

ALiGN

**Advancing Learning and
Innovation on Gender Norms**



Gender norms and masculinities

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1. Introduction and key concepts

Meaningful engagement with men and boys is critical to advancing gender equality and equity, and is increasingly recognized in international development. There is a growing realisation that gender and its norms affect both girls and boys, men and women.

The [International Center for Research on Women \(ICRW\)](#) 2018 report on [Gender Equity and Male Engagement notes that](#) men and women live within, uphold, are harmed by, and can transform, patriarchal power structures. This does not imply that they are harmed equally by patriarchy, nor does it down-plays the patriarchal power and privileges held by men. A 2014 [MenEngage Alliance, UNFPA, and UN Women discussion paper](#) states that while men usually have more agency than women, their own decisions and behaviours are shaped – and profoundly – by rigid social and cultural expectations related to masculinity.

As noted in the 2009 [First Global MenEngage Symposium report](#), gender both creates and generates a complex social system of power imbalances that constrains the rights and choices of girls, boys, women and men. It urges us to examine the costs that men and women pay as a result for patriarchal social and gender norms and to leverage men as agents of change to challenge the structures, beliefs, practices, and institutions that sustain men’s privileges.

This thematic guide brings together evidence to unpack the concepts around gender norms and masculinities across a number of key themes.

- The factors that lead to changes in masculinities
- Overall insights from programme approaches
- The ‘what’ and ‘how’ of male engagement across key areas:
 - Violence against women and girls
 - Health
 - Unpaid care work
 - Women’s economic empowerment
 - Education
 - Lessons learned from programmes
- Measuring changes in norms of masculinity
- Programme toolkits.
- Case study

Key concepts

Equality and equity often are used interchangeably, yet they are distinct concepts. Gender equality is defined as the same treatment of all people regardless of their gender identity; while gender equity refers to the creation of conditions of fairness that consider the diversity of all people across all genders and identities – not despite their gender, but in *response* to their gender. As such, gender equity is a pre-requisite for gender equality.

As well as disadvantaging women, gender norms and power dynamics also expect men to take risks, be violent, endure pain, be tough, be providers, mask their emotions, not seek help, be sexually active and aggressive, to be (or appear to be) heterosexual, and drink alcohol, as noted in the 2015 [EMERGE Evidence Report](#).

Men experience the pressure to be 'real men' and to live up to the prevailing standards of masculinity by which men assess themselves and others. Some of the prevailing standards of masculinity have been organised by [Promundo](#) into what they call a 'Man Box'. The pressure to fit into the 'man box' has an impact on men's satisfaction with their lives, their self-confidence, physical and mental health, friendship and support-seeking, and their body image. It can result in risky behaviours, bullying and violence. These standards differ across societies and there are several local variations, but there are common threads running through them on what it means to be a 'real man'.

In many societies, men still feel that their main role in the family is that of the breadwinner. When this role is taken away from them for some reason, it can threaten their identity and make them feel incompetent ([Barker, 2011](#)) The 2011 [International Men and Gender Equality Survey \(IMAGES\) study](#), found that a high percentage of men, ranging from 34 percent in Brazil to 88 percent in Mexico reported feeling stress or depression because they did not have enough income or enough work. The IMAGES study also found that men who reported stress because they had no job or not enough work were more likely to report depression, have suicidal thoughts, report having been arrested, and report the use of violence against their intimate partners.

Men's health is another area where gender-related vulnerabilities are clearly visible (see [Ragonese et al. \(2019\) and the ALiGN guide on this issue](#)). [WHO's 2000 review](#) on the health and development of adolescent boys shows that, in general, boys and young men show higher rates of mortality as a result of violence, accidents and suicide, while girls and young women show higher rates of morbidity caused by sexual and reproductive health issues.

Men have a disproportionate share of the overall disease burden as a result of ill health, according to recent data on Disability Adjusted Life Years ([DALY](#)), a measure of the burden expressed as the number of years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death (see [Verma and Kedia, 2018](#)). Much of this disease burden stems from health problems linked to the gender socialisation of boys and men around tobacco use and alcohol consumption, road traffic injuries and violence.

The roles of boys and men change over the course of their lives and the influence of these roles on men's actions and practices changes with time and context. ICRW's 2010 report '[The Girl Effect: What Do Boys Have to Do with It?](#)' presents the following overview of the links between developmental stages, behaviours and their implications on men and boys and related programming (an area explored in this guide below).

	Social development	Sources of influence	Where to reach them	Implications for programmes	Key indicators
Early adolescence	Increased awareness of social norms around gender; rejection of 'feminine' behaviours or roles; growing importance of sports and/or competition; less able to engage in abstract thinking	Parents particularly important; teachers; coaches	Schools, as almost all attend in some capacity; sports programmes; other youth programmes	School and sports-based programming is likely to be more effective at reaching youth; parental buy-in is crucial; programmes should focus on normative aspects of gender	Understanding of social construction of gender norms and identities; identifying gender stereotypes; equal valuation of masculine and feminine traits and roles
Middle adolescence	Increased individual independence; strengthening personal relationships with male peers; initial romantic relationships; sexual initiation and exploration; beginning to exhibit abstract thinking skills	Peers replace parents as main source of influence (particularly male); romantic partners become more important	School, though this may become less effective; sports programmes; community centres catering to young males (e.g. video game centres, Internet cafes, etc.)	Working with peer groups is particularly important; sports or other shared activities may be useful as entry points; increased emphasis on intimate/sexual relationships	Increased desire/ability to challenge gender stereotypes; ability to express sexuality in a manner free of stereotypes; ability to express emotions in positive and non-violent ways; de-objectification of women.
Late adolescence	Established romantic relationships; sexually active; increased pressure to be economically independent	Romantic partners become more influential; peers continue to be important, but less so than in middle adolescence and smaller peer groups tend to predominate	Workplace becomes more important; community centres catering to older male youth (e.g. bars, sports centres)	Working through employers may be a useful entry point; understanding the dynamic between romantic partners and peers is important; focus on the nature of intimate relationships particularly important	Self-esteem not tied as closely to stereotypical male outcomes (number of sexual partners, aggression, fathering children, or being sole breadwinner); increased intimate partner violence (IPV); self-esteem more oriented towards provider role; more emotionally supportive relationships (both in partnerships and with peers)

The way in which gender norms play out in an individual's life is shaped by structural factors and the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in which they live. According to [ICRW and Promundo's 2010 report](#), published as a part of the [Men and Gender Equality Project](#), gender norms may vary across local contexts and interact with socio-cultural factors, including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, age sexuality and ability. This is emphasised in ICRW's 2018 report on [Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#), which argues that men do not have a homogenous experience of male privilege. Men from low-income and minority groups experience relatively low power and status, even though they may still have power over the women and children in their households. The way men experience masculinity, therefore, varies in different socio-economic contexts.

While working with men and boys to challenge gender norms, the context-specific needs and vulnerabilities of boys and men who belong to excluded or marginalised groups, including migrants, boys and men who live in conflict areas, boys and men who identify as LGBTQI+, boys and men who belong to socially excluded ethnic groups, must be considered. Boys and men who belong to such groups deal with a marked contradiction: they are told they are part of a dominant group (male), yet their context, which does not meet the standards of the dominant group, creates a sense that they lack this privilege ([Kaufman, 1999](#)).

2. Factors that influence norms around masculinities

Gender norms do not form or change in isolation. As noted in the [EMERGE 2015 brief on Engendering Men](#), men's support for gender equality and the extent of changes in norms of masculinity vary according to context and the roles men play: within families and social relationships; in the community as religious or cultural leaders; in the workplace as bosses and employees; as political representatives; or as teachers, doctors and other professionals (see [ICRW's 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#)). Men relate to, and can change their stance on, gender equality and women's empowerment depending upon where they are and the role they are playing. Understanding these locations and contexts is crucial if we are to change gender norms.

Changing norms is extremely challenging. Given the benefits that patriarchy bestows on men, it follows that gender equality requires men to lose their unfair privileges – a complex and dynamic process. At an individual level, it can be difficult for men (and women) to transform beliefs and practices that they have learnt from childhood. In addition, the desire and ability of men and boys (and women's) to change depends on their broader contexts and the messages they receive from their surrounding about gender norms.

