

# **Involving Men in Efforts to End Violence Against Women**

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## **Introduction**

Thank you to the organisers of this Forum for inviting me to speak here: the Eastern Suburbs Domestic Violence Network, and the organisations and DV Committees it represents.

I want to start by acknowledging that the work done by the women, and men, in this room is really at the frontline of domestic violence work. I have the utmost respect for those of you who do this work, and I feel both humbled and privileged to be in this forum with you.

In this paper, I offer an overview of strategies for the primary prevention of violence against women. I focus on working with men to end violence against women, and I situate this within a wider framework of violence prevention.

I begin by outlining the rationale for addressing men in efforts to prevent violence against women. I then offer a framework identifying six key levels of intervention in violence prevention. I discuss examples of working with men in each, and I identify effective or promising strategies in work with men. The final section of the paper then explores some key challenges in working with men.

## **Men's roles in preventing violence against women**

Efforts to end violence against women must address men. This notion is increasingly accepted in violence prevention circles. More generally, there is growing international support for the belief that we must involve men in efforts to build gender equality.

The growing emphasis on the need to address men in ending violence against women is fuelled by three key insights. First and most importantly, violence prevention must address men because largely it is men who perpetrate this violence.

Second, constructions of masculinity play a crucial role in shaping violence against women: at the individual level, in families and relationships, in communities, and societies as a whole.

These first two insights boil down to the point that we have *no choice* but to address men and masculinities if we want to stop violence against women. However, violence prevention work with men has been fuelled also by a third and more hopeful insight: that men have a positive role to play in helping to stop violence against women. Violence is an issue of concern to women and men alike and men have a stake in ending violence against women.

Among men, effective violence prevention strategies challenge the beliefs, values and discourses which support violence, challenge the patriarchal power relations which sustain and are sustained by violence, and promote alternative constructions of masculinity, gender and identity which foster non-violence and gender justice.

## **The primary prevention of violence against women: Definitions, scope, and evaluation**

### **Defining primary prevention**

'Primary' prevention strategies aim to lessen the likelihood of boys and men using violence in the first place. 'Secondary' prevention refers to reducing opportunities for violence by supporting the men who are at risk of perpetrating violence. 'Tertiary' prevention aims to prevent the re-

occurrence of violence, and refers to work with men who have already used violence. It may be more accurate to describe this as violence intervention.

### **Evaluations of effectiveness**

To identify the most promising strategies for the primary prevention for violence against women, we must be guided by both research on the determinants of this violence and evidence for the effectiveness of particular interventions. In relation to the second source of guidance, we face two significant challenges. First, there has been very little evaluation of primary prevention strategies. Second, existing evidence regarding the effectiveness of *any* kind of intervention is sparse (Flood 2005-2006). Many efforts have not had any evaluation, and existing evaluations often are poorly designed, limited to participants' satisfaction, or only assess proxy variables associated with violence against women rather than this violence itself (Tolan 2006).

Nevertheless, some strategies and interventions clearly are effective: they show evidence of implementation, evidence of effectiveness, and a theoretical rationale. Others are promising: they show evidence of implementation and a theoretical rationale. Other strategies are potentially promising: they have not been tried or evaluated, but they do have a theoretical rationale.

### **Violence prevention: Multiple levels of intervention**

Men's violence against women is the outcome of a complex interplay of individual, relationship, community, institutional, and societal factors. Thus, violence prevention too must work at these multiple levels (World Health Organization 2002).

In the following discussion, I organise violence prevention strategies among men in terms of six levels of intervention.

#### **Level 1: Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills**

The smallest and most localised form of prevention is transferring information and skills to individuals and increasing their capacity to prevent or avoid violence against women. For example, teachers, carers, and physicians may help boys and young men to increase their safety and their equitable attitudes, healthcare practitioners may engage patients and parents to promote healthy relationships, and other community leaders and public figures may speak to boys and men to encourage non-violence (Davis *et al.* 2006).

It is particularly important that we address programs and services to boys who have witnessed or experienced violence in families. Boys who have witnessed or experienced violence are more likely to grow up holding violence-supportive attitudes and perpetrating violence themselves (Flood and Pease 2006).

