working within agreed scripts for positive behaviour according to new learning or prevailing moral codes, such as responsible parenthood or avoiding violence, striving to be *"better" men and women, rather than "different" men and women'* (Jewkes et al., 2010: 1077).

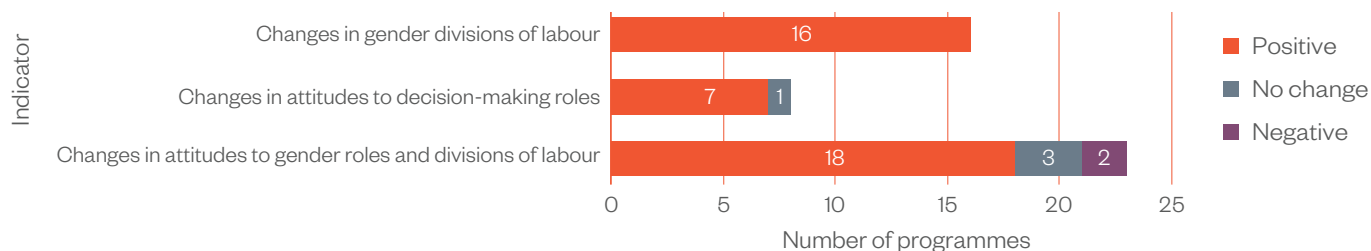
## Changes in gender divisions of labour

*'After I had learned here I am helping not only my girlfriend but also my families, my grandparents, and my mother... I am doing a range of work including wiping, laundering clothes, cleaning rooms, and I wash household utensils if they are dirty. I am helping my mother in any other task while she is working another task' Participant in Male Norms Initiative in Ethiopia (Pulerwitz et al., 2010: 18).*

Over 80% of all changes in attitudes to gender roles and gender divisions of labour were positive: close to two thirds of programmes (22/36) recorded an increase in equitable attitudes towards gendered roles. Half the studies used GEM Scale questions on responsibilities for care of young children to assess changes; a few studies also recorded changing perceptions on male breadwinner roles, on women working outside the home and on who should make decisions, both within the home and in the public sphere. Six studies recorded



**Figure 4: Changes in relation to gender roles**



shifts of between 10 and 25 percentage points towards more egalitarian attitudes. The shifts to less egalitarian attitudes were small, and all occurred in programmes with positive change on other indicators or in other locations, suggesting they may reflect the measurement process more than indicating a negative shift as a result of programme participation.

Just under half the programmes (16/34) also recorded actual changes in decision-making and roles within the household. All changes on this indicator shifted in the direction of gender equality, with four studies recording shifts of more than 10 percentage points. This reflected boys and young men taking on some household chores as a clear way of translating abstract commitments to gender equality into practice; in some of the programmes with older adolescents (who were married or had partners), participants reported more equal decision-making as well as a greater role in household chores. Two studies from India also found evidence of sports coaches who participated in combined sports coaching and gender equality promotion programmes adopting more gender-equitable divisions of labour and decision-making in their homes (Das et al., 2012; Jejeebhoy et al., 2017).

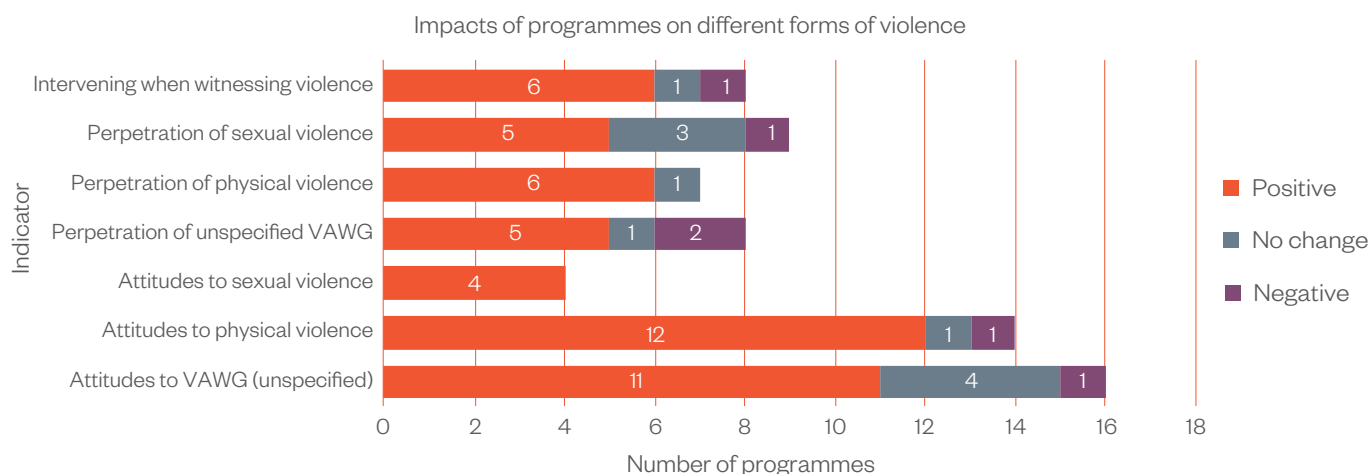
While family members, particularly sisters and partners, were generally appreciative of increased