A [MenEngage and UNFPA Advocacy brief](#) argues that men can be motivated to question their deeply held beliefs by appealing to their sense of social justice and by demonstrating the change they need to make. The challenge, however, is how to speed up such change remains.

A 2014 [MenEngage Alliance, UNFPA, and UN Women discussion paper](#) notes that men's support for gender equality is shaped by multiple and sometimes conflicting factors. It is sometimes based on self-

interest, or men's concern for their own personal well-being and relationships. It may be rooted in potentially patriarchal attitudes about protection, where men see themselves as 'gatekeepers' who exercise power in nearly every sphere of life. It may, however, be linked to a sense of gender justice and universal human rights. It is crucial to understand these multiple factors and to note that they are not mutually exclusive.

Changes in gender norms happen in diverse ways, with many drivers at individual, community and the institutional levels. Change may be rapid and overt, or slow (see [Boudet et al., 2013](#)). It may be easier to change norms on a smaller scale, within the home or community, than changing the same norm across an entire country or culture. Such small-scale change can be achieved through targeted programming, while norm change at a larger scale requires policy changes, as well as social and political mobilisation (including through the media and social media).

Small-scale change may, however, influence norm change at a larger scale. For example, if more men take on a greater share of caregiving tasks at home, it can create a shift in broader expectations of what men can and should do, and have an impact on the next generation of boys (see [Marcus and Harper, 2014](#)).

As well as being influenced by context and role, gender norms are also influenced by international and national social, economic and political processes and trends (see [Marcus and Harper, 2014](#)). These can either aid or constrain the positive changes made in gender norms and masculinities. As noted in the 2015 [EMERGE Evidence Report](#), they include technological development, demographic changes, globalization, migration, growing education, situations of conflicts, right-wing populism and religious fundamentalism, among others.

The [IMAGES survey](#) shows that changes in attitudes to support gender equality are more apparent among younger men, those with higher levels of education and those who live in urban areas. There are exceptions, however: more recent [IMAGES research in the Middle East](#) shows the opposite trend, with young men having more rigid attitudes than their fathers. The [EMERGE Evidence Report](#) summarizes how some such trends can influence gender norms.

- Women's earning and control over their income and ownership of assets has been associated with lower levels of domestic violence, and higher levels of decision-making power and mobility. However, women's economic empowerment may also be met with resistance as it challenges established social norms. This may lead to increasing violence from men in the household, as well as a double burden for women of continuing domestic and unpaid care work on top of their paid work.
- Peace-building and post-conflict situations provide a unique opportunity for governments to codify gender equality and engage men thoughtfully in the process. At the same time, there can be pressures to revert to pre-conflict roles once men are 'back from fighting'. Here, it is also important to note [women's exclusion from official peace building processes](#).

- Broad shifts in population growth (declining population growth rate) and fertility (reduced fertility rates, particularly among adolescent girls) have been associated with higher rates of education for girls and women, increased access to contraception and health services, opportunities to pursue activities beyond reproduction and greater labour force participation.
- Migration can be associated with progressive shifts in gender norms. Men and women who from their homes tend to have less contact with their extended families, more access to education, and live in more diverse settings, enabling them to diverge from traditional norms. At the same time, however, migrants may face poor conditions, insecure housing, a lack of social and political support and a lack of employment. This heightens the risks to women of sexual violence, poor reproductive health services and outcomes and isolation, while putting greater pressure on men when they are unable to 'provide'.
- The rise of conservatism and religious fundamentalism is a critical concern worldwide and has a major impact on gender norms. [A 2007 survey by the Association for Women's Rights in Development](#) found that 76% of women's rights activists see had seen an increase in religious fundamentalism over the previous 10 years. Fundamentalism reinforces patriarchy, gender inequality and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It may curb the rights for women by restricting their sexual freedom, economic autonomy, participation in public life; curtail their sexual and reproductive rights, and increase their vulnerability to violence. Religious fundamentalism may also increase the pressure on boys and men to be 'masculine' through enforcement of compulsory heterosexuality, dress codes, and support or participation in armed groups (see [Balchin et al., 2011](#)). It can also be embedded in institutions, such as health and education systems, that then deny services to women and girls.
- The media, including social media, is a strong channel for messages on gender norms and roles. They can often perpetuate unrealistic and stereotypical images of what it means to be a woman or a man and what a relationship between men and women should look like. Their influence often perpetuates certain message about gender norms, making it difficult for men and women to question these norms. However, the media can be very powerful in generating debate when they challenge accepted ways of thinking and behaving. The debates generated after [a recent Gillette advertisement](#) that promotes a new kind of positive masculinity is a case in point.

Actions that change gender norms often meet resistance, as noted in the 2015 [EMERGE Evidence Report](#). This can result in a backlash from those in positions of power (often from men who benefit from patriarchal structures, but also from women) and can include moves to preserve traditional gender norms by reversing the progress made to promote gender equality (see [Boudet et al., 2013](#)).

Resistance may include imposing obstacles to rights, employment, curtailing sexual and reproductive autonomy, refusing to take on equal parenting responsibilities and the use of violence (see [Alvarez Minte, 2013](#)). This backlash can even come from those who are the most marginalized. Among men, sometimes the struggle to find work and the pressure to provide for the family can cause a backlash against gender equality. This can be exacerbated by rising economic and social pressures due to rapid

urbanization and migration, growing inequalities and increased instability due to climate-related shocks. Men may question norms in public, but they may also simply accept them in order to get ahead.

Changes in gender norms can be contradictory. For example, parents may encourage daughters to play sport, but many find it unsettling when their sons want to play with dolls. There are more incentives for girls and women to act in ways seen as stereotypically masculine than there are for boys and men to act in ways seen as feminine. As a result, men and boys are still dealing with tremendous pressure to be 'men' from a very young age, which contributes to their poor physical and mental health (see [Verma and Kedia, 2018](#)).

3. Initiating changes in masculinities and related norms

What helps to initiate change in masculinities and related norms?

Laws, policies and international and national agreements provide a key impetus and foundation for norm change. International bodies and the international community have reiterated the need to engage men and boys as a part of the global gender equality agenda. Although this agenda is not uniform and does not enjoy universal endorsement, it is encapsulated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ([CEDAW, 1979](#)), the International Conference on Population and Development ([ICPD, 1994](#)), the [Beijing Platform for Action \(1995\)](#), [the Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs, 2000\)](#), the [UN Commission on the Status of Women \(2004\)](#) and now the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs, 2015](#)).

Development practitioners suggest that male engagement in programmes for gender equality also has its genesis more than 20 years ago in efforts to address violence, as well as public health work on HIV/AIDS. Gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women and girls are also key motivators for working with men. The argument is that gender relations cannot be transformed if men are not engaged in that transformation. [ICRWs' 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#) states that '*If women are becoming empowered but the men are being left behind (either in terms of programming or in terms of gender norms/attitude changes), women may be unintentionally put at risk.*'

Alongside gender equality and women's empowerment, the enhancement of men's own well-being is another motivator for their greater involvement in changes in gender relations. To convince men to join an intervention on gender, interventions can also highlight how working for gender equality is in their best interest and can improve their lives and relationships. Other good entry points include promoting the benefits of gender equality for their health, family dynamics and relationships with their children and the satisfaction this can bring. However, it is equally important to talk about the negative impact of gender imbalances in their lives, and in the world, and the need to change them. As a result, programmes need to strike a balance between focusing on positive outcomes and holding men accountable for the changes that are needed. The work of the [MenEngage Alliance](#) attempts to strike just such a balance.

Approaches to engaging boys and men to enhance gender equality and equity

Programming to support male engagement falls along a spectrum that includes approaches that do no harm (gender-neutral), approaches that are gender-sensitive, and approaches that are gender-transformative (see [Gupta, 2000](#)).