Prevention efforts among youth can address the associations between domestic violence and poverty, low work attachment, and low educational attainment, and other social factors. And they should target associated high risk behaviours among boys, such as illegal drug use and delinquent behaviour (Vezina and Herbert 2007).

Among older male populations, other direct participation efforts include responsible fatherhood programs, those addressing prisoners' reentry into communities, premarital relationship education, and couples counseling programs.

#### **Level 2: Promoting Community Education**

I define 'community education' broadly here, focusing on four streams of education: face-to-face educational groups and programs, communication and social marketing, local educational strategies such as 'social norms' and 'bystander' approaches, and other media strategies.

### Face-to-face educational groups and programs

The most extensive body of evidence in the evaluation of primary prevention efforts concerns educational programs among children, youth, and young adults. From a series of evaluations of violence prevention education, delivered in schools and universities in particular, it is clear such interventions can have positive effects on males' attitudes towards and participation in violence against women. Male (and female) secondary school and university students who have attended rape education sessions show less adherence to rape myths, express less rape-supportive attitudes, and/or report greater victim empathy than those in control groups.

Existing evaluations show that not all educational interventions are effective, changes in attitudes often 'rebound' to pre-intervention levels one or two months after the intervention, and some even become worse. However, education programs which are intensive, lengthy, and use a variety of teaching approaches have been shown to produce positive and lasting change in attitudes and behaviours (Flood 2005-2006). We know far less about the effectiveness of violence prevention education among other male populations such as professional athletes.

One of the most well documented programs for young men has been developed by Program H, a consortium of NGOs based in Brazil and Mexico. In sites in which young men were exposed to weekly educational workshops (and a social marketing campaign), they showed improved attitudes towards violence against women and other issues (Schueller *et al.* 2005). In South Africa, men who participated in workshops run by the Men As Partners project were less likely than non-participants to believe that it is acceptable to beat their wives or rape sex workers (White *et al.* 2003: 22). Discussion groups and forums also are being used among adult men to prompt questioning and transformation of dominant constructions of masculinity, in Zimbabwe (Mtutu 2005), India (Karlsson and Karkara 2004), and Nicaragua (Esplen 2006: 6).

Community education strategies have been used to good effect in contexts affected by war, militarism, and civil conflict. In Namibia for example, participatory research, community plays, resource centres, and family visitors' programmes have produced shifts in attitudes and behaviour, including a decline in boys' ritualised sexual violence against girls in hostels (Kandirikirira 2002).

### **Including peer education and mentoring**

Interventions among boys and young men in general should be complemented by other strategies aimed at addressing particularly intensive forms of support for violence in the peer cultures and group norms of some boys and young men, such as peer education and mentoring.

Peer-based strategies are of particular value. In violence prevention education, programs for men are more likely to be effective if they use peers in leadership roles, and non-violent men can play a powerful role as peer educators.

### Communication and social marketing

Communication and social marketing campaigns are one of the more common means of primary prevention of violence against women. There is evidence that social marketing campaigns can produce positive change in the attitudes and behaviours associated with men's perpetration of violence against women (Donovan and Vlais 2005). For example, Soul City, a multimedia project in South Africa, generated increased knowledge and awareness of domestic violence.

Men's groups and networks have adopted a wide range of creative communication strategies, including the use of film in India to encourage men to reflect on their relations with women (Roy 2001), 'guerilla theatre' in South African bars to spark discussion, the distribution of pamphlets to men in community markets in Cambodia (Kaufman 2003), and a 'Walk Across America' to raise community awareness about violence against women. In Brazil, Program H developed postcards,

banners, and comics which drew on mass media and youth culture to promote respectful identities and gender-equitable lifestyles among young men and women. In the USA, Men Can Stop Rape have developed an innovative poster campaign centred on the theme “My strength is not for hurting”, encouraging men to practise consent and respect in their sexual relations. Some social marketing campaigns use well-known male figures to help address boys and men, whether in trying to prevent acid attacks on girls and women in Bangladesh (Karlsson and Karkara 2004) or to encourage norms of consent and non-violence among young men in Australia and the US (Flood 2002-2003).

