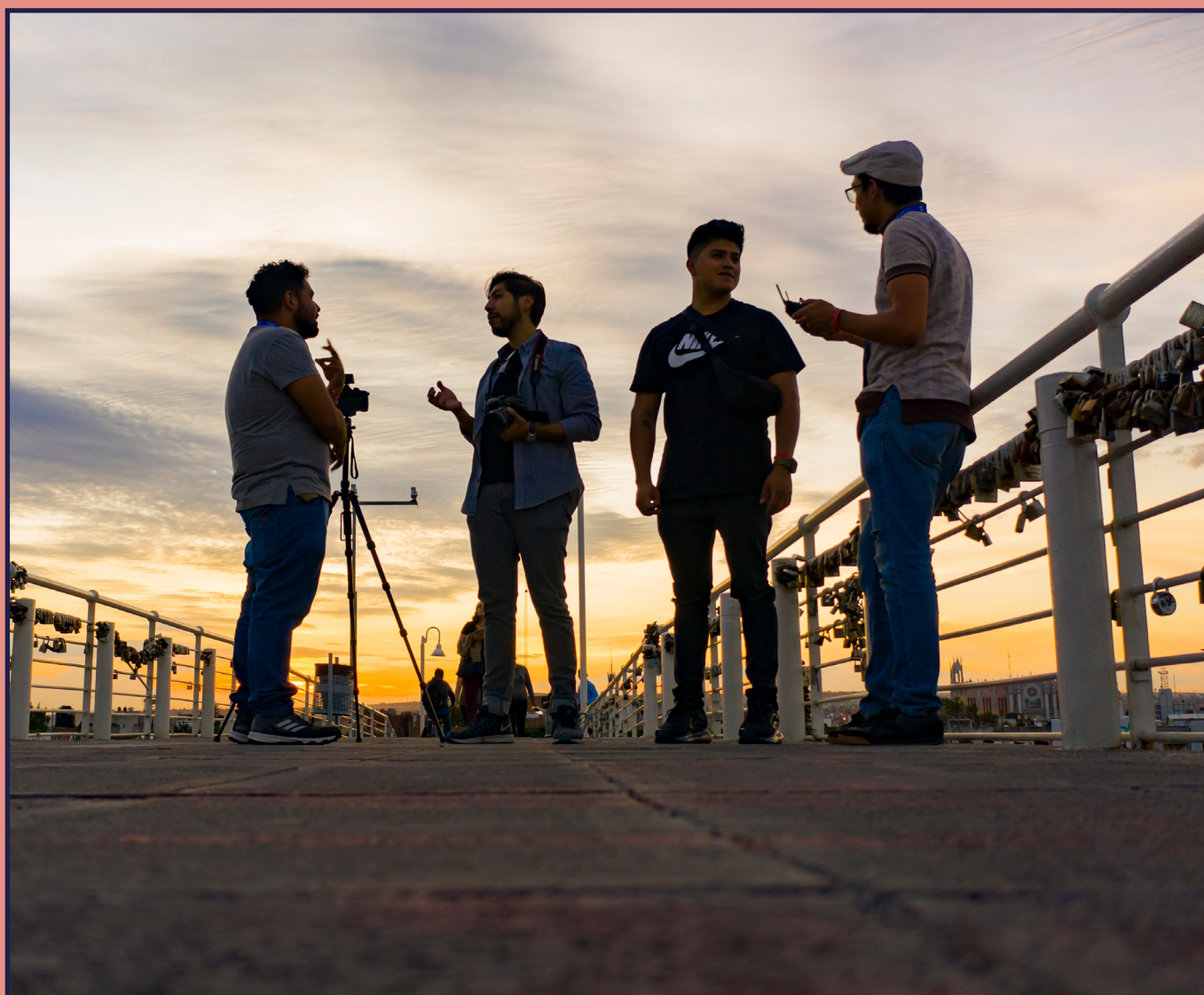


BRIEFING NOTE

BOYS AND MEN: PART OF THE EQUATION TO REDUCE GENDER VIOLENCE IN MEXICO



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About Simetría AC

Simetría AC is a non-partisan and non-profit organization that aims to reduce the inequalities and barriers that women in Mexico face in fully accessing their human rights, to promote their empowerment, end discrimination against them and eradicate gender-based violence. Its work is based on the development and use of robust quantitative research methodologies, the construction of data and indicators, as well as the study of public policies from their design and implementation to their results and impact.