- Gender-neutral approaches do not distinguish between the needs of women and men and do not engage with gender roles and norms. They promote messages that are not targeted to any one sex, such as general health messaging around 'safe sex'. Other examples include health treatment and care services that do not consider the specific needs of women, such as their need for female health professionals and counsellors.
- Gender-sensitive programming recognizes and responds to the different needs and constraints of individuals based on their gender. Examples include providing women with female health workers and counsellor because that will make them feel more comfortable. Gender-sensitive programmes do not, however, change any larger contextual issues and cannot fundamentally alter the balance of power in gender relations (see [EMERGE Evidence Report, 2015](#)).
- Gender-transformative programming tries to transform unequal gender norms and the resulting behaviours and attitudes and create more gender-equitable relationships. The past decade has seen a burgeoning of such approaches. Two excellent examples are the [Men as Partners or MAP project](#) by the Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa and [the Stepping Stones programme](#). Both work with young men and women to redefine gender norms and encourage healthy sexuality.

A 2014 [MenEngage Alliance, UNFPA, and UN Women discussion paper](#) notes that engaging men for gender equality is conceptualised in three ways:

- As **gatekeepers** who hold power in society and uphold inequitable patriarchal norms. Their involvement is, therefore, seen as necessary to change women's lives.
- As **allies or partners** in the struggle for gender equality and equity -- although this does not place enough emphasis on role or stake of men and boys in gender equality or on how their lives will benefit (despite the loss of privileges).
- As **stakeholders and co-beneficiaries** in creating gender equality and equity: this focuses more explicitly on what men and boys will gain from more equitable families and societies.

ICRW's conceptual framework on male engagement programming for gender equity, ([ICRWs' 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#)) advocates for the engagement of men and boys as stakeholders and co-beneficiaries. It stresses that their engagement is about recognizing how social norms of power and gender affect men and women as individuals, in their relationships with each other, and in the structures and institutions that organize societies. This approach allows men to understand and advocate for the benefits of gender equity that both men and women will enjoy.

4. The 'what' and 'how' of male engagement across key areas

Violence against women and girls (VAWG)

[One woman in three \(and in some countries more than two-thirds\)](#) of women have experienced violence, usually from an intimate partner – statistics that have changed little in recent decades. Most violence against women and girls is perpetrated by men.

There is a growing recognition among practitioners that engaging men and boys is critical to preventing and addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG). This is because (see [Flood, 2015](#)):

- men (and to some extent, boys) are also the principal perpetrators of violence against women and girls
- violence against women is driven by norms of masculinity that subordinate women and that condone or even demand violence, with a man considered weak or 'unmanly' if he doesn't respond with violence in certain situations
- ending violence has direct and indirect benefits for men, helping them challenge the pressure to be 'strong' and 'in control' and work to support the well-being of their female loved ones.

The [ICRWs' 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#) also notes that, on a practical level, it makes sense to work with men to end VAWG, because they tend to hold positions of power in male-dominated societies and have, therefore, the power to address VAWG and gender equity in public policy and institutions, both formal and informal. In addition, when women experience violence and interact with local institutions, they may well encounter male service providers or officials. The engagement of these men is, therefore, vital to ensure women's access to care and justice. Finally, engaging and sensitising men on VAWG may help to prevent a backlash – which could itself be violent – in reaction to women's greater agency and empowerment in other sectors (i.e., education or financial independence).

Most programmes for male engagement in efforts to end VAWG aim to shift norms at the individual and community level, with only limited work on male engagement in VAWG prevention at the institutional and policy levels. Programmes at the individual level aim to change the attitudes and behaviours of individual men and boys, focusing on the relationships between men and women and promoting non-violent relationships. They work with individuals or couples in one-to-one or group settings.

Group-based gender education and reflection is the approach used most commonly to change VAWG-related attitudes and behaviours at the level of the individual, couple or household. Another common approach is working directly with male perpetrators to change their behaviours and attitudes toward women (see [MenEngage, Promundo, Rutgers WPF, and MenCare+ briefing](#)). In Lebanon, for example, the [ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality](#) runs a men's centre that provides voluntary and confidential counselling for men (see [ICRWs' 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#)). In South Africa, [Mosaic](#) also counsels couples.

The evidence on the effectiveness of group-based gender education and reflection is mixed. While these programmes are generally considered effective in changing men's attitudes towards VAWG, it is not clear whether the change in attitude they express translates into actual changes in their behaviour.

Programmes that target young men and boys, particularly those who have grown up in violent homes or communities, can also be effective in addressing VAWG (see [Contreras et al., 2012](#)). The Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) programme review on '[Programming with adolescent boys to promote gender equitable masculinities](#)' shows that VAWG was a common focus for programmes working with adolescent boys and young men. Such programmes aim to prevent VAWG in the next generation while changing the norms, attitudes and behaviour of boys who are old enough to be in intimate relationships. These programmes matter because they help to change the behaviour of boys towards their sisters, other family members and classmates as demonstrated by the [Gender Equity Movement in Schools \(GEMS\)](#).

One common strategy for reaching boys and young men is to combine VAWG prevention and gender equality programming with other social activities, particularly sports and residential trips. For example, [ICRW's Parivartan Programme](#) in Mumbai, India, used sports to question norms that encourage VAWG.

The [Young Men Initiative](#) in the Balkans and Khanyisa in South Africa used residential trips as a way to help boys focus on these issues. [Rozan's Humaqadam](#) programme in Pakistan has also integrated games of cricket and cinema trips into its strategy.

Such strategies strengthen bonds among boys and enable them to share their experiences and question established gender norms around violence and the way in which they treat their female peers and relatives. This collective sharing and listening prepares them to stand up to conventional norms around VAWG and is highlighted in the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) programme review on '[Programming with adolescent boys to promote gender-equitable masculinities](#)'.

Community-based approaches to engaging men on VAWG aim to change community norms around violence (see the [Practice Brief by the Prevention Collaborative](#) on Strengthening Prevention Work with Men and Boys in Community Settings). These approaches also use reflective group education and dialogue (see the [Young Men Initiative case-study, 2012](#)). For example, Women for Women International ([WfWI](#)) programming in the Democratic Republic of Congo used a gender-synchronised approach that begins with separate all-male and all-female community discussion groups, which later come together in community dialogue sessions where both sexes hear from each other and develop community action on VAWG (see [ICRWs' 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#)).

Community based approaches also target male leaders who play a critical role in changing gender norms. The [SASA! Programme](#) that started in Uganda and is now global works with an array of community stakeholders to address VAWG (see [video](#)). Such approaches are also increasingly working with men as bystanders: men who are present when violence occurs but who do not take part in it. These men may hold more equitable views but may be wary of speaking out, so programmatic approaches include building their skills and capacity to intervene when they witness violence or the

expression of violent and sexist beliefs, and to share a more positive view on masculinity (see the USAID study on engaging men to end VAWG, 2015). Their engagement can help to reduce the tolerance and perpetuation of VAWG.

There is evidence that such programmes can change men's attitudes towards VAWG as noted [in a multi-country intervention and impact evaluation study](#), but there is limited evidence to show whether the reported change in attitudes translates into actual change in behaviour, as noted in a [2015 USAID study](#). While some research points to positive outcomes and reduced rates of violence, high rates of attrition are a concern: many men who participate in these programmes do not complete them (see [Ricardo et al., 2011](#)).

The mass media are also used to question norms about VAWG. Media campaigns may seek to make public spaces safer for women by encouraging men to speak out against instances of public violence, hold public figures accountable for violent actions or statements, call for policies and initiatives to prevent VAWG and promote non-violent conceptions of masculinity. Male role models and celebrities can champion non-violent and equitable perspectives. Organizations like the [Puntos de Encuentro](#) in Nicaragua and [Voices for Change](#) in Nigeria are examples the programmatic use of mass media to tackle VAWG through television programmes, radio shows and online campaigns using an 'edutainment' approach: entertaining people while delivering a particular message.

Health

Women and girls continue to lack access to essential health services and information worldwide, and pregnancy and childbirth remain a leading cause of deaths among girls aged 15–19 in low and middle-income countries (see [Patton et al., 2009](#)).