#### Local educational strategies: ‘social norms’ and ‘bystander intervention’ campaigns

Two further approaches are promising ones for the primary prevention of violence against women, with both a theoretical rationale and evidence of implementation. Using the ‘social norms’ approach, US campaigns on university campuses have highlighted the gap between men’s perceptions of other men’s agreement with violence-supportive and sexist norms and the actual extent of this agreement. By gathering and publicising data on men’s attitudes and behaviour, they seek to undermine men’s conformity to sexist peer norms and increase their willingness to intervene in violent behaviour (Flood 2005-2006). Social norms campaigns could be adopted in universities, workplaces, and other public institutions.

Using a ‘bystander intervention’ approach, other campaigns have sought to place “a sense of responsibility and empowerment for ending sexual violence on the shoulders of all community members”. They teach men (and women) skills in de-escalating risky situations and being effective allies for survivors and foster a sense of community responsibility for violence prevention (Banyard 2005).

#### Other media strategies

At least three kinds of intervention are relevant in relation to the media’s influence on community attitudes towards violence against women: better news reporting, media literacy, and regulation.

In a ‘media advocacy’ approach, journalists and news media have been encouraged to portray violence against women in appropriate ways, for example as social problems requiring public intervention (Ghez 2001; Wray 2006).

Media literacy involves teaching critical viewing and thinking skills, to improve viewers’ ability to ignore or resist anti-social messages. It is particularly important that we tackle boys’ consumption of sexist and violence-supportive media such as pornography (Flood 2007a).

Perhaps the most controversial form of intervention into media is the regulation of media content: the regulation for example of portrayals of violence in children’s television and forms of Internet pornography.

### **Level 3: Educating Providers (and other professionals)**

Organisational and workforce strategies for the primary prevention of violence against women are scattered and underdeveloped. But workplace strategies are promising ones. We know for example that workplace training can improve attitudes towards sexual harassment.

Workplace strategies often involve working with *men*, given that police, law, and medical institutions typically are dominated by men. However, very little primary prevention work has been conducted with men in workplaces in gender-sensitive ways. At the same time, there are some inspiring and promising instances of such work. In south and central America, the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) is training soccer coaches to promote more gender-equitable masculinities among boys (Schueller *et al.* 2005). In Islamabad, an NGO called Rozan

has run gender violence sensitization workshops with police on gender-based violence (Lang 2003).

Another key form of violence prevention relevant to this area of action is increasing workforce and organisational capacity to prevent violence against women, by developing resources and technical assistance.

#### **Level 4: Engaging, Strengthening, and Mobilising Communities**

To prevent violence against women, we must change the social norms, gender roles, and power relations which feed into violence. We must build local communities' capacity to respond effectively to violence and encourage their ownership of the issue. And we must address the social contexts in which violence against women occurs (Rosewater 2003).

Promising community strategies include community and media education campaigns, 'community action teams' designed to involve communities in building strategies for community safety, awards programs for responsible media coverage and effective community leadership in violence prevention, and holding religious and political leaders accountable for providing clear messages that violence against women is unacceptable (Davis *et al.* 2006).

In terms of changing the social and community conditions that lead to violence, one key strategy is to link violence to other issues which influence community well-being, such as poverty, affordable housing, access to health care, and economic development.

##### Involve male community leaders

We must also involve male community leaders in such efforts. For example, while religious beliefs historically have been used to justify violence against women and church clergy at times have been complicit in this violence (Flood and Pease 2006), religious institutions and leaders also have a potentially powerful role to play in encouraging an ethic of non-violence. The spiritual and theological understandings of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other world religions each contain emphases and values which could serve to undermine community tolerance for violence against women. Spiritual and religious leaders should be encouraged to challenge violence against women and gender inequality, through public statements, sermons, teachings, and religious materials.

