



2016: The year of Engaging Men and Boys in stopping gender-based violence

How a school curriculum-based approach can work



Violence against women and girls kills and devastates families and communities worldwide. According to the World Health Organisation,¹ one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence. One in two women killed in 2012 were murdered by a partner or family member.² Sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) leads to serious short and long term effects for both survivors and their families, including depression, loss of income and wages, and a higher risk for children who grow up in violent households of experiencing violence later in life.

Progress to reduce this gender-based violence, however, is possible. CARE is currently working to pilot a school module on gender equality and sexual violence based on successful approaches on tackling GBV developed in the Balkans, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This briefing note explains what CARE is trying to achieve, our experience in the area of engaging men and boys in preventing violence, and why we think this approach has merit. It concludes with recommendations focusing on the role that donors, governments, civil society and education specialists can play to ensure that successes can be replicated and scaled up.

WHY DOES CARE WORK TO RE-FRAME THE VIEW OF MASCULINITY?

CARE's mission is to work towards a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and all people live in dignity and security.³ Central to achieving this is an approach seeking gender equality and a life free from violence – including sexual and gender-based violence – for all women. This is not controversial: it is firmly recognised in development frameworks including the recently launched (September 2015) Global Goals for Sustainable Development. For example, Goal 1 on Ending Poverty (1b), Goal 3 on Healthy Lives (3.4 and 3.7), Goal 4 on Education (4.7), Goal 5 on Gender Equality (5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5c) and Goal 16 on Peaceful and Inclusive Societies (16.1) reaffirm that damaging outcomes for women and girls, including gender-based violence, are sustained by inequalities between men, women, boys and girls.

This has been perpetuated by social norms and attitudes in societies across the world. Unpacking and challenging these attitudes, including what the roles and functions of men and women are in society, and questioning what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, is the entry point to addressing deep-rooted questions of power and gender. Ultimately, CARE believes that work must be done to challenge and re-frame concepts of masculinity that reinforce violence to women.

THREE REASONS FOR ENGAGING WITH MEN AND BOYS

CARE has worked on programmes to engage men and boys for over 15 years, with our approach evolving over time: first focused on reducing gender-based violence and then as a strategy for building gender equality. From 2006-2009, CARE's strategic impact inquiry on women's economic empowerment, which looked at programming in 30 countries, highlighted the importance of working with men and boys as part of a holistic approach.⁴ Evidence showed how focusing on women where men themselves were disempowered could trigger household conflict and violence. Therefore, working with men alongside their female family members helps prevent a backlash from dominant male partners by enabling men to understand how changes in women's roles could have a positive impact on the family, and giving men a chance to adjust to these changes.

Secondly, and more deeply, tackling masculinities directly is also about challenging the idea that violence against anyone – but especially violence based on gender or sexuality – is acceptable. More recent research in Sri Lanka (2013) revealed that 58% of men believe that "It is manly to defend the honour of your family even by violent means",⁵ while 67% who reported perpetrating sexual violence said that they were motivated by sexual entitlement.⁶ This norm is strongly influenced by violent conflict, where masculinities may be militarised and displays of dominance, power and violence are celebrated and rewarded, and persists long after a conflict ends.⁷

This problem-based approach of addressing masculinities to prevent violence against women and girls has more recently been complemented by a third view that men and boys are important allies in achieving gender justice but are largely absent from campaigns and movements.⁸ In truth, rigid gender norms are damaging for men too. Straitjacket ideas of masculinity, often based on aggressive and alpha male characteristics, leave many men failing to make the grade, impacting on their self-esteem and behaviour, and resulting in violence against themselves or their intimate partners.⁹ Risk-taking by men in disasters and emergency situations has also been shown to lead to higher rates of male mortality.¹⁰ The promise of gender equality is not only equity, but also a redefinition of valid gender roles to be much broader and more inclusive than the current narrow idea of men or women.

Throughout these approaches, CARE's work with men and boys is carefully designed to align and intersect with wider women's empowerment and gender equality efforts. While sometimes CARE works with groups of men and women separately, this work is synchronised so that all efforts work towards the common aim of transforming power relations based on gender and providing support for those

most impacted by gender inequality. This is also important for ensuring that men work alongside and in support of women and their leadership, and do not redefine the gender equality movement at the expense of women and LGBT rights organisations.

THE CURRICULUM-BASED APPROACH TO ADDRESSING GBV

Reaching young people is critical to changing behaviours and social norms, and one of the most effective ways of reaching out to children is through the school system.