Male engagement in the health sector is an established way to work with men to change gender norms. A woman's sexual and reproductive health is often inexorably linked to that of a man, and men are often the key decision makers when it comes to the health of girls and women. It is crucial, therefore, to engage men to improve health outcomes for girls and women, for households and for communities.

In the past, the health interventions aimed to engage men in family planning programmes, with the goal of preventing HIV/AIDS. Over time, this focus has expanded to include men as a part of interventions to uphold sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), aiming to increase contraception uptake, promote birth spacing, to promote healthy and consensual sexual behaviour and to strengthen maternal and child health programmes.

Like initiatives for VAWG, health programmes engage men in many ways. Some work with young boys and adolescents (see [Kato-Wallace et al., 2016](#)); some with adult men, either as partners, male family members, or traditional and religious leaders; and others work with male community members more generally. Given a specific sector focus (i.e. health) male engagement in health programming has also targeted institutions and policies by building the capacity of service providers, local governments, and institutions and forming partnerships with local NGOs.

Health programmes work with men and women, boys and girls at multiple levels and together or separately. One key focus of many health programmes is norm and behaviour change communication for family and community members. These programmes encourage boys, men, girls and women to reflect on the related implications of gender norms on health behaviours (both positive and negative). In addition, programmes often focus on promoting more equitable communication and decision making around family planning.

Health programmes that engage men have shown promising results across a variety of health outcomes (see [Barker et al., 2010](#)). Research has also shown that engaging men in family planning interventions can increase gender equality and lead to positive health outcomes for both sexes (see [FHI 360, 2012](#)). In Uttar Pradesh, India, for example, [research](#) has found a positive correlation between contraceptive use and men who hold gender-equitable attitudes towards women. Studies have also shown that male engagement in HIV/AIDS programming leads to an increase in the percentage seeking treatment and adhering to treatment regimes (see [Mokganyetji et Al., 2015](#)).

Health programmes that work with men may have an impact across a range of gender norms that go beyond health itself (see [Muralidharan et Al., 2015](#)) to reduce the perpetration of violence by young men, increase action against early marriage by religious leaders and enhance communication between partners, men's contribution to household chores, sexual and emotional intimacy and so on.

Brothers for Life, a national programme in South Africa, is one such example (see [Sonke Gender Justice](#)). The programme addresses men's limited involvement in fatherhood, encourages them to reduce their risky behaviours and increase their use of HIV/AIDS related services, and challenge the gender inequalities that drive the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. It works to change men's attitudes and behaviour to reduce the incidence of multiple concurrent partnerships, alcohol and substance abuse, and the use of violence.

Despite such programmes, health – and in particular family planning – is still seen as a 'woman's concern'. When men get involved in health programmes or access health services (for treatment for depression, for example), they may be stigmatised for entering an area seen traditionally as a 'woman's domain'. Most SRHR programmes tend to focus more on women and, therefore, overlook men. It is crucial to view men as equal partners who need to invest in their own well-being, as well as in the health and well-being of the women and girls around them (see [Hook et al., 2018](#)).

It is important to distinguish programmes that aim to include men in broader health issues around SRHR or maternal health from those that aim to improve the health of men and boys. As noted, norms of masculinity have an impact on their general physical and mental health, their well-being and their access to health services and there is growing recognition of the need to address the relationship between norms of masculinity and their unhealthy and risk-taking behaviours.

Organizations such as [Movember Foundation](#) to target prostate cancer and the new [Global Action on Men's Health](#) (GAMH) encourage international public health agencies to develop research, policies and

interventions to promote men's health and to examine the social and structural drivers of men's health (see [EMERGE Evidence Report, 2015](#)). Similarly, RHEG (Network of Men for Gender Equality) and Papai in Brazil (no English-language versions available) have developed educational materials to help health providers cater specifically for men. However, these efforts could have a greater impact if they positioned men's health within a patriarchal context and demonstrated the links between the health of men and women.

Unpaid care work

Women's participation in the workforce has increased in recent years, but this has not been matched by an increase in men's participation in the unpaid care work carried out in the home (such as caring for children or any elderly or disabled family members) or domestic chores such as cleaning, cooking or washing clothes. Women continue to do [between two and ten times more of this work than men](#) and often face a double work burden of paid work and unpaid care responsibilities (see [ALiGN, 2018](#)). This double burden is a key driver of gender pay and employment gaps.

Men's limited participation in care work stems from gendered expectations that care work is a woman's responsibility and earning an income i.e. being a 'breadwinner' outside the home is the responsibility of a man. This is, however, changing in many parts of the world. The [IMAGES](#) survey found that younger men, those with higher levels of education (secondary and above) and men who had seen their own fathers carry out care work were more likely to carry out care work and domestic work themselves (see [Barker et al., 2011](#)). In addition, men are more likely to carry out domestic tasks if their partners are in paid work.

Many programmes to promote the role of men in unpaid care have used the threshold of fatherhood as a key entry point. At the individual level, programmes aim to create men-only spaces or groups where men can share their experiences and fears about fatherhood and receive support from their peers. Some programmes run fatherhood training classes, or focus on the greater involvement of men during pregnancy and childbirth. A number of programmes focus on young men and boys to instil a willingness to take on more housework at an early age (see Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) programme review on '[Programming with adolescent boys to promote gender-equitable masculinities](#)'). [The Choices, Voice, Promises project in Nepal](#), which worked with 10-14 year-olds to promote more gender equitable divisions of labour, led to some boys taking on more housework.

At community level, programmes use men who are already involved in parenting as role models. Some programmes use campaigns involving celebrities and public education to encourage men to play a greater role in care-giving. [Search for Common Ground](#) in the Democratic Republic of Congo engaged the pop star Celeo Scram to promote messages around men's involvement in unpaid care work. [Plan International has set up father's clubs in Senegal](#) to conduct public outreach on gender equality, health and men's involvement in such work.

Programmes also spread awareness about the benefits of involving men in fatherhood. The [Fatherhood Project](#) in South Africa and [MenCare](#) use such an approach, developing and distributing education

materials on caregiving, masculinity, reproductive health (including sexual risk and HIV/AIDS), and gender-based violence.

At the institutional level, programmes advocate for greater recognition of the value of women's unpaid work and demand policies (on parental leave, paternity leave policies and flexible work-schedules, for example) that encourage men's participation in unpaid care work (see [Promundo](#)). Paternity leave allows men to bond with their children at an early age and participate in family responsibilities, resulting in new norms of care that see care work as a shared responsibility, rather than 'women's work'. Evidence demonstrates the success of paternity leave and paid family leave policies, particularly in developed countries like Sweden and Canada (see [State of the World's Fathers report, 2017](#)). However, with the possible exception of Sweden, such policies do little to tackle the gender inequitable norms that limit men's uptake of such provisions.

Studies show that men's involvement in unpaid care improves health outcomes for men as well as women, while also improving family life, relationships and communication between fathers and their children (see [UN, 2011](#); [Barker et al., 2012](#)). Evidence from the MenCare project in 40 countries shows that it has resulted in more equitable decision making and equal sharing of household responsibilities (see [MenCare videos](#)). A study of the [Ecole de Maris](#) (Schools for Husbands) programme in Niger, where men discuss community health issues, finds that the percentage of safe births increased in a village where the programme was active.

Evidence also shows that more men want to be involved in care-giving, particularly child care (see [State of the World's Fathers report, 2017](#)). However, this interest is also gendered, with research showing that men are more likely to engage in physical play with their children than bathe them or cook for them (see [Barker et al., 2011](#)).

Women's economic empowerment

Women are making a growing contribution to national economies. According to the World Bank, there are around 8 to 10 million formal small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with at least one female owner in developing countries. Even so, women continue to face discrimination, primarily because of their gender, which prevents them from reaching their full economic potential. Interventions for women's economic empowerment and enterprise development may even lead to negative impacts as a result of the interplay of complex gender norms, such as an increase in gender-based violence at the hands of husbands and other male household members.