sharing of domestic roles, some boys and young men reported backlash, particularly from older relatives and community members. These were occasionally couched as homophobic insults ('If you do "women's work" you must be gay'). A few studies also found increased support for the view that it is a man's duty to support his family financially. Rather than necessarily reflecting a reassertion of traditional norms, this may reflect boys and young men accepting the responsibilities of fatherhood, in contexts where fathering children while providing limited financial or practical support are common practice, even if not in line with normative ideals. Where male roles were bound up with concepts of duty to protect one's family or reputation, changes were also more limited.

### Changes in gender-based violence

In many contexts, prevailing norms of masculinity increase the likelihood of men and boys perpetrating violence against women and girls or other men and boys, and also of experiencing violence (Heilman and Barker, 2018). As a result, violence prevention is a common focus of programmes promoting gender-equitable masculinities: in both school- and community-based programmes. It was the core objective of 10 programmes

**Figure 5: Changes in relation to gender-based violence**



examined and part of the curriculum of a further 16. In most cases, the primary focus was on violence against women and girls, but 10 programmes included sessions on reducing violent behaviour more generally, such as responding to disagreements with other boys or men in non-violent ways. Figure 5 shows the detail of changes observed. Overall, the evaluations of 24 programmes, working across the adolescent age range, found evidence of positive change in attitudes to violence against women or girls.<sup>2</sup> In nine cases, the proportion of participants who reported believing that violence against women or girls was justified in certain circumstances (e.g. burning food, not looking after children properly, going out without permission) fell by between 10 and 24 percentage points.

The evaluations of 21 programmes found positive change in behaviour (reduced perpetration or increased intervention when witnessing violence). The scale of reduction in violence perpetration was typically smaller than changes in attitudes, a few percentage points in most cases, though it was as large as 14 percentage points in the Changing Gender Norms project in China (Pulerwitz et al., 2015). These smaller declines typically reflected lower numbers reporting perpetrating violence at the outset. In most cases, older adolescents reported changes in violence against partners or harassment of girls while out with friends, while younger adolescents reported change in behaviour towards their sisters, or girls in their schools.

Four evaluations found evidence of positive change in attitudes towards sexual violence (such as reduced support for the view that women and girls provoke sexual violence through dressing provocatively). Five recorded reduced perpetration of sexual violence. The qualitative evidence around sexual violence is particularly revealing, indicating that verbal harassment or groping were normalised and common, and seen as a way for boys to have fun together. Programme participation – even in male-only programmes – thus exposed them to a fundamentally new way of thinking about this behaviour:

*'Before I participated with my friends in actions like sexual harassment because it was fun for us. But now, I have completely changed... and I advise others... [on how to make similar changes]' Participant in Male Norms Initiative in Ethiopia (Pulerwitz et al., 2010: 19).*

*'Earlier when I used to go out with my friends, then I used to also tease girls using vulgar words. But after participating in Yaari-Dosti, my thoughts have changed. I feel now that the girls who are teased by the young boys suffer a lot. We should respect them' Participant in Yaari-Dosti in India (Verma et al., 2008: 28)*

Despite these positive changes, three evaluations reported increased perpetration of both physical and/or unspecified violence and of sexual violence. Although these reported increases in violence should not be dismissed, all evaluations suggested they reflected greater awareness of what constituted violence, and thus boys naming previously taken-for-granted acts as violence, rather than an actual upsurge in violence. These studies also show that changing norms and behaviour related to violence can be an incremental process and that sometimes participants revert to their previous ways of behaving; this was particularly the case in contexts where girls and women were understood to provoke sexual harassment through their choices of clothing, or mobility outside the home (Rozan, 2012).