To achieve its goal Simetría AC develops the following strategies. First, analysis of public spending. We monitor the spending of the main national public programmes that aim to contribute to equality and the reduction of gender-based violence. Second, analysis of the normative and institutional framework of Mexico's equality policy and its policy to prevent and eradicate violence against women. Third, analysis of public policies and programmes to prevent and eradicate gender violence. The inputs and recommendations derived from the analysis contribute to informing, engaging and advocating with decision makers and citizens on possible ways to improve policies for the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls.

For more information: www.simetriamx.org | Twitter: [@simetriamx](https://twitter.com/simetriamx).

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APIS Sureste Fundación para la Equidad AC (Yucatán)

GENDES AC (Ciudad de México)

Juconi AC (Puebla)

Hombres por la Equidad AC (Ciudad de México y Querétaro)

Cómplices por la Igualdad with MenEngage (Ciudad de México)

Fundación Vive 100% Mujer AC (Estado de México)

Fundación de Apoyo Infantil Sonora IAP AC (Sonora)

Enfoque de Igualdad AC (San Luis Potosí).

Key findings

Simetria has conducted a study with eight civil society organisations (CSOs) that work for women's rights and that aim to prevent gender-based violence in Mexico, and with their beneficiaries. The study, conducted between August and December 2021, explored whether and how these organisations work with men to change norms that underpin gender-based violence. The key findings are as follows.

- **Type of activity.** The CSOs interviewed indicated that their interventions with men combine reflection groups, workshops and, in some cases, psychotherapy. During reflection groups, each man shares his experience and receives support from other members, which is a useful tool to help him improve his current situation. All the organisations interviewed consider it important to complement reflection groups with a psychological evaluation, as well as with individual therapy if needed.
- **Challenges.** A lack of resources is one of the main barriers faced by the CSOs in Mexico that include men in their programmes and is the main reason for a lack of evaluations of these interventions. Organisations also report a lack of interest from authorities in this issue.
- **Participant feedback.** Almost all of the beneficiaries interviewed said that they felt good about participating in the programmes. They mentioned that the programmes had helped them to improve their relationships with their partners and families, and to gain more control over their anger and other emotions.
- **Resistance to work with men.** There is still resistance by feminist and women's rights organisations to the inclusion of men in the prevention of violence against women. One reason is that some organisations that work for women's rights perceive competition for resources with the CSOs that work with men, while some feminists have the impression that workshops do not help men to stop perpetrating violence. It remains crucial to prioritize a focus on the survivors of gender-based violence and listen to their voice and their needs.

Introduction

‘For me it was revealing. I realised that now it is easier to identify when there is violence in a situation, and I try to avoid it. I know how to recognise what happens to me and have healthier relationships in all aspects.’

Antonio, programme participant

Violence against women and girls continues to affect most women and girls in Mexico. The most recent data, from 2016, show that 66% of women aged 15 and over had faced some type of violence during their lives. In all, 49% of women had suffered emotional violence, 34% physical, 41.3% sexual and 29% economic violence (INEGI, 2016). In terms of the scope of the violence experienced by women and girls, 25.3% of women had been victims of school violence ; 43.9% of intimate partner violence (during their current or last relationship); 26.6% of women of workplace violence; 10.3% of family violence (in the last 12 months) and 38.7% of violence in their communities (INEGI, 2016).

In the most extreme cases, this gender-based violence (GBV) can end in murder, a crime that continues to grow in Mexico. In 2021, official figures on femicides in Mexico recorded the deaths of 966 women as a result of gender-based homicide, the highest number since 2015 (Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública, 2021).

Given the magnitude of this problem in Mexico and elsewhere in the world, some civil society organisations (CSOs) have shown an interest in working with men to prevent, reduce, and ultimately eliminate violence in general, and GBV in particular. The objective is to sensitise men and make them aware that violent behaviour and attitudes can be modified. Various programmes in other countries that have been evaluated show that it is possible to shift the behaviour of men towards more equitable gender attitudes.