This violence can emerge when men sense a threat to their masculinity and a shift in a status quo that has favoured them in the past, as a result of women's economic empowerment. This highlights the need to engage men to generate greater acceptance of women's income-generation and recognition of its value; redefine gender norms around 'who should earn' and 'who should provide care'; and create an enabling work environment for women (see [ILO, 2014](#)). Such engagement can reduce the pressure on men to be sole bread-winners and on women to provide care while creating opportunities for both to share their workloads inside and outside the home.

At the individual and household level, some economic empowerment programmes engage men and women in savings groups and skill-development training where they reflect on gender norms while building skills for income-generation (see [USAID, 2015](#)). In general, male engagement components are added into larger women's economic empowerment programmes and engage men through all-male groups or as part of a couple (see [ILO, 2014](#)). The Village and Savings loan programme in Rwanda for example, started with all-male groups to explore masculinities and then engaged these men with their wives to discuss the dynamics of the household relationships, decision making and division of labour (see [CARE, 2012 and the related toolkit](#)).

At the community level, programmes often use male champions, peer groups and media campaigns to show men that new divisions of labour and decision making are socially acceptable. CARE's Abatangamuco project in Burundi (meaning: 'those who shine light where there was darkness') is one example (see [PRIO, 2012](#)). The project supports a group of men who have decided independently to change their lives, end abusive and oppressive practices and collaborate more closely with their wives. They use testimonies, theatre, personal consultations and other peer-to-peer activities to convince other men to make similar changes, join the organisation and contribute their own testimonies.

Men have also been engaged for women's economic empowerment through community mobilization efforts and campaigns, including debates and training with community members and leaders. [Women for Women International \(WFWI\)](#) incorporated a male engagement component into its women's economic empowerment programming in Kabul, Afghanistan. Through this component, WFWI aimed to increase men's knowledge of the social and economic issues faced by women, change their attitudes, enable them to challenge norms around women's work, and mobilise their positive behaviour to influence other men.

At the institutional level, men have been engaged to create enabling and safe work settings (which feature equitable hiring, pay and promotions, as well as sexual harassment policies). Such settings enable women to enter, stay at and advance their careers at work, recognise their disproportionate responsibilities for care and domestic work and encourage men to take up unpaid care work (through flexible work arrangements, maternity and paternity leave, and part-time, temporary or home-based work).

For example, Men's Action for Stopping Violence against Women ([MASVAW](#)) in India works to ensure fair conditions for female kiln workers (see [CHSJ, no date](#)). As a result of advocacy by MASVAW, some brick kiln owners have modified their workplace policies to allow pregnant women to engage in lighter work and address the gender pay gap (see [ICRWs' 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#)). A few programmes, like [Jagori's](#) work with the [Delhi Transport Corporation \(DTC\)](#) have targeted transportation workers specifically, mobilising them to discourage harassment and violence towards women to create a safer environment for them.

There is evidence on the effectiveness of approaches that combine group-based training and reflection with savings programmes (see [ICRWs' 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#)).

These programmes have been successful in shifting men's attitudes about women's work, income-generation and the division of labour within the household. However, their impact on behaviour has been limited and the long-term sustainability of such programmes remains under-researched.

Education

Girls' learning levels and education completion rates remain lower than those for boys in many countries, with more girls dropping out, particularly during the transition from one level of education to another. At the same time, particular cultures and socio-economic groups in some countries perpetuate a norm among boys, especially adolescents, that education is 'girly', and that cool boys don't need to work hard at school. In addition, the norm that puts pressure on boys to become breadwinners and contribute economically to their household often propels boys from poor families – in particular to quit school and join the labour market. As a result, drop out among boys is also becoming a major problem.

Addressing these issues means engaging with boys and men (who usually exercise decision-making power), girls and women, their family members and also their school staff. It is equally important to work with young boys and men to question unequal gender norms in education and their implications (see [Marcus et al., 2018](#)), and to promote the kind of quality education that they see as adding value to their lives.

At the individual level, one key approach is to engage boys in male-only groups, both within and outside school. Promundo's [Program H](#) curriculum for adolescent boys uses this strategy and has been adapted by organizations like CARE in their [Young Men Initiative](#) in the Balkans, by CORO, Horizons, and the Population Council in the Yaari Dosti Programme in India.

Few of these programmes, however, have an explicit focus on equality in education. Their emphasis is more on gender equality and tackling VAWG by working with young men to support egalitarian norms and behaviour in relation to education. For example, they encourage young men to avoid dominating the classroom, to be more supportive of their sisters' education, to not be violent and to be respectful towards their female peers.

At the community level, male engagement focuses on educational settings through gender-sensitization or transformation curricula. Most of these programmes engage adolescent boys by educating them about gender equality and work at many levels, engaging boys, teachers, male family members and male community influencers to help them question their own gender-based biases. The [Gender Equity Movement in Schools \(GEMS\)](#) programme implemented in multiple locations in India and replicated in other countries is one example (see [Achyut et al., 2017](#)). [CARE](#), [Breakthrough](#) and [Save the Children](#) also use this approach.

At the institutional level, beyond some work with teachers to promote more gender-sensitive approaches, there is very little focus on changing norms of masculinity in most countries, particularly at higher levels of education provision. Engagement with educational institutions is limited to providing

budgets for schemes to support scholarships for girls. Some countries, such as Ghana, have included gender-sensitivity training as a part of its training for new teachers. In India in Maharashtra State, India, the Government has adapted the GEMS curriculum to launch a scheme -- the [Meena Raju Manch](#) -- to promote gender equality in schools by raising awareness about issues such as gender equity, the right to education and child sexual abuse.

There is evidence that these programmes have resulted in lower rates of harassment of girls in school and better learning environments for both girls and boys (see [Barker et al., 2012](#)). Programmes like UNICEF's '[Gender Socialization in Schools: Enhancing the transformative power of education for Peacebuilding in Uganda](#)', have also changed the knowledge and attitude of teachers.

An [evaluation of the GEMS programme](#) in Mumbai, India, found that students who participated in the programme demonstrated a positive shift in their attitudes towards gender equality. However, while there were measurable improvements in their knowledge and attitudes, the same evaluation found no changes in their behaviour after their trainings.

In addition to the areas outlined above, programmes have also worked to engage men on other issues such as ending child marriage (see [Greene et al., 2015](#)), supporting women's political participation and land rights (see [ICRWs' 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#)) and climate change (see Kato [Wallace et al.](#)) among others.

5. Lessons learned from programmes

[ICRWs' 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement](#) summarizes key lessons from male engagement in gender equality programmes and the challenges these programmes face. These are also captured in the [EMERGE Evidence Report, 2015](#) and the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) programme review on '[Programming with adolescent boys to promote gender-equitable masculinities](#)'.

One key emphasis in existing literature and evidence from programmes that work with boys and men to achieve gender equality is the need to move away from gender sensitization to an approach based on gender transformation. While increasing men's knowledge of gender disparities and creating more gender equitable attitudes among men is important, it is not enough. Such changes in knowledge and attitudes must translate into tangible changes in behaviour.

Behaviour change requires gender transformation, with young boys and men reflecting on and challenging gender norms in their own lives, within their families and within their communities. Programmes should promote positive masculinities through, for example, the promotion of a more equitable distribution of power and labour within households.

At the individual level, evidence suggests four key ingredients for success.

- **Start young, the earlier the better:** young and adolescent boys will then have a greater chance of building equitable relationships and wielding a positive influence on people around them throughout their lives.
- **Engage with men throughout their entire life-cycle:** it is important to engage with boys and men as they age and move from one life stage to the next.
- **Engage with men while considering their diverse roles and contexts:** (within the family, in the community, etc.) and how these change over time.
- **Use a gender-synchronized approach:** programmes should work with both men and women to achieve gender transformation, either simultaneously or sequentially, with single-sex groups and mixed-sex groups. It is important to provide both men and women with safe spaces where they can discuss and reflect on the ways in which gender norms shape their lives and the lives of others.

At the community level:

- **Use male role models and advocates:** recruiting male role models in programme communities is an effective way to create norm change. However, it is important to unpack gender norms among male facilitators and role models.
- **Identify and collaborate with community influencers:** (religious leaders or elders, for example) who create, shape and uphold social and gender norms.