Six of the seven evaluations that measured 'bystander behaviour' found increases in boys' intervening or willingness to intervene when witnessing violence (compared with one that found no change or a decrease in taking action). These were programmes with a particularly strong focus on reducing GBV and peer violence; in some, participants highlighted their new understanding of their duty to disrupt violence as a key change:

*'... they taught us that if one of my friends misbehaves with a girl then I am supposed to make him understand or I should explain to him not to do it as it is a bad behaviour or inappropriate' Participant in Do Kadam Barbare Ki Ore programme, India (Jejeebhoy et al., 2017: 29).*

The evaluations of five programmes recorded an increase in boys reporting that they treated girls and women with more respect, and had stopped teasing and verbal abuse. As well as aiming to reduce violence against women and girls, 10 programmes also aimed to reduce peer violence. Six evaluations found increased commitment to resolve disputes in non-violent ways and reduced reported involvement in peer violence. Two found no change or increased support for peer violence; the evaluations suggest this reflects messaging that focused heavily on reducing violence against women and

<sup>2</sup> As Figure 5 shows, not all studies specified what they included under the label 'violence', but the narrative suggests that, where the form of violence was unspecified, studies were referring primarily to physical violence.

girls and did not specifically challenge norms supporting violence as a response to disagreements among male peers (Eschenbacher, 2011; Rozan, 2012).

## What factors increased programme impact?

Good-quality training of facilitators in both facilitation skills and gender equality. Qualitative evaluations that focused on process as well as outcomes highlight the importance of facilitators having two key skillsets: first, a strong commitment to gender equality; and second, skills in group dynamics and conflict resolution. Where facilitators' commitment to gender-equitable masculinities was weaker, so typically were the impacts on participants' attitudes and behaviour. The evaluation of Parivartan in India highlights the transformative nature of participating in training and serving as a facilitator in changing attitudes and behaviour regarding gender equality. The other key skillset for effective facilitation emerging from these evaluations is in the promotion of positive group dynamics and conflict resolution. This is particularly in community-based programmes working with older adolescents in low-income urban areas, where young men are accustomed to using violence as a means of resolving disagreements (Pulerwitz et al., 2006; Obach et al., 2011). Ensuring good-quality facilitation requires careful selection of facilitators, regular refresher training

and support for facilitators to help address the challenges they face and maintain motivation (Das et al., 2015).

**Building rapport before discussing sensitive and challenging issues.** This emerged as a key recommendation, and relates also to the importance of framing programmes positively. Most programmes started with modules providing information that participants found valuable, such as on sexual and reproductive health and risks associated with alcohol, tobacco and drug use, before moving onto potentially more challenging topics such as questioning what it means to be a boy or man, violence and sexuality.

**More intensive attendance or programme design.** Overall, these studies suggest some relationship between programme length, attitude and behaviour change, with increased change generally associated with longer programmes. However, other aspects of programme design and implementation also appear influential – for example the amount of space for discussion and the relative balance of imparting knowledge, and discussion of its implications. The programmes that included residential experiences – such as camping – found that these focused, but informal, settings provided greater space for reflection in a relaxed environment, away from other pressures and distractions, and that change in attitudes and behaviour was stronger among participants than among non-participants.



*'Basing the workshops in nature, and the alternation of group work and physical activity/fun brought an energy to the process that allowed considerable ground to be covered. It also seemed to allow for prolonged focus upon the group exercises by participants' (York, 2014: 66).*

**Opportunities for informal socialising.** Programmes also need to be intense in the 'right way' – with opportunities for socialising outside the formal sessions. For example, the YMI may have been more effective in Pristina than in other sites because the programme office functioned as an informal drop-in centre, where boys could discuss issues with each other and facilitators outside programme sessions. As with residential trips, this increased exposure to the concepts and behaviour YMI was promoting, and also gave space for boys to discuss norms of masculinity and gender-equitable behaviour among themselves (Namy et al., 2014, 2015). Humqadam, a programme working with older adolescents and young men in Pakistan, likewise found that building in cinema trips, cricket matches and other opportunities for fun had a qualitatively important positive impact, both sustaining interest in the informal education sessions and deepening engagement with the values it was promoting (Rozaan, 2012).