By their teenage years, many young people are starting to enter into intimate relationships, and may start to play out for the first time the accepted but damaging behaviours they have witnessed in their communities. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) research¹¹ has shown a correlation between men's use of violence against intimate partners and their exposure as a child to violence both against themselves and their family members. It also shows that being involved with violent fights generally is a significant predictor of men ever perpetrating physical violence against a partner,¹² suggesting that programmes and policies reducing violence in general, particularly among youth, may also have an impact in reducing violence specifically against women.

Research by CARE in Sri Lanka¹³ confirmed that reaching young people is critical, showing that:

- Almost one-third of the men who perpetrate sexual violence inclusive of rape do this for the first time between the ages of 15 and 19 years.
- Two-thirds of the sample that perpetrated sexual violence inclusive of rape did so for the first time between the ages of 20 and 29.

School offers a chance to create the space to have a discussion with hard-to-reach young men who might at first be disinterested in discussing gender issues and masculinity. This was underlined at the 48th Session of CEDAW in 2004,¹⁴ where education was identified as a key strategic space for engaging young men and boys. However, education is also a highly contested space and the formal education sector can be very difficult to access and influence. Key actions for organisations such as CARE have been to:

- Lobby for the reform of school materials and curricula to be gender sensitive.
- Promote new notions of masculinity associated with non-violence, respect and equality.
- Work with men who do not perpetrate violence against women as allies in prevention interventions.

This fits within the framework CARE uses for its engaging men and boys work of moving through individual levels of personal sensitisation and awareness, before moving into the public space for mobilising community change and broader advocacy.¹⁵

Government adoption of the curriculum-based approach in the Balkans

One of the most successful uses of the curriculum-based approach to engaging men and boys has been in the Balkans. Since 2006 CARE has been working through schools to address a culture of violence among young men, including attitudes condoning sexual violence. CARE's Young Men Initiative¹⁶ adapted Promundo's Program H curriculum¹⁷ in four countries in the region. Renamed Program M, the approach has engaged with 13-19 year olds in school and in after-school clubs to give young men the skills to develop healthy relationships based on gender equality and to address all forms of violence in their everyday life. The extensive 20-hour syllabus is delivered over two school years and covers themes such as: expressing emotions; power and relationships; fatherhood and men and caregivers; sexual and reproductive health; health and HIV/AIDS; understanding violence and managing anger; and substance abuse.

To date more than 25,000 young men have been reached through the YMI, including through active social media campaigns, theatre productions and rap music. Evaluations have shown improvements in awareness, attitudes and intentions around violence. One controlled pilot showed that before the intervention, a minority (48%) did not condone using violence against an unfaithful partner; this rose to 73% after the intervention.¹⁸ The same research also showed that after the intervention, 58% rejected the idea that physical strength was the key determinant of masculinity, compared to just 31% before.¹⁹

Upcoming research shows that while the programme is successful where teachers deliver the content, the highest success rates were found when youth facilitators worked in schools, and when participants attended the after-school clubs at the same time. This gave them greater exposure to the content, but also created positive group dynamics and role models that they could use to support their changing attitudes and behaviour in wider society. Change is not easy, and the after-school clubs were able in particular to give the students space to question the stereotypes or dominant norms in their community.

Based on the accumulating evidence of success of this intervention, the governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo have incorporated elements of the approach in their national curricula.

ADAPTING THE APPROACH TO THE GREAT LAKES REGION OF AFRICA

Following the successful testing of the model in the Balkans and the uptake by their national governments, CARE has received support to try the approach as a strategy to prevent sexual and gender-based violence in the DRC and Burundi. In a three-year pilot that ends in 2016, CARE has conducted action research with experts and youth aged 13-23 in and out of school to adapt Program M²⁰ and the original Promundo methodology, taking into account the large number of young people who are not engaged in full time education. One-third of the nearly 4,000 young people involved in the project are young women, reflecting the importance of how ideas of masculinity and femininity are created both between and within the sexes.

Some of the initial research findings identified how gender norms were portrayed in this context, with strong negative stereotyping of women, an emphasis on strength and virility as characteristics of masculinity, and a tolerance for some forms of violence particularly in the home (see box).

The research served to illustrate the prevalence of destructive attitudes, and gender inequality. However, it also showed that diverse views were held by young people and this, along with their interest in discussing topics seen as taboo, gives an entry point for engagement. The young people were open to the notion of changing gender norms, even if they wanted to hold onto certain attitudes that remain unequal, such as the submission of a woman to her husband. Clearly it will take more than a few hours of conversation to change attitudes, but change is possible.

The young people interviewed confirmed that the school environment was a powerful influence on how young people behave, whether for good or for bad. Crucially, however, school was seen as a relatively safe community space – and so could be an enabling environment for work to challenge gender norms and attitudes.