As noted by [Jewkes et al. 2015](#), there is also a need to look beyond the individual and community levels to the systemic and institutional forces that shape gender norms. Changing an individual's beliefs and attitudes without changing the broader system and policies (see [ICRW and Promundo's 2010 report](#)) in which gender relationships operate can limit the reach, sustainability and impact of programmes.

It is important, therefore, to hold men in positions of power accountable to create and enforce such policies. It is also important to consider the role of men who are part of the informal sector (small businesses, self-employed entrepreneurs and so on) and who may not comply with these policies. Here, strategies should engage men both as individuals and as a part of a community.

Challenges

A number of challenges must be resolved in current work with men on gender equality.

- If such work is not based on an analysis of patriarchy and power dynamics, it risks playing in to a 'men's rights' agenda, which argues that men are the victims of patriarchy and that gender inequality actually favours women. The key organisations, alliances and networks on men and gender equality base their work firmly on feminist analysis, acknowledging that it is women who are mainly disadvantaged by gender inequality the world over. At the same time, while men have to give up power if equality is to be achieved, they have much to gain in breaking out of the 'man box'. While some women's organisations welcome and participate in work with men and boys, others fear that it will divert resources and support from much-needed work with women and girls. There are

concerns that moving away from an explicit focus on women and girls in gender equality and equity work can blur the realities of patriarchal power, with the needs and voices of women and girls relegated where men become the protagonists. There is, therefore, a view among practitioners that while engagement with men and boys is beneficial, it must be complemented by a simultaneous focus on women and girls.

- Accountability to the women’s movement and to other historically oppressed social groups is necessary to build collaborative and equitable partnerships. Organizations and networks that work with men for gender equality recognise and have tried to incorporate accountability principles. [Sonke Gender Justice, for example](#), has a rule that 50 % of its board members must be women. For the [MenEngage Alliance, being accountable means to:](#)
 - be critically aware of one’s own power and privilege, and be open to criticism
 - take action to address personal and institutional practices that go against principles of gender equality and human rights, acknowledging any harm caused and making amends
 - respect and promote women’s leadership in the gender equality movement
 - create structures of consultation and partnerships with women’s rights organizations.

Accountability also requires men and others in positions of power and privilege to be receptive, so that they can listen to the perspectives of the oppressed groups in order to become authentic allies.

- Another key challenge relates to intersectionalities. While there is agreement that programmes must recognize the contexts of men and women and the multiple influences these have on their practice of gender norms, there is lack of clarity on what this means in practice. At present, male engagement programmes do not address the broader structures of patriarchy within which individuals and relationships operate, and men and boys are often viewed one-dimensionally. It is important to acknowledge the overlapping identities occupied by men, and to remember that not all men share one single experience of power and male privilege.
- A further challenge is how to engage men and boys effectively without instrumentalizing them as a pathway to women’s empowerment or marginalizing women and girls in the process. Some scholars argue that programmes should encourage men and boys to participate in gender interventions programmes by promoting promote the positive outcomes for their own lives and their relationships with their families and communities. Another good lens may be to promote the benefits to men’s health. However, programmes must not ‘oversell’ the positives: it is still important to talk about inequalities, the power held by boys and men and their responsibility to question this power. The focus should be on promoting the idea that men can be agents of change while holding them accountable. Engagement with men around gender equality and equity should aim to shift norms and power dynamics for the betterment for all, rather than being a zero-sum game between boys and men and girls and women.
- There is a need for more enquiry on how to include people across the gender spectrum (LGBTQI) to promote gender equity. Programmes on positive masculinities rarely address sexuality or

transgender and gender non-conforming identities. They use a predominantly heteronormative (and often binary) framing of gender relations that can be counterproductive to the achievement of gender equity.

- Men need to be engaged more systematically at the institutional level. Efforts are being made in the health sector, for example. Many countries are working on policies for unpaid care and providing flexible work arrangements, parental and paternity leave and so on. These positive steps offer lessons for the greater engagement of men at the institutional level. Another approach could be for countries to institutionalize mechanisms that collect data on gender and time-use in their national health surveys, which can be used as evidence to develop and enhance policies.

6. Measuring changes in norms of masculinity

There is a lack of evidence on to what extent programmes that engage men and boys have an impact on their lives, or on the lives of women and girls at the household, community and structural level. The evidence that is available focuses largely on interpersonal issues and evaluation approaches tend to be quantitative, short-term and instrumental. There is a pressing need to test the effectiveness of programmes that engage men and boys for gender equality and equity (see [EMERGE Evidence Report, 2015](#)).

Programme evaluations do highlight a shift in attitudes as a result of activities around gender norms. However, they are unable to capture and highlight any resultant changes in behaviour – if any such changes occur. This is because of their short-term nature, as well as the challenge of measuring changes in patriarchal norms that are deeply entrenched. In addition, evaluations tend to be carried out immediately after a programme ends, and often fail to capture changes that occur over time as a result of its activities.

Programmes that work to engage men to change gender norms fail to measure outcomes for women. This is a major gap that makes it difficult to determine whether male engagement efforts change the lives of both men and women. Existing evaluations of outcomes for women have focused largely on outcomes related to health and violence reduction. It is important, therefore, to ask men and boys about their behaviour and then triangulate their responses with those from women and girls. This can be achieved through qualitative measurement.

Despite the lack of rigorous evaluations of male engagement programming, there is a growing body of expertise and knowledge about what works well and what does not in terms of outcomes for women and girls. The best-known tool for measuring gender attitudes is the [Gender Equitable Men Scale \(GEMS\)](#) developed by Population Council, Horizons and Promundo. This scale measures attitudes around gender norms in relation to violence, sexual relationships, homophobia, domestic chores and daily life, and reproductive health and disease prevention. It provides information about the prevailing norms in a community as well as any changes in these norms as a result of a programme.

The GEMS scale has been widely adapted for use in health, education and violence prevention programmes to measure attitude change in boys once a programme's activities have been completed (see [Singh et al., 2013](#)). Initially developed for young men aged 18-29, the scale has also been adapted for use with different age groups between 10-59 years of age and has been used in middle- to high-income communities in various countries. The [IMAGES survey](#) was based on the GEMS scale, which was adapted to account for the contexts of different countries.

Another key tool is the [Partners for Prevention toolkit](#) for 'Replicating the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence: Understanding Why Some Men Use Violence against Women and How We Can Prevent It'. This toolkit consolidates the methodology, learning and resources developed for the implementation of the original UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence, conducted by Partners for Prevention between 2010-2013 in seven countries across Asia and the Pacific. It provides a comprehensive, step-by-step guide to using the methodology in any setting to conduct rigorous research with men on violence against women to inform prevention. The toolkit explains the importance of every step in each phase and, where relevant, directs the reader to the corresponding tool.

[The randomized control trial \(RCT\) conducted in Rwanda](#) to assess the impact of the gender-transformative Bandedereho intervention for couples on multiple behavioural and health-related outcomes is an important tool for the study of the outcomes of interventions that engage men for gender-norm transformation.

7. Programme toolkits

A range of toolkits and resources are available to support programmes that work with men and boys to question non-equitable views of masculinity and develop positive attitudes to prevent the unhealthy behaviours that affect their well-being and that of their families.

Overall gender attitudes

- [Manhood 2.0](#) is a gender-transformative curriculum developed by Promundo and the University of Pittsburgh. It aims to engage young men (aged 15 to 24) in reflection on harmful gender norms, particularly related to teen pregnancy prevention, dating violence and sexual assault, and the discrimination against (and bullying of) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals.
- A [regional curriculum for East and South-East Asia by Partners for Prevention](#) provides a generic conceptual framework for understanding masculinities. It seeks to inspire users to become more effective activists and advocates for gender justice, helping them to critically analyse their contexts through a gender and human rights lens.
- The [Program HMD toolkit](#) for action presents a shorter version of the approach contained in Promundo's programmes H and M. The toolkit is based on 10 years of evidence and experience from the implementation of Program HIM around the world, which has engaged youth in the promotion of gender equity, including respect for sexual diversity and gender and social justice.