This research aims to increase knowledge about the strategies developed by CSOs in Mexico to include boys and men in the prevention and eradication of GBV, with a specific focus on domestic and intimate partner violence (also called domestic abuse or violence in the private sphere). This is defined as any pattern of behaviour used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It includes any physical, sexual, emotional, economic, and psychological acts (including the threat of such acts) that influences another person (UN Women, n.d.). The study focuses on this type of violence because it is one of the most common forms of violence suffered by women worldwide, and Mexico is no exception (UN Women, n.d.).

This study also aims to deepen the information on the interventions that are carried out in Mexico to contribute to the reduction of this violence. The lessons learnt will inform the preparation of a guide on good practices for the inclusion of men in the solutions to domestic violence.

Relevant concepts and definitions

Some of the main concepts discussed in this document are also discussed with men during the interventions conducted by CSOs around the world and in Mexico to prevent and eradicate GBV.. Gender equality, for example, is defined as having access to the same treatment and opportunities in the enjoyment and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, regardless of one's gender. It is about parity in terms of the rights, responsibilities and opportunities for both women and men (UN Women, 2015).

Stereotypes and gender roles are the ideas, qualities, and expectations that society attributes to women and men and are symbolic representations of what women and men should be and feel. They are mutually exclusive ideas that reaffirm one model of femininity and another of masculinity by assigning one model or the other to each of us (National Institute of Women in Mexico, n.d.). Their definitions are important, as they help us to understand what is expected of a man and how he should treat women and support our analysis and understanding of how some gender roles and stereotypes promote and normalize violence against women.

In the same sense, social norms are perceptions of what others are expected to do and actually do. Most people absorb, learn, accept, and follow, both consciously and unconsciously, these norms from a very early age, often from infancy (Institute for Reproductive Health, 2021). Social norms can encourage or discourage behaviour and, as a result, have an influence on individual and community well-being (Social Norms Learning Collaborative (2021).

Finally, the definition of violence against women is important for establishing a common understanding of this problem. Violence against women and girls is defined as any act of GBV that has or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, as well as threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether they occur in public life or in private life (UN Women, n.d.).

Methodology

Key research questions

The key questions of this research are:

1. What types of initiatives are carried out by CSOs in Mexico and worldwide to include men in the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls?
2. What has been the impact of these initiatives?
3. What aspects must be considered when developing an initiative that includes men in the prevention and eradication of violence against women, including social gender norms?

Research design and tools used

To answer the research questions, the work of CSOs in various countries was analysed, and in-depth interviews were carried out with eight CSOs in Mexico. In addition, a literature review of international practices was conducted to understand how women's organisations work with men. The research and analysis process for the study aimed to construct a model for organisations working to prevent domestic and intimate partner violence. The following activities were undertaken.

1. Interviews with beneficiaries and CSOs in Mexico that work for women's human rights. A sample of eight CSOs was interviewed to capture their methodologies and the results of their strategies to prevent and draw attention to violence against women, covering a range of beneficiaries that included women, children and men. Those surveyed comprised: 1 CSO president, 4 general directors, 1 director of institutional development and 2 coordinators of the relevant programmes; plus 12 programme beneficiaries.
2. Theoretical framework. A detailed review of literature and good international practices on the subject was carried out.
3. Validation of recommendations and methodology. Three specialists in the field were consulted: a psychologist; a sociologist; and an economist (see Annex 4 for details). All three specialists reviewed the proposed intervention model, and their feedback and comments were included in the final document.

Sample selection

According to the National Directory of Civil Society Organizations elaborated by the National Institute of Women, there are more than 900 CSOs in Mexico that are dedicated to empowering women, reducing gender inequality and addressing and preventing GBV, each with their own strategy, vision, target population and scope. Given the scope of the project and resources available, it was only feasible to include and interview eight CSOs and some of their beneficiaries.

The selection of the CSO sample followed a non-random methodology with a small number of homogeneous organizations because the objective was to deepen the investigation and consolidate the techniques used by CSOs to prevent and address violence against women. The research did not aim to provide a more general analysis that would be representative of all CSOs working in this sphere.