Taken together, these findings suggest a case for longer-term programmes, running over a year or more, with more space for informal drop-in activities, whether in school-based clubs or community centres. This model has proved positive in some sexual and reproductive health education programmes (such as Straight Talk in Uganda) and, among the programmes studied, in YMI in the Balkans (Namy et al., 2014, 2015) and the CMA programme in southern Nigeria (Girard, 2003).

**Youth-focused, positive branding.** The evaluation of YMI highlighted the importance of positive branding that appeals to its target audience. The programme's imagery was upbeat and positive, focusing on adolescent boys and young men as change-makers. Although its primary purpose was to change the norms and attitudes that underpin violent behaviour, it communicated a core message of boys and young men having the power to achieve change rather than being the problem. The evaluation found this branding to have played an important role in encouraging participants to identify with more gender-equitable norms, a finding shared with other initiatives, such as V4C in Nigeria (V4C, 2017) and Girl Effect programmes worldwide. As ICRW (2018)

points out, branding and messaging must be carefully designed to inspire action in support of gender among boys and young men, without simultaneously implying that women and girls need protecting or are unable to act towards their own empowerment.

## Main challenges and limitations

**Not much attention to boys' own developmental needs.** The primary objective of most programmes reviewed was to promote gender equality, and in a few cases to improve sexual and reproductive health. They were not comprehensive youth development programmes. However, there was a notable lack of activities aimed at addressing boys' key concerns, such as developing economic skills or stronger livelihoods – in contrast with girl-oriented programming, where economic 'empowerment' components are more common (Marcus et al., 2017). Although participants certainly appreciated the opportunity to reflect on masculinities and discuss different 'models' of boyhood and manhood, it was clear from a number of evaluations that older adolescents would additionally have appreciated activities that helped them enhance their livelihoods. Timing programmes to avoid clashes with key periods of study and work intensity (e.g. seasonal migration or work peaks) is also important in reaching a wider group of disadvantaged boys. A more holistic approach with greater attention to pressing concerns for low-income older adolescents may enhance impact by widening the appeal of gender equality and positive masculinities programming.

**Limited engagement with other wider stakeholders.** Compared with programmes focusing on girls and young women, relatively few of these programmes worked with parents, partners or the wider community. Most of the evidence comes from programmes that focused only on boys and young men, pointing out the limitations of this approach. As participants in the Khanyisa programme in South Africa put it, '... our friends and neighbours have not been part of Khanyisa, what will happen is that what we have learned will slowly go away and in the long run we will totally forget about it' (York, 2014: 73).

**Resistance to norm change.** Our review found explicit evidence of resistance to norm change processes. Interestingly, this resistance was most commonly expressed when boys and men took on work considered to be a female responsibility.

*'There is a problem for young men trying to do this in our society because sometimes you will try to clean or do the so called women's stuff and your parents will say don't worry, your sister will do that, so that's hard, and sometimes if you keep on trying to help some will think that it's a sign of being gay. This will hurt you and you will start wanting to do something which will prove that you are man enough, and you will stop doing so called women's stuff because you don't want to be labelled as gay' Khanyisa project in South Africa (York, 2014: 71).*

As this quote shows, homophobic insults are widely used to police acceptable masculinity. There was much less reported resistance to boys and men reducing their use of violence against women and girls or stopping it altogether: this may be because respondents were ambivalent about the use of violence or considered it acceptable only in extreme circumstances.

## Knowledge gaps

**Role of context.** These evaluations focus on programme impacts; a few discuss the broader socioeconomic context in which they operated and the lives and livelihoods of the adolescents and young men targeted. Although practitioners design programmes based on understanding of the local context, this knowledge is rarely discussed in evaluations. Few studies explain how programmes respond to the prevailing legal or political context, such as the existence of laws on GBV or gay rights. A few evaluations from very strongly patriarchal contexts hint at the challenges of change when little in boys' wider lives is supportive of the new ideas and practices they are learning through these programmes.