- A [facilitator manual by CARE](#) focuses on training facilitators to engage men and boys in development programming, and demonstrates how their engagement for women's empowerment benefits everyone.
- A [New York Times lesson plan](#) highlights how to teach and learn about masculinity in today's era of constant and rapid change.
- [Healthy Images of Manhood \(HIM\)](#) is a workplace programme based on successful gender programmes in Africa and Latin America. It aims to engage men and change unhealthy cultural practices, gender norms and behaviours. The manual can be used to design and conduct the programme for any organization.
- The [Rus funk manual](#) on the male engagement continuum provides lessons learned in applying this model to community- and campus-based initiatives.
- A [MenEngage Global Alliance toolkit](#) provides guidance on the steps and processes involved in setting up networks that work collectively to transform masculinities and engage men and boys in gender equality.

Violence against women and girls

- A [training guide from Rozan](#), a Pakistan-based NGO, is designed for use by facilitators and programme planners who seek to engage young men in issues around gender-based violence and masculinities. It comprises a 15-session series that can be conducted with groups of 10-25 men in community settings.
- The Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP) is a primary violence prevention intervention developed for humanitarian settings. The [EMAP Framework](#) developed by the GBV Responders' Network and the International Rescue Committee offers three key manuals: an Introductory Guide that provides an overview of the framework and its concepts; an Implementation Guide that provides weekly lessons for working with women and men in single-sex groups, as well as tips for introducing and implementing the intervention; and a Training Guide that details tools to lead group sessions with men while including the inputs of women and girls throughout the intervention.
- A [paper](#) based on lessons learnt from the Partners for Prevention regional project 'Engaging Young Men through Social Media for the Prevention of Violence against Women' offers a comprehensive overview on how to use social media as a tool to prevent violence against women and girls. It also provides recommendations on developing and implementing a social media strategy, as well as monitoring and evaluation.
- ICRW's [Parivartan handbook](#) was developed as part of the Parivartan programme for sports coaches and mentors working with schools and communities. The handbook provides an overview of the programme; explains key concepts such as gender, respect, boundaries and violence; and provides tips and suggestions for exercises as 'Teachable Moments', as well as inspirational stories and resources that could help mentors and coaches discuss issues with athletes and other participants. The package also includes [Training Cards](#) that outline practical steps and activities that coaches and mentors can use with participants to leverage sports for greater gender equality.

Health

- Promundo's [Very Young Adolescence 2.0 curriculum](#) to promote gender equality and sexual and reproductive health offers programme of 12 weekly sessions for boys and girls (aged 11-14) on SRHR and gender norms.
- The [Sonke Gender Justice and Pathfinder's manual](#) is for those working with men and boys on issues of gender and health including SRHR, and more specifically on increasing access to safe and stigma free abortion services. The manual was developed for use in workshop settings and as a resource and facilitation guide to build the capacities of individuals and organisations to address specific SRH issues with men and boys.
- [The International Planned Parenthood Federation and UNFPA have developed a package](#) to support providers of SRH services to increase the range and quality of services available to meet the needs of men and adolescent boys. It focuses on the provision of such services that are integrated within clinical and non-clinical contexts and follows a gender-transformative approach.
- [Promundo, MenEngage Alliance & UNFPA's toolkit](#) provides strategies and lessons learned for engaging men and boys on diverse themes such as SRH; maternal, newborn and child health; fatherhood; HIV/AIDS; gender-based violence; advocacy and policy, as well as addressing issues around monitoring and evaluation of this work.
- [International Planned Parenthood Federation's \(IPPF\) toolkit](#) provides practical guidance for developing organizational policies that encourage men's involvement in sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS programmes and explains how to tailor policies for specific groups of men and boys.
- [Promundo's toolkit for action](#) provides conceptual and practical information on how to design, implement and evaluate HIV prevention activities, which incorporate a gender perspective and engage young men and relevant stakeholders.
- [Promundo's manual](#) seeks to help participants develop activities at a community level to create a supportive environment for work related to male engagement and HIV/AIDS. The manual focuses on mobilising community members to engage men. All of its activities can be used with groups of men and women.
- [The MenCare program guide](#) presents the strategies used by MenCare that emerged from the tenets of the MenCare campaign: a three-year, four-country collaboration between Promundo and Rutgers to engage men aged 15-35 as partners in maternal, newborn, and child health and in SRHR.

Unpaid care work

- The [MenCare prospectus](#) by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice provides an overview of the campaign and provides tools to promote social norms around men's active participation as involved fathers and caregivers.
- The [Program P Manual](#) by MenCare Campaign, Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice compiles interconnected strategies and actions to reshape how local communities, governments, and in particular the public health system, engage men as caregivers.
- [Oxfam's Rapid Care Analysis \(RCA\) and Household Care Survey](#) is a user-friendly assessment tool that provides distance training sessions for development practitioners. Its purpose is to assess who carries out unpaid care in a community to identify, reduce and redistribute care work that is

heavy and unequal. The RCA also seeks to ensure that carers can be represented in decision making.

Education

- The [GEMS manual](#) by ICRW, CORO for Literacy and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) is based on the experience of conducting group education activities with students. It is organised in seven themed modules, drawing on the GEMS experience to provide evidence of a useful and feasible methodology that creates discussion around gender equality within schools.
- An [educational manual](#) by Promundo can be used for working with men to question non-equitable views about masculinity and develop more positive attitudes to prevent unhealthy behaviours. It can also be used to train facilitators to implement workshop activities with groups of men.
- [Plan's Champions of Change methodology](#) presents a community-wide strategy to promote gender equality and social norm change through youth engagement and peer-to-peer mobilisation. It aims to advance gender equality by engaging girls in a process of empowerment and by working with boys to challenge dominant masculinities and support girls' empowerment. Champions of Change has intentionally developed separate but inter-related curricula for girls and boys.

Child marriage

- [The More Equal Future manual](#) was developed as part of a collaboration between the MenCare Campaign, World Vision and Promundo to engage fathers to prevent child marriage in India.
- [The briefing series by ICRW and Girls Not Brides](#) suggests ways to incorporate and measure child marriage prevention and response throughout the programme lifecycle within a variety of sectoral and cross-sectoral programming. These briefs can be of particular interest to donors and practitioners during the needs assessment and programme design stages.

8. Case study: Men as key stakeholders in gender equity

A gender-transformative approach

The [International Center for Research on Women](#) (ICRW) works on various programmes and studies to engage young men and boys using a gender-transformative approach. Our programmes seek to transform gender norms by understanding what drives them and figuring out ways to challenge or adapt them, to create conditions for greater gender equity for girls and women, boys and men. ICRW believes that working with men and boys is vital for the achievement of such equity.

Our work on men and boys has a solid foundation on evidence-based research. This has helped us identify the rationale to work with men and nuanced ways to do so. For example, our very first study on domestic violence in India 2001-2002 focused on masculinities and the ways in which various constructions of masculinities express themselves in different settings. Similarly, as part of the global [International Men and Gender Equality Survey](#) (IMAGES), we studied harmful norms of masculinities and explored linkages between, for example, childhood exposure to violence and subsequent perpetration,

and between rigid masculinities and son-preference and intimate partner violence in India. Evidence from these studies has been used to develop our programmes with men and boys.

ICRW's interventions with men and boys began by focusing on gender-based violence (GBV). Our flagship programmes around this issue have been the [Gender Equity Movement in Schools \(GEMS\)](#) in Mumbai and Jharkhand, India and [Parivartan Boys](#) in Mumbai, India. GEMS and Parivartan operated in different settings. GEMS is modelled on the Population Council's Yaari Dosti Program, which was a contextual adaptation of Program H by Promundo. While GEMS was a curriculum-based school programme and worked both with adolescent girls and boys, Parivartan was a sports-based community programme with a focus on young men and boys and coaches.