It was necessary, therefore, to establish strict criteria to ensure objective and rigorous analysis. The first was that the selected CSOs should have common experience in relation to the objective of the research as follows.

- CSOs working to advance and promote women's rights
- CSOs that include in their actions work with boys and men to change negative gender norms and the resulting behaviours
- CSOs that focus specifically on domestic and intimate partner violence
- CSOs established in urban areas with high rates of GBV.

The following activities were carried out to select the sample.

1. **A review of the National Directory of Civil Society Organizations with actions towards women.** This review identified 69 CSOs that met the established criteria. A sub-sample of 22 CSOs was constructed, based on the depth of their work in this area and a review of the trajectory of this work by the psychologist. Three CSOs were identified during this review.
2. **An Internet search for CSOs that met the established criteria**, which identified two CSOs.
3. **Drawing on the knowledge of our experts and Simetría's own experiences of collaborations.** This identified three CSOs that met the established criteria.

The selected sample of organizations was varied and heterogeneous, located in different states in Mexico. This helped to generate more complete information on CSOs that work in different way and in different situations with different types of beneficiaries. As a result, CSOs that work for women's rights and that deal with cases of domestic violence were included. Similarly, CSOs that work only with men to prevent domestic violence were included, as well as those who work with children, adolescents and their families. (Table 1. See Annexes).

Key informant interviews

Two questionnaires were designed and compiled to gather information on the methods that CSOs in Mexico are developing and implementing to work with men and boys on the prevention and eradication of domestic violence. One questionnaire was used for interviews with the representatives of the eight CSOs, and the other for the 12 programme participants interviewed. In all cases, the interviews were recorded. The interviewed CSOs helped Simetría to identify programme participants to interview, including both men and boys. Of these beneficiaries, 8 were men aged 18 years of age and older, 3 were adolescents aged 14 or 15, and 1 was a boy aged 8. In all cases, the interviews were conducted remotely by the psychologist via Zoom meetings, using google forms, and were recorded with the prior consent of the respondents.

The following criteria were followed for interviews with those under the age of 18.

- 1) consent was requested from the CSOs that provide workshops to mothers and to children in order to carry out the interview,
- 2) consent was requested to carry out the interview from the child's parent
- 3) mothers could be present throughout an interview with a child
- 4) the interview was conducted by the psychologist who specialises in the prevention of GBV and support for its survivors, and
- 5) the psychologist selected the questions used for the interviews with the children (who were not asked questions on adult topics).

Interviewing the beneficiaries was not an easy task. And in the case of two organisations (Fundación Vive mujer 100% AC and Enfoque de Igualdad AC) it was not possible to do so. This is the result of the internal policies of the CSOs, the nature of the care they provide (e.g., in the CSOs that provide shelter to women and their children, beneficiaries may stay for only a few days and contact is lost once they leave) or because the beneficiaries live in very remote communities without Internet access. To compensate for this lack of information, internal evaluations of the programmes carried out by these two CSOs with boys and men were reviewed and their recommendations were included in the proposed model.

The CSOs interviewed reported that activities are usually carried out in a group setting; one or two times a week; with a duration of an hour and a half; and with one or two therapists (who are mostly men). In some of the groups a voluntary contribution is requested for each session, while others are free. The CSOs pointed out that many of the participants, in addition to facing a personal crisis, are also experiencing an economic crisis (e.g., unemployment, low income, insufficient income to cover costs until the end the month), so free workshops facilitate the participation.

All CSOs reported that the workshops work with small groups of men, using a gender perspective. This perspective helps participants to understand the power dynamics that are imposed by society and derived from gender differences. This matters because many men believe that women should be submissive and subordinate to them – the comments they make or the orders they dictate – but that, in practice, women refuse to comply. While men have the idea that women should obey men, women do not think that this should be the case in a relationship: with both having a different idea of ‘the couple’. In the workshops, men are first made aware of all the services they expect from their partners. And then they start to work on self-responsibility, discussing how can they meet their own responsibilities.

For CSOs, the decision to work with men to prevent and draw attention GBV has not been easy. In fact, 62.5% of the CSOs surveyed reported having had some problems with the inclusion of boys and men in their programmes. The most common problems mentioned were their resistance to joining and attending the programmes and possible situations of threats of violence towards staff and other participants within the organisations.