**Attention to psychosocial wellbeing.** A growing body of practice suggests that successful efforts to transform gender norms and relations are often built on the dual foundations of strong psychosocial wellbeing and strong interpersonal relationships.<sup>3</sup> The programming implications are little discussed in the literature and are not much reflected in this set of studies, though around half report some positive changes in boys' self-esteem, stronger friendship networks and increased ability to challenge norms about expressing emotions. More focused attention to these 'softer', less tangible, elements of programming could help identify the ingredients of truly transformative initiatives.

**Impact of different programme designs on changes in boys' attitudes and behaviour.** Because no evaluations compared the impacts of different components and approaches, much less is known about effective programming to promote gender-equitable masculinities compared with in girls' empowerment programming. Taken together, these evaluations suggest that group-based discussion tends to lead to greater impacts than community awareness-raising, and that undertaking both components together generally maximises impact, but these findings are somewhat indicator- and programme-specific and the evidence base is thin (four studies). Because so few programmes involved additional components, we lack evidence of the added value of sport, youth-friendly services or economic empowerment – as compared with programming with adolescent girls, where the importance of multi-component approaches is more strongly established (Marcus et al., 2017).

**Single-sex or mixed programmes.** No studies rigorously compare the impacts of programmes working only with adolescent boys and young men with those working also with girls and young women. Three quarters of the programmes reviewed held fully or partially single-sex sessions, on the premise that these would be safer spaces to challenge deeply held beliefs, and to build more empathetic and equitable masculinities. School-based programmes and programmes with younger adolescents were least likely to be gender-segregated. Where programmes that structured in some mixed sessions, where boys and girls could understand each other's perspectives, participants generally considered this beneficial, mirroring the findings of ICRW's (2018) review.

**Long-term impacts: does intervention in adolescence live up to its promise?** There is a clear lack of evidence as to whether participation in gender-equitable masculinities programmes has lasting effects. Only three evaluations took place more than a year after participants had left a programme, and none involved longitudinal follow-up of former participants. We do not know, for example, whether boys are able to carry learning from programmes in early adolescence through to peer group or partner interactions in late adolescence, or from late adolescence to adulthood. This is a key knowledge gap, which GAGE is well placed to fill.

<sup>3</sup> These points were made by Lori Michau of Raising Voices during ALIGN's Webinar on Cross-Country Perspectives on Gender Norms on 10 July 2018 ([www.alignplatform.org/resources/2018/07/align-webinar-slides-cross-country-perspectives-gender-norms](http://www.alignplatform.org/resources/2018/07/align-webinar-slides-cross-country-perspectives-gender-norms))

**Scalability and cost-effectiveness of different types of programmes.** Of the 34 programmes, only 5 worked with over 50,000 adolescents and young people, and none of the evaluations explicitly looked at the challenges of ensuring quality and responsiveness to local conditions when operating at scale. None provides evidence of the cost-effectiveness of programmes or particular activities.

**Faith-based providers.** Only two programmes worked with faith-based organisations. We are aware of some faith-based positive masculinities programmes run by Christian churches in East Africa but were unable to find evaluations, perhaps because these are local initiatives without external funding. More evidence of the contribution of faith-based programmes, and of how organisations have handled disconnects between dominant interpretations of religious teaching and new norms of masculinity, would help ensure programme framing responds to the broader religious and cultural environment.

**Humanitarian contexts.** Finally, we found a particular gap concerning evaluations of programmes promoting gender-equitable masculinities in humanitarian emergencies and contexts affected by violence. This is probably because programming in these contexts tends to focus on young men as opposed to adolescents.

## Recommendations

To build on the strong potential of these programmes and to ensure scalable positive impacts:

1. **Pay greater attention to boys' concerns and priorities** (particularly the need for support with developing economic skills and assets). This is both intrinsically important for marginalised boys and young men with few developmental and livelihood opportunities and essential for sustaining commitment to programmes.
2. **Frame programme objectives and messages in aspirational and motivating ways.** In particular, focus on the opportunity to transform society, rather than highlighting problems with dominant norms of masculinity and associated behaviour.
3. **Build in opportunities for mixed gender discussion and activity.** While male-only spaces can be important for discussing sensitive issues, there is considerable value in some mixed gender activities to enable boys to hear girls' perspectives, particularly in contexts where girls are socialised to defer to boys.
4. **Build in opportunities for socialising, potentially including residential activities.** While a well-tailored

curriculum is important to expose boys to new knowledge and ideas, informal interaction is a critical and under-recognised element of effective programmes. Residential experiences provide an ideal setting for such interaction; if these are not possible, so do group outings or leisure activities.