At the core of these programmes was a determination to help young boys and men deconstruct and challenge the concept of what it means to be 'real men'. At the same time, ICRW has used these programmes to create 'buy in' from patriarchal and masculine structures within education and sports for our on gender equity. We have also negotiated with our partners who work primarily on girls' issues, to include components on men and boys in their work.

One key strategy in our programmes has been to combine work on men and masculinities with that of the empowerment of girls and women. This stems largely from ICRW's experience of having worked in communities with women and girls, where we were often asked why we were not working with men. Parents, teachers and community members have often expressed a need and demand for work with men and boys because their contribution is seen as vital to address gender inequities. Drawing on the lessons learned, some of our recent programmes for adolescent girls, such as [Plan-It Girls](#) (school-based) in New Delhi and Jharkhand and [Pankh](#) (a sports-based community programme) in Rajasthan have components on men and boys.

Work with boys from an early age

During the course of our programmes, we learned that it is crucial to begin to work with boys at a young age, because their attitudes are already formed by the time they are 14-15 years of age and it is more challenging to encourage them to examine these – and the gender norms that they value – with a critical eye. Younger boys are more willing to engage and more receptive to the questioning of norms. In the Parivartan programme, for example, it was easier to work with younger boys than with the older coaches.

Build in crucial points in programmes where girls and boys can engage

We have had a mixed experience in terms of how girls and boys interact within a programme. It has sometimes been effective to segregate them around some topics such as sexuality and then bring them together for common sessions. This mix of separate and joint sessions often works.

We have had to adapt as programmes have progressed and comfort levels have developed. During the course of programmes, we have created specific content around masculinity and built spaces that allow for a deep dive into the content with men and boys, including crucial points where they can

engage with women and girls. The creation of such dedicated spaces is important to ensure that boys and men open up and are able to examine their own thoughts and feelings.

Start conversations around privilege and power

While working with boys and men, it is important to create dissonance and challenge their exercise of power and privilege. This has been extremely difficult, because it creates discomfort. Boys and men are willing to talk about violence, but when it comes to examining the privileges and gender norms that give them a sense of entitlement to inflict violence, they often become uncomfortable. Breaking through this discomfort has been a challenge.

One key observation during our work with men and boys has been to understand the power hierarchies between them and how they struggle to fit into the expected mould of 'being strong and earning well'. Those who do not fit into this mould often face a backlash for not being 'man enough'. As a result, it is difficult to increase men's acceptance of alternative ways of behaviour.

During discussion, boys and men often highlight structural issues in their environment that prevent them from challenging patriarchy. They often talk about how the lack of safety and the high risk of violence in their community prevents them from supporting the mobility of their female family members and friends. What has worked is to ensure that such discussions are non-confrontational, and that they allow men to reflect on and examine their own attitudes so that they can develop solutions and ways of doing things differently. Here, it is important to look at the eco-system in which men and boys live. Well-trained male facilitators and resource persons are also crucial during this process. Through our programmes, we have been able to develop a network to train men and boys and develop responses to some of the arguments often used by men and boys to defend their privilege.

Keep the focus on boys and men

It has been challenging to engage boys and men on gender issues in our programmes, because they often consider this as an issue for girls or women only. Separate sessions with boys and men have helped to position gender as an issue that also affects their daily lives. Men and boys taking part in the programmes start to feel that they are doing something good for 'girls and for women', rather than themselves, so it is important to constantly bring the focus back to them – and this does not come naturally. It takes effort.

Masculinity is also linked in complex ways to sexuality and it can be very challenging to deconstruct this link and deal with the resultant discomfort. Our programmes have made young men and boys examine their own views and feelings, but we haven't been able to break into the core of why men and boys hold certain thoughts around sexuality. As a result, therefore, we have been able to influence attitudes, but this has not necessarily translated into changes in behaviour.

Did our programmes create gender-equitable men? We do not know. Yes, there was a reduction in violence, but we do not know how this manifested over time. Gender transformation is a long-term and time-consuming process. Given the short-term nature of programmes and lack of funding for long-

term impact evaluations, one limitation has been the inability to measure the longer-term impact of our work with men and boys.

Build the capacity of local partners

The process of working with men and boys has taught us the importance of building the capacity of our local partners. If an investment is made to strengthen the capacity of local partners working on the issue, the chances of programmes being scaled up and having a sustainable impact become higher. We worked with a local partner in Parivartan, which then designed and scaled up its own programmes on gender norms in the community. ICRW has influenced grassroots partner organizations to adopt a gender perspective into their programmes, not as standalone components, but as a concept that needs to be woven into their approaches at various points.

Create change agents

As a result of its programmes, ICRW has been able to leave a legacy of shared discussions on gender equity in communities. Our programmes have also left behind a few change agents: leaders who define their own trajectories that are often a little confused or contradictory, but that are filled with a sense of constant questioning. We have been able to create shifts in individual perspectives around household chores, intimate behaviour, violence and mutual respect. We have also left behind the message that boys are privileged and powerful and that they must manage this power responsibly.

An evaluation of the [GEMS programme](#) in Mumbai found that students who participated demonstrated a positive shift in attitudes towards gender equality. GEMS has gained universal appeal and has been adapted to various contexts in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Viet Nam and elsewhere.

Evaluate the impact on the lives of boys and men

When young adult men participate in programmes that deconstruct masculinity, it creates conflict within themselves, their family, their community and their work. It is important, therefore, to build in follow-up to programmes. This keeps the conversation going and helps us to identify and understand any changes over a period of time in the lives of these young men and boys. Because ICRW's work with men and boys has been a part of larger programmes with girls and women, we have not been able to capture the impact of our work on the lives of men and boys adequately, or to rigorously evaluate this work to test the effectiveness of our strategies. We have generated many perspectives on how best to work with boys and men, but have been unable to translate these perspectives into long-term programme strategies and outputs.

Create dedicated spaces to work with men and boys

At ICRW we have struggled with the adoption of an instrumentalist approach to working with men and boys. There is much debate about working with men and boys for their sake or because gender equity for women and girls will never be achieved unless we engage with the men and boys who currently exercise power and privilege in society. There has also been an echo of the larger discomfort about working with men and boys and the need to make it accountable to the needs of women and girls.

There is consensus however, on the need to engage with men and boys, the need for this to be adequately resourced and to create dedicated spaces where work with boys and men can happen. We recognise that it is too risky to not work with men. Moving ahead, we would like to absorb all the lessons we have learned and develop strategies for dedicated long-term programming with men and boys, with clearly defined outcomes and in-built evaluation techniques that can capture changes over time.

9. About the authors

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Sapna Kedia works as Technical Specialist with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). She specializes in qualitative research. As a researcher, over the years Sapna has conducted research and documented innovations in the field of improving public service delivery and promoting social inclusion in India. These innovations span sectors -national and state governments, international organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, and cover themes ranging from health, education, environment, child development, gender and ICT for development.

At ICRW she coordinates and conducts qualitative research primarily on health and reproductive rights of women. Sapna works on men and masculinities and has recently led the study on 'Male Involvement in Pre-Marital Abortions in Delhi'. She also supports the 3D Program for women and girls at ICRW, which has at its core the idea of 'convergence' for addressing the multiple needs of women and girls.

Sapna holds a Masters in Political Science from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India and a Bachelors in Political Science from Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University, India.

Ravi Verma



Ravi Verma is the Asia Regional Director for the International Center for Research on Women. Ravi has more than three decades of experience working on issues of girls and women's empowerment and gender equality. His research is focused on primary violence prevention, child marriage prevention, sexual and reproductive health issues and engaging men and addressing masculine norms.

Ravi has led groundbreaking work in evidence-based gender transformative strategies with programs such as Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS), Promoting Adolescent Engagement, Knowledge and Health (PANeKH), and Parivartan as well as Parivartan Plus. These programs were founded on evidence-building through clear conceptualization, formative research and desk-based reviews in order to ensure contextually and ecologically responsive programming and initiatives.

Throughout his career he has held multiple positions within the Government of India, as a professor at the International Institute for Population Sciences in Mumbai and as a member of High-Level Committee on the Status of Women (HLCSW). He currently serves on the International Advisory Board of Lancet-Women and Global Health 5050.