Regarding the evaluation of results, some CSOs monitor beneficiaries’ perceptions of the programmes (using a self-perception questionnaire) and their satisfaction levels, but do not carry out more rigorous evaluations of impact or results. In no case was it possible to verify the level of effectiveness of the programmes, or to what extent their objectives and goals have been met, or their barriers and challenges have been overcome. This makes it difficult to determine whether the programmes are failing, what should be done to improve the results and, above all, if the efforts being made to prevent GBV are bearing fruit. CSOs pointed out that the reason for this is that they do not have the budgets needed to evaluate their programmes.

Regarding the opinions of the programme participants interviewed, practically all of the beneficiaries surveyed stated that they were very satisfied with the programmes they attended. These results are very encouraging because participants reported changes in their behaviour, especially regarding self-control, the identification of violence, feeling supported and ending gender stereotypes. In addition to what they have learned in the programmes, several participants have transmitted this knowledge to others and have used it in practice with other members of their family or their partner. Likewise, 75% of those surveyed stated that they had changed their behaviour with other men, with many distancing themselves from groups of men that generated violence against women, with the same percentage reporting that they had changed their behaviour with women (for more information on the perception of the beneficiaries of the results of the programmes see Annex 3.)

In all, 50% of the beneficiaries surveyed stated that there is pressure on men to behave in certain ways in the society in which they live. In that sense, they reported that the programme was useful to help them understand, identify and eliminate gender stereotypes. They also reported that the programme had helped them to improve their communication with the people that surround them, identify violence and improve their self-control, among other benefits.

The information obtained from the review of international practices and from interviews with CSOs in Mexico and their beneficiaries has been used to develop a practical guide to inform the design of

Findings

‘They teach me to observe myself in my actions, to imagine that each person is like a very beautiful garden, and you have to be very careful when passing through there. I must ask permission; I must generate an agreement.’

Daniel, programme participant

International practices

A review of international practices to include men in the prevention of GBV was undertaken as part of this research. This showed that CSOs in different countries include working to transform negative masculinities and promote more egalitarian behaviours among their objectives, aiming to contribute to the prevention and eradication of GBV.

Most of the projects reviewed involve young people and men in the prevention of GBV through educational workshops, groups with other men and webinars. Among other topics, social gender norms are discussed in the workshops and groups with men. However, men are sometimes provided with counselling and group therapy. This is the case for Manscentrum, a men's crisis centre in Sweden, which offers conversational help to clarify, process, and find solutions to relationship problems, anger and violence, among others. This organisation also conducts group therapy for men with violent behaviour.

The topics covered in the workshops include gender equitable attitudes, healthy relationships, positive masculinities, social gender norms, abusive behaviours, negative impacts of gender violence, power in relationships, sexuality, conflict resolution and violence against women and girls. Concepts on the role of men in care and domestic activities are also introduced.

Reflection on social gender norms is seen as essential. Recent research has suggested that acts of violence are not only transmitted from one generation to the next, but also reinforce the systemic patriarchal hierarchy, in which women and children are subservient to men (Namy et al., 2017, cited in Heilman and Barker, 2018). According to the Prevention Collaborative, intimate partner violence is most common where men's authority over female behaviour is the norm and where women are disadvantaged in terms of access to land, property and other productive assets (Prevention Collaborative, n.d.).

Various studies confirm that rigid social norms about gender, gender roles, family and marriage – along with men's childhood experiences of violence – contribute to men's use of violence against their female partners (Heise, 2011; Moore and Stuart, 2005; Levtoev et al., 2014). When men adopt rigid and inequitable definitions of masculinity, they are more likely to engage in many forms of intimate partner violence (Barker et al. 2011; Levtoev et al., 2014; Fleming et al., 2015). Norms in some settings establish GBV violence as acceptable and even as a strategy for solving problems at home, with a social acceptance of intimate partner violence as a normal part of intimate relationships (Heise, 2011). In many contexts, the use of violence by a man against his wife or partner is seen as a way to control

her behaviour and reinforce power structures that, implicitly or explicitly, confers higher social status (Prevention Collaborative, n. d.).