##### Foster coalitions and networks

We must also foster coalitions and networks to increase the 'critical mass' behind particular prevention efforts, improve collaboration on interventions, and reduce unnecessary competition among organisations. We need coalitions between researchers and community providers, among art and music organisations, between grassroots organisations and sectors of government, and with businesses and workplaces (Davis *et al.* 2006; Expert Group 2003: 33).

##### Mobilise communities through events, networks, and campaigns

Community development strategies are complemented by strategies of community mobilisation. We must not only educate men and women but also organise them for collective action (Greig and Peacock 2005). More activist involvements are needed to change the social norms and power relations which underpin men's violence against women.

We must create opportunities for individuals to mobilise their communities through events, networks, and campaigns. Examples of key strategies here include community workshops and events, work with influential groups and community 'gatekeepers', cultural tools of art and drama such as murals, competitions, and street theatre, and fostering grassroots men's and women's groups and networks committed to advocacy for non-violence and gender equality (Greig and Peacock 2005).

It is particularly important that we mobilise men through such work, because of men's relative absence from efforts to end violence against women. Around the world, a variety of grassroots men's groups and networks work to engage men in personal and collective efforts at violence prevention (Flood 2005a). The most widespread example of an anti-violence campaign organised by men is the White Ribbon Campaign. Men are encouraged to show their opposition to men's violence against women by purchasing and wearing a white ribbon. In some countries, the White Ribbon Campaign also involves year-round educational strategies, including advertising campaigns, concerts, fathers' walks, and fund-raising for women's organisations.

Another well developed example is EngenderHealth's Men As Partners program, which uses community education, grassroots organising, and advocacy for effective policy implementation. Other groups and networks can be found across the USA (Flood 2005a) and in countries such as India, Cambodia (Lang 2003), Namibia (Odendaal 2001), Kenya (Miruka 2007) and South Africa (Tshabalala 2005).

In many instances such men's groups and networks are initiated by men themselves, but in others, women's groups and organisations have nurtured and trained male anti-violence advocates.

### **Level 5: Changing Organizational Practices**

Changing the practices of organisations and institutions can have a significant impact on community norms. For example, media outlets can restrict violence-supportive representations, healthcare institutions can adopt workplace policies modeling egalitarian relationships, and churches may encourage their members to relate in non-abusive ways (Davis *et al.* 2006). Universities, technical and further education (TAFE) institutions, and other professional bodies involved in training professions should integrate materials on violence against women in their curricula.

#### And organisational or institutional cultures

Violence-supportive attitudes are encouraged and institutionalised in the peer relations and cultures of particular organisations and contexts, especially in male-dominated and homosocially-focused male university colleges, sporting clubs, workplaces, and military institutions (Flood and Pease 2006). In other words, some contexts and cultures are particularly dangerous for the women who come into contact with them. Intensive interventions in such contexts is necessary to address their violence-supportive local cultures.

There are some powerful examples of sporting institutions taking action to address violence against women among professional male athletes. In Australia, the professional sporting codes of National Rugby League (NRL) and the Australian Football League (AFL) are developing education programs for their players, codes of conduct, and other measures in response to a series of alleged sexual assaults by players in 2004 (AFL 2005).

There are also powerful examples of agencies addressing their own gender relations. For example, Lang and Smith (2004) describe the experience of a development agency working to model gender-equality itself, by addressing its own policies, staff and organisational culture.

### **Level 6: Influencing Policies and Legislation**

Legal and policy reforms in relation to violence against women have been largely concerned with tertiary responses to intimate partner violence. Yet law and policy also are crucial tools of primary prevention, at national, state, and local levels. National and state-based plans of action for eliminating violence against women are necessary elements in any systematic prevention effort. We require a whole of government approach, with a national funding base, involving integrated prevention plans at national and state levels (Office of the Status of Women 2004).

Law and policy are critical tools too in establishing and disseminating particular strategies of primary prevention. For example, they are necessary in establishing and spreading violence prevention curricula for schools and universities (including sexuality education addressing sexual violence prevention), influencing the availability and consumption of alcohol, shaping the content of advertising, pornography, and other media, and restricting gun use.