5. **Recognise time conflicts particular for older adolescents.** In particular, avoid scheduling sessions to conflict with seasonal study or work peaks.
6. **Ensure facilitators are well trained and have strong commitment to gender equality as well as conflict resolution skills.** This requires sustained investment in refresher training and structured support to facilitators. In school-based programmes, there are trade-offs between bringing in external facilitators (more costly, more challenging to fit 'off-curriculum' content into the school day) compared with training teachers to provide courses. This may appear more sustainable but needs to be offset against the risk that teacher-led sessions will be insufficiently participatory for maximum exploration of sensitive topics, and the risk of overburdening already stretched teachers.
7. **Explore options for scaling.** These may include working in schools, and with existing community-based initiatives and organisations, such as faith-based providers and youth organisations, such as the Scouts, which have a long-term presence in some communities. Investing in facilitator training is vital and needs to be properly planned as part of any scale-up process.
8. **Work more systematically with community decision-makers and other stakeholders and institutions** to provide a supportive context for the changes supported by gender-equitable masculinities programmes.
9. **Invest in filling knowledge gaps,** in particular: comparing the impacts and added value of different content, approaches and activities, including programmes with a stronger emphasis on developing boys' hard and soft skills and psychosocial wellbeing; generating more evidence from particularly challenging contexts (e.g. where patriarchal norms are very strongly ingrained, and contexts affected by conflict); and the cost-effectiveness and long-term impacts of gender equitable masculinities programming with adolescent boys.