One challenge for workshops in many countries was to encourage men and youth to participate. Various strategies were used to address this challenge:

1. holding recreational activities such as soccer
2. hold workshops on productive activities that help men to generate more income
3. offering food
4. following up with members to understand the barriers to participation and find ways to improve and maintain attendance.

The Rwanda Men's Resource Center, for example, has worked with coffee-producing cooperatives in that country with two objectives: providing financial and technical support to increase coffee production and income, and providing information on gender equality and the prevention of family violence (Promundo, 2012).

Regarding the language used, the strategies that use a negative tone in their messages are less effective in engaging male participants. The most effective programmes are those in which the participants are not seen as 'beneficiaries', but rather as fully empowered agents who control their own lives and futures. For example, messages that blame and/or criminalise men for exercising violence against women as 'being the bad guys' will not be well received by them. In contrast, research suggests that messages should promote respect and emphasise the benefits that men can gain from participating in programmes (Promundo and UNFPA, 2010).

Evaluations of the results of the programmes tend to evaluate the impact on the attitudes of men in the short term. There is no information on what happens to these attitudes in the long term. The international experience reviewed shows, for example, that one of the easiest ways to evaluate programmes is by collecting testimonials from workshop participants, as was the case with Emerge and Partners for Prevention ([www-manscentrum-se](http://www.manscentrum-se); Promundo, 2012).

Participants in the Partners for Prevention programme in Viet Nam reported having more respectful and equitable attitudes towards their wives as a result of their participation in the workshop, as well as greater knowledge about GBV, positive masculinities and gender equality (Partners for Prevention, 2016). Likewise, organisations such as Manscentrum and Promundo pointed out changes in attitudes reported by workshop participants as a result of the programme, such as an increase in more equitable gender behaviours, as well as positive changes in behaviour related to the division of labour in the home and to childcare.

In India, Promundo evaluated its programme by conducting in-depth interviews with its workshop participants. In addition, interviews were carried out with the women who were partners of the workshop participants to gather more objective information about the change in men's attitudes as a result of their participation in the programme. In Brazil, an evaluation by Promundo surveyed knowledge and awareness about gender equality and violence against women and children before and after the intervention among workshop participants and a control group (men from another community who did not take the workshop). The results showed that 20% of the men who took part in the workshop reported having greater control of themselves in terms of avoiding violent reactions (Promundo, 2010; 2012).

Civil society organisations interviewed in Mexico

The national CSOs in the Mexico sample were asked why they decided to include men in their programmes to prevent GBV. While the answers varied, there were, in general, five key factors:

1. they realised the importance of working with the person who exercises violence to raise awareness about the negative impacts this causes for themselves, their family, community, etc.
2. because there are significant numbers of children living or working on the streets in the communities where they work who need support and attention
3. because significant numbers of women go to shelters with their male children
4. because they have been requested to include men in their programmes by beneficiaries who are survivors of violence, and
5. because this is necessary to promote the prevention of GBV.

The CSOs interviewed indicated that their strategies are based on meetings or growth groups that promote reflection. In these reflection groups, each man presents his experience, and the others listen. In many cases, the beneficiaries have been attending these programmes for months and even years.

All eight organisations combine these reflection groups with workshops and in some cases with psychotherapy. All of the organisations interviewed consider it important to complement group therapy with a psychological evaluation, as well as with individual therapy (when required). Psychotherapy complements the work conducted during the reflection groups and workshops, particularly for men who may have suffered traumatic experiences in their own childhood and adolescence, such as maltreatment or sexual abuse.

The CSOs surveyed reported that most participants arrive on their own as the result of a personal or family crisis that has made them realise that they need support. On some occasions, however, the participants have been referred by the judicial system.

Psychotherapy with men who exercise violence aims to:

1. teach time-out techniques
2. address the problem of jealousy
3. re-evaluate cognitive biases
4. help them work on their personal history
5. design strategies to solve specific problems
6. raise awareness of the services available to the couple
7. training in relaxation and communication skills, and
8. teaching techniques to cope with anger control impulses.

strategies to include adult men in raising awareness of and preventing GBV. The guide sets out key points to be considered as follows.