### The criminal justice system

The criminal justice system only responds to a very small proportion of domestic violence and sexual assault matters, given both low rates of reporting and attrition through the legal process (Stubbs 2001). At the same time, the criminal justice system does have an important symbolic role in shaping community perceptions of violence against women, and strong legal sanctions do encourage community intolerance for this violence (Flood and Pease 2006).

Again, men can play an important role here. For example, in Pakistan, some male lawyers and judges have worked to encourage appropriate convictions for perpetrators of violence and to advocate for the rights of women vulnerable to honour killing (Lang 2003).

### Research monitoring and evaluation

Finally, ongoing research into the determinants of violence against women is needed to extend our understanding of the risk factors for, dynamics of, and populations most at risk of violence. In addition, our efforts at primary prevention themselves must be subjected to rigorous scrutiny. Outcome-based evaluations of existing prevention programs, and investment in evidence-based prevention programs, are necessary in furthering our prevention efforts (Office of the Status of Women 2004).

## **Challenges in working with men**

I will conclude by discussing some of the key challenges in working with men and some of the key strategies which are effective in engaging, educating, and mobilising men.

### **Providing for men**

First, there is the challenge of whether to address men at all. Among many women's groups and organisations there is understandable caution about working with men. Involving men in gender policy and programming can threaten funding and resources for programs and services directed at women, and it can mean the dilution of the feminist content and orientation of services. At the same time, there is a clear feminist rationale for working with men: that we will need to change *men* – men's attitudes, behaviours, identities, and relations – if we are to make progress towards gender equality.

I have written elsewhere (Flood 2007b) of the principles which should guide any work with men. Above all, this work must be pro-feminist. It must be guided by feminist content and framed with a feminist political agenda. It must be done in partnership with, and even be accountable to, women and women's groups. And it must involve the protection of 'women's space', women-only, and women-focused programs. Second, this work must be committed to enhancing boys' and men's lives. Third, work with men must acknowledge both commonalities and diversities, and the complex ways in which manhood and gender are structured by race, class, sexuality, age and other forms of social difference.

### **Reaching men**

The second challenge is how to reach men. There are two clusters of strategies here: go to men, and bring them to you. Successful strategies for going to men include peer education, targeting the workplaces, sporting and entertainment events at which men dominate, and community outreach

strategies in the places where young and adult men congregate (United Nations Population Fund 2000). The other side of reaching boys and men is bringing them to you, by making our services and programs more attractive to men or ‘male-friendly’.

### **Appealing to men**

Third, how do we appeal to men? How do we engage their interest and commitment? What works best is to begin with *the positive* – to begin with what is working, with the fact that most men treat women and girls with respect, and so on. However, this does not mean condoning men’s endorsement of sexist or oppressive understandings and practices. Any work with men must retain a fundamental, feminist critique of gender inequality.

Second, ground the language and content in men’s own experience and concerns. For example, in my writing and activism, I have tried to create a language through which men can take on the issue of violence against women as their own. I have argued that violence against women is also a ‘men’s issue’.

We must ensure that our interventions are culturally appropriate – where this is understood as embodying not just a sensitivity to cultural diversities, but a sensitivity to *gender* cultures and the diverse constructions of masculinity and sexuality which are dominant in particular social contexts and communities (Flood 2005-2006).

Third, emphasise the shared benefits for men and women and, in particular, the ways in which men will gain from gender equality. Most if not all contemporary societies are characterised by men’s institutional privilege (Messner 1997), such that men in general receive a ‘patriarchal dividend’, a patriarchal pay-off, from gendered structures of inequality (Connell 1995). However, men can be and are motivated by other interests. There are four important resources in men’s lives for the construction of egalitarian and non-violent identities and relations. There is *personal well-being*: men pay heavy costs for conformity with dominant definitions of masculinity (Messner 1997). There are men’s *relational interests*: men’s care and love for the women and girls in their lives. There are men’s *collective and community interests*. Gender reform benefits the wellbeing of the communities in which men live. For example, our communities benefit from a diminishing of the civil and international violence associated with aggressive constructions of masculinity and patriarchal nation states. Finally, there is *principle*. Men may support gender equality because of their ethical, political, or spiritual commitments.