The curriculum module that has been designed and is being tested is built on these real power dynamics and social norms held between the sexes in the region. The content is divided into four themes: gender equality; gender and power; youth violence and prevention; and sexual and reproductive health and HIV. Each theme has multiple workshops. In line with CARE's approach, girls as well as boys have been actively involved in its creation, and indeed girls have been trained as facilitators to deliver the content to their female peers. The module allows for work with mixed and single sex groups, and is aimed at effecting changes at the individual, group and community level. Now, when young people engage outside of school, they do so in mixed groups, and the boys march under the banner of women's rights seeking gender equality.

Young male attitudes to gender and violence in Eastern DRC: A snapshot

Researchers ran focus groups with 15 young men attending school and another 15 young men not in education in Goma, DRC. In both groups, attitudes about idealised types of men and women were very similar. The woman works at home, and obeys her husband; her value is based on her physical attractiveness to men; she is less bright than a man, is quiet and cries easily, but is also quicker to forgive. By contrast an ideal man is strong, has a beard, is creative and is naturally superior to women, controlling his sisters as a boy and making decisions over women as an adult. Examples of cultural perceptions of gender differences extended to the idea that girls should be given more chores than boys, with girls with leisure time criticised as lazy and ill-prepared for marriage.

Reflecting on the levels and forms of violence in their community, the research revealed that for the young people violence of various types is a day to day occurrence. Participants acknowledged the impact that witnessing violence had had on others, with one giving the example of how a young 8-year-old boy in the region who witnessed the rape and murder of his mother by armed groups, was caught attempting to rape another young girl in turn.

Violence was seen as harmful in all instances except when it came to intimate partner violence. Half of the participants interviewed agreed that men had an entitlement to sex with their wife, while a majority of participants thought that hitting a woman was a means of educating her in general, and that sexual harassment was part of teaching a girl her role in life as she is growing up.

Burundi: A systemic approach

In Burundi, CARE is implementing the adapted Program M curriculum modules alongside another larger programme which will look at comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education, including the implementation of the government-approved The World Starts With Me curriculum in over 1,000 schools. This will be delivered alongside improved SRH services, and creating a supportive and enabling environment in schools, families and communities. This five-year consortium project will run from December 2015. In partnership with UNFPA, Rutgers and Cordaid, it takes a more systemic approach to tackling norms within a change in structures and services. Evidence from both initiatives will be used to build support for the permanent inclusion of gender, non-violence and masculinities content in school teaching.

2016: THE YEAR OF ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Since September 2014, CARE has been piloting the adapted Program M modules in some 300 schools and out-of-school clubs in Burundi and the DRC to see if some of the same changes we observed in the Balkans can be replicated in the Great Lakes region. There are still some key things we do not know:

- What is the right mix between in-school and out-of-school activities, and what kind of supportive social media outreach is most effective in the region? This is key for understanding how much influence school-based activities have within the broader web of relationships and influences experienced by young people.
- How can we best amplify the voices of young men championing gender equality, while maintaining a focus on the rights of women and girls?
- What is the long term effect of the intervention on young male attitudes, and perhaps most importantly on their subsequent behaviour?

As the pilot project comes to an end in early 2016, the data will be evaluated and shared with civil society activists, local authorities and relevant ministries at the national level. We will lack the longitudinal research to conclusively show changes in long term behaviour, but where the evidence points to early success, the key goal will be to see interested governments in the region either scale up the approach by certifying the school module for use in their national curriculum, or take the evidence alongside their other programming to build the case for the permanent inclusion of gender, non-violence and masculinities in the national curriculum.

At the community level, youth who have completed the module will be active in 'Be A Man' campaigns to engage other youth and men to take part and become champions for gender equality. In 2016, this work could sit alongside international campaigns such as UNWomen's HeforShe and the MenEngage Alliance's MenCare campaign, making 2016 the year of engaging men and boys for gender equality and mobilising men and boys as allies against gender-based violence. CARE welcomes synergies with other groups pushing for similar outcomes and looks forward to conversations on bringing these efforts together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our experience in the Balkans and the first interventions in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, CARE recommends:

Donors and international institutions focused on stopping sexual and gender-based violence

- Balance their strategies to address the prevention of violence as well as the response. As part of prevention, donors should invest in tackling the social norms, attitudes and values that normalise and justify gender-based violence, especially among young men.
- Ensure that their education programming funds more than just school attendance, and instead looks at curricula and the school environment from a gender perspective to tackle harmful gender stereotypes.
- While maintaining funding for women's rights organisations and women's leadership initiatives, add additional funding for specific programmes such as curriculum approaches that target men and boys for GBV reduction. As part of this approach, support training for teachers to discuss comprehensive sexual education with youth.