## References

- Das, M., Ghosh, S., Miller, E. et al. (2012) *Engaging coaches and athletes in fostering gender equity: findings from the Parivartan Program in Mumbai, India*. New Delhi: ICRW
- Das, M., Verma, R., Ghosh, S., Ciaravino, S., Jones, K., O'Connor, B. and Miller, E. (2015) 'Community mentors as coaches: transforming gender norms through cricket among adolescent males in urban India' *Gender & Development* 23(1): 61–75
- Edstrom, J., Hassink, A., Shahrokh, T. and Stern, E. (eds) (2015) *Engendering men. A collaborative review of evidence on men and boys in social change and gender equality*. Brighton: IDS
- Eschenbacher, H. (2011) *CARE Bangladesh Girls' Education and Leadership Evaluation. Innovation through Sport: Promoting Leaders, Empowering Youth. Final Evaluation Report for CARE USA*. Saint Paul, MN: Miske Witt & Associates Inc.
- Girard, F. (2003) *'My father didn't think this way': Nigerian boys contemplate gender equality*. New York: Population Council
- Heilman, B. and Barker, G. (2018) *Masculine norms and violence: making the connections* Washington DC: Promundo
- ICRW – International Center for Research on Women (2018) *Gender equity and male engagement: it only works when everyone plays*. New York: ICRW
- Jejeebhoy, S.J., Acharya, R., Pandey, N. et al. (2017) *The effect of a gender transformative life skills education and sports-coaching programme on the attitudes and practices of adolescent boys and young men in Bihar*. New Delhi: Population Council
- Jewkes, R., Wood, K. and Duvvury, N. (2010) "'I woke up after I joined Stepping Stones': meanings of an HIV behavioural intervention in rural South African young people's lives' *Health Education Research* 25(6): 1074–1084
- Kato-Wallace, J., Barker, G., Sharafi, L. et al. (2016) *Adolescent boys and young men: engaging them as supporters of gender equality and health and understanding their vulnerabilities*. Washington DC and New York: PromundoUS and UNFPA
- Keller, J., Mboya, B.O., Sinclair, J., Githua, O.W. and Mulinge, M. et al. (2015) 'A 6-week school curriculum improves boys' attitudes and behaviors related to gender-based violence in Kenya' *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 1–23
- Marcus, R., Gupta-Archer, N., D'Arcy, M. and Page, E. (2017) *Rigorous review: girls' clubs, life skills programmes and girls' well-being outcomes*. London: ODI/GAGE
- Marcus, R., Stavropoulou, M. and Archer-Gupta, N., (2018) *Programming to promote gender equitable masculinities: a rigorous review*. London: ODI/GAGE
- Namy, S., Heilman, B., Stich, S. and Edmeades, J. (2014) *Be a man, change the rules! Findings and lessons from seven years of CARE International Balkans' Young Men Initiative*. Washington DC: ICRW
- Namy, S., Heilman, B., Stich, S., Crownover, J., Leka, B. and Edmeades, J. (2015) 'Changing what it means to "become a man": participants' reflections on a school-based programme to redefine masculinity in the Balkans' *Culture, and Health & Sexuality* 17 (S2): S206–S222
- Obach, A., Sadler, M. and Aguayo, F. (2011) *Involucrando hombres jóvenes en el fin de la violencia de género: Intervención multipaís con evaluación de impacto. Caso chileno*. Santiago de Chile: Cultura Salud/EMA
- Miske Witt & Associates (2011) 'The Power to Lead Alliance (PTLA): empowering girls to learn and lead'. Final Evaluation Report. Saint Paul MI: Miske Witt & Associates
- PATH (2012a) *Evaluation summary: changing gender norms of Kenyan scouts*. Washington DC: PATH
- Pulerwitz, J., Barker, G., Segundo, M. and Nascimento, M. (2006) *Promoting more gender-equitable norms and behaviors among young men as an HIV/AIDS prevention strategy*. Washington DC: Population Council
- Pulerwitz, J., Martin, S., Mehta, M. et al. (2010) *Promoting gender equity for HIV and Violence prevention results from the PEPFAR Male Norms Initiative evaluation in Ethiopia*. Washington DC: PATH
- Pulerwitz, J., Hui, W., Arney, J. and Muller Scott, L. (2015) 'Changing gender norms and reducing HIV and violence risk among workers and students in China' *Journal of Health Communication* 20(8): 869–878
- Rozan (2012) 'Report. Evaluation study: working with men and boys on prevention of GBV'. Islamabad: Rozan
- Sosa-Rubi, S.G., Saavedra-Avendano, B., Piras, C. et al. (2016) 'True love: effectiveness of a school-based program to reduce dating violence among adolescents in Mexico City' *Society for Prevention Research* 1–16
- Verma, R., Pulerwitz, J., Mahendra, V.S., Khandekar, S., Singh, A.K., Das, S.S., Mehra, S. and Barker, G. (2008) *Promoting gender equity as a strategy to reduce HIV risk and gender-based violence among young men in India*. Washington DC: Population Council
- V4C – Voices for Change (2017) 'Using social marketing to shift discriminatory gender norms'. Voices for Change Legacy Paper, (<http://www.v4c-nigeria.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/1624-V4C-LP-Social-Marketing-WEB.pdf>)
- York, M. (2014) 'Transforming masculinities: a qualitative study of a transformative education programme for young Zulu men and boys in rural Kwazulu-Natal' *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 7(7): 55–78



### **GAGE Programme Office**

Overseas Development Institute  
203 Blackfriars Road  
London SE1 8NJ  
United Kingdom  
Email: [gage@odi.org.uk](mailto:gage@odi.org.uk)  
Web: [www.gage.odi.org](http://www.gage.odi.org)

## **About GAGE**

Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) is a nine-year longitudinal research programme generating evidence on what works to transform the lives of adolescent girls in the Global South. Visit [www.gage.odi.org.uk](http://www.gage.odi.org.uk) for more information.

## **Disclaimer**

This document is an output of the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) programme which is funded by UK aid from the UK government. However, views expressed and information contained within do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies and are not endorsed by the UK government, which accepts no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.

## **Copyright**

Readers are encouraged to quote and reproduce material from this report for their own non-commercial publications (any commercial use must be cleared with the GAGE Programme Office first by contacting [gage@odi.org.uk](mailto:gage@odi.org.uk)). As copyright holder, GAGE requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication. When referencing a GAGE publication, please list the publisher as Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence. For online use, we ask readers to link to the original resource on the GAGE website, [www.gage.odi.org](http://www.gage.odi.org)

© GAGE 2018. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution – NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

ISBN: 978-1-912942-03-9

Front cover: © David Walker/ODI