One of the most significant challenges in work with men is to minimise their reactions of defensiveness and hostility. Many men already feel defensive and blamed about the issue of violence against women. Measures that can lessen men’s defensiveness include approaching males as partners in solving the problem rather than as perpetrators of the problem, addressing men as bystanders to other men’s sexism or violence, creating safe and non-judgmental environments for open discussion and dialogue, using male facilitators, and acknowledging men’s own victimisation (Flood 2005-2006).

### **Educating and changing men**

What works in educating men? A growing body of expertise suggests that the following strategies are useful.

- Use men to engage men: male facilitators and educators, and women and men working together.

Male educators tend to be perceived as more credible and more persuasive by male participants (Flood 2005-2006). They can act as role models for other men, and having men work with men embodies the recognition that men must take responsibility for helping to end gender inequality. At

the same time, having mixed-sex educators is a valuable demonstration to participants of egalitarian working relationships across gender.

- Use all-male groups and workshops.
- Create safe spaces for men to talk and learn.
- Offer programs which are comprehensive, intensive, relevant to the audience, and based on positive messages, and which address cognitive, affective or emotional, and behavioural domains – how men think, how they feel, and what they do.
- Make your interventions culturally appropriate – including sensitivity to *gender* cultures.
- Address culturally specific supports for gender inequality. And draw on local resources and texts in promoting gender equality.

For example, Christian men may defend gender inequality by claiming that male dominance is mandated by God and legitimated in the Bible. This can be undermined by finding *other* Christian accounts which reject such privilege, including Biblical references which state that God created man and woman equally, that a Christian marriage should be a partnership, and so on. Other aspects of this work include placing ‘tradition’ in its social and historical context, showing that ‘tradition’ has varied over time and is shaped by many forces and factors, and inviting assessment of the positive and negative aspects of tradition (Greig and Peacock 2005). A second strategy is to look for and build on local resources, texts, and norms in promoting gender equality.

- Match your intervention to men’s stage of change.

Interventions should be matched to men’s level of awareness about and willingness to take responsibility for problems of violence and gender inequality. First, education programs can take men through different developmental stages over the course of the program. Second, different educational approaches can be used with men who are at different stages of awareness and commitment.

- Use innovative and engaging techniques to foster men’s support for and commitment to gender equality.

These might include exercises in gender reversal or ‘walking in women’s shoes’, listening directly to women’s experiences, local stories and examples, personalising women’s suffering, making comparisons with other forms of inequality or unjust power, drawing on culturally appropriate texts and stories in critiquing gender inequality such as religious texts, local myths and fables, and, on the other hand, using the language of human rights, fairness, justice, and so on.

- Be prepared for, and respond to, resistance.

Acknowledge and work with men’s fears about gender equality, and acknowledge men’s own perceived victimisation.

- Focus on the practical action men can take.

It is essential that our work with men explore the concrete actions that men can take to advance non-violence gender equality. Some of the obvious forms of action men may take up include: Making a commitment to specific changes in their families and personal relations; Telling other men and boys in their communities about their experiences with the program (and this is also a very valuable method of recruitment); Working as peer educators; Presenting the program to other organisations in their communities; And so on.

- Assess the impact of your work.

Systematic evaluation should always be part of our efforts.

### **Mobilising men**

These educational strategies must be part of a broader effort aimed at mobilising men and communities and work towards broader forms of social and political change.

### **Conclusion**

Preventing men's violence against women will require sustained and systematic efforts at the levels of families and relationships, communities, institutions, and societies. Men must be engaged in this work: as participants in education programs, as community leaders, as professionals and providers, and as advocates and activists working in alliance with women. We will only make progress in preventing violence against women if we can change the attitudes, identities, and relations among some men which sustain violence. To stop the physical and sexual assault of women and girls, we must build on the fact that most men do not use violence and that most men, if only privately, believe that such violence is unthinkable. We must erode the cultural and collective supports for violence found among many men and boys and replace them with norms of consent, sexual respect and gender equality. While some men are part of the problem, all men are part of the solution.