Governments

- National and local authorities should ensure time is given in school for youth to be engaged in a discussion about gender roles, healthy sexual relationships, positive masculinities and femininities, violence prevention and gender equality. The curriculum approach is one method that should be considered, including the training of teachers to deliver the classroom-based modules.
- Governments should scale up and learn from successful pilot programmes addressing GBV. For example, the DRC and Burundi governments should look at the evidence from the pilot programme in their countries and move to either certify the module for use in schools nationally, or build its content into other approaches that engage with youth on gender, sex education and non-violence.
- Beyond the curriculum, governments should look at ways to bridge the gap between the classroom and home life, and look to reinforce more equal gender norms in the community activities of other public bodies.

Academic institutions

- Researchers engaged in preventing sexual and gender-based violence should conduct longitudinal research into school-based approaches, such as CARE's work in the Balkans, to follow up on young men several years after their engagement in the programme and observe any sustained changes that may have resulted.

NOTES

All URLs accessed November 2015.

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³ CARE International (2014) CARE 2020 Program Strategy, <http://www.careinternational.org.uk/sites/default/files/CARE-2020-Program-Strategy-English.pdf>

⁴ CARE International (2009) Strategic impact inquiry: Women's empowerment and engaging men, <http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/2009-SII-Womens-Empowerment-and-Engaging-Men-Brief.pdf>

⁵ Neloufer de Mel, Pradeep Peiris, Shyamala Gomez (2013) Broadening gender: Why masculinities matter – Attitudes, practices and gender-based violence in four districts in Sri Lanka, CARE International Sri Lanka, p4, http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/Broadening-Gender_Why-Masculinities-Matter.pdf

⁶ *Ibid*, p47

⁷ Saferworld (2014) Masculinities and peacebuilding: A policy and programming agenda, <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/masculinities-and-peacebuilding-pages.pdf>

⁸ For more on how CARE engages men and boys and the theory behind our approach, see CARE International (2014) Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality Series, Brief 1: Stories of engagement, <http://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/engaging-men-and-boys-for-gender-equality-series-stories-of-engagement-brief-1>, and Brief 2: Lessons learnt, <http://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/engaging-men-and-boys-for-gender-equality-series-lessons-learnt-brief-2>

⁹ *Ibid*; see also Saferworld (2014) *op cit*, p5, on 'Thwarted' masculinities

¹⁰ Sawai, M (undated), Who is vulnerable during tsunamis? Experiences from the Great East Japan Earthquake 2011 and the Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/IDD-DRS-who-is-vulnerable-during-tsunamis.pdf>

¹¹ Promundo (2009-14) International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), <http://promundoglobal.org/programs/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images/>

¹² See Fleming, P, Barker, G, McCleary-Sills, J, and Morton, M (2013) Engaging men and boys in advancing women's agency: Where we stand and new directions, World Bank, p4, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2013/11/18486236/engaging-men-boys-advancing-womens-agency-stand-new-directions>

¹³ Empowering Men to Engage and Redefine Gender Equality (EMERGE) Project, CARE Sri Lanka; see Neloufer de Mel *et al* (2013), *op cit*

¹⁴ United Nations (2004) Women's Commission adopts agreed conclusions on men's role in achieving gender equality, women's equal participation in conflict prevention, Press release, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2004/wom1447.doc.htm>

¹⁵ CARE International (2014) Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality Series, *op cit*

¹⁶ <http://www.youngmeninitiative.net/en/>; see also CARE (2012) The Young Men Initiative – A case study 2012: Engaging young men in the Western Balkans in gender equality and violence prevention, http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/YE-2012-Balkans_Young_Mens_Initiative.pdf

¹⁷ <http://promundoglobal.org/programs/program-h/>

¹⁸ Young Men Initiative, CARE International and ICRW/International Center for Research on Women (2014) Be a man, change the rules! Findings and lessons from seven years of CARE International Balkans' Young Men Initiative, p10, http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/YMI_ExecutiveSummary_2013-WEB-PREVIEW.pdf

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p8

²⁰ CARE International (2011) Program M: Young Men's Manual: A training manual for educators and youth workers, <http://www.youngmeninitiative.net/?id=59>

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Cover photo: Young men participating in a march against GBV during the '16 Days of Activism against GBV' campaign in the DRC, December 2014

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CARE International UK
89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7TP
www.careinternational.org.uk
Registered charity number 292506