- There are three proven strategies to work with men who have exercised violence:
 - o workshops for men on concepts and themes of GBV and social norms, among others
 - o reflection groups, which are spaces where they can share individual testimonies with other men, and
 - o psychotherapy when is required.

The guide proposes the implementation of all three simultaneously, including psychotherapy (depending on the degree and cause of the problem).

The needs of each participant must be determined with a diagnosis and – based on this diagnosis – the relevance of combining different tools should be defined. In some cases (particularly in the case of men who are impulsive or those with behavioural disorders), workshops and psychotherapy are insufficient for their adequate treatment and must be complemented with a psychopharmacological treatment to control their violent behaviour (Cervelló, 2001, Maiuro and Avery, 1996). In these cases, it is recommended that men are referred to an institution or CSO that provides them with this type of help (to address, for example, drug addiction, alcoholism, or a biological problem that requires medical treatment, etc.).

- It is essential to clearly define the objective of the strategy, as well as the target population: children, adolescents, adult men, etc. This definition will enable the better design and stronger focus of the strategy.
- It is advisable diagnose the wider context of GBV that is experienced in the surrounding region, the profile of the potential beneficiaries (men, youth, adolescents and/or children), the predominant work activity, types of violence, average educational level, school dropout rate, degree of femicide and the levels of insecurity and poverty, as well as the main problems facing the community. Based on this diagnosis, the objectives could be reached, and the problems could be solved in a more focused and appropriate manner.
- It is important to note that, initially, men do not want to attend these workshops. A dissemination plan for the workshops must be drawn up and the strategy itself – as well as the workshops – must be given an attractive name. This needs careful consideration, as the language and messages that are used can either attract or deter participants. The evidence shows that messages blaming men for their violence against women, or their machismo will not be successful, and deter their participation in the workshops.

Experience shows that it is necessary to carry out other strategies to overcome men's resistance to workshop participation and encourage them to attend. One way to do this is to offer workshops that are of tangible, practical use for the participants. Our interviews and our review of international practices suggest that one successful strategy to encourage men to participate is to offer them courses where they can learn a skill and thereby improve their income (Promundo, 2012). A requirement to take a free course and learn a new skill (such as how to fix electrical appliances or prepare food) is that they must also take part in a workshop on masculinities.

In Africa, for example, the Rwanda Men's Resource Center (RWAMREC) worked with three local coffee cooperatives to conduct GBV prevention training to educate participants on alternatives to violence. Each coffee cooperative received financial and technical support from RWAMREC, which included

seed money for the production of coffee baskets and other income-generating projects. The goal of the project was to use economic opportunities to increase cohesion amongst male and female coffee cooperative members, with the income-generating activities providing a space for the reinforcement of non-violent behaviours and continuous dialogue across genders (Promundo, 2012). While the impact results were not assessed in Rwanda, the pilot experience affirmed that coffee cooperatives are a potentially low-cost way to reach large numbers of participants with messages about GBV and achieve even more impact when combined with the income generation approach.

Sports tournaments and activities that are of interest to men have also been used in other countries. One example that has been well received has been soccer tournaments (Brazil), with the men who participate required to attend sessions on masculinities (Promundo, 2010; 2012).

A number of other desirable programme characteristics have emerged from our research as follows.

- It is essential that men understand the potential benefits of participating in these workshops as a way to motivate their continued attendance:
 - improvements in their self-esteem
 - improvements in their quality of life
 - improved relationships with people that surround them
 - more positive reactions appropriate to problems, among others.
- The topics to be addressed in the programme will depend a great deal on the profile of the potential beneficiaries and their context, as well as the specific objective of the strategy. It is important, therefore, to conduct a diagnosis of the context and the general characteristics of the beneficiaries before the programme curriculum is prepared.

Some of the topics included in other countries are gender roles and stereotypes; social norms, gender violence and its types and consequences; the pressures of being a woman and a man; anger management; effective listening; assertive communication; and pathological jealousy, among others.

Before starting the workshops, the facilitator (usually male) should receive training on his role as facilitator, as well as the purpose and content of the workshop. The facilitator must have knowledge about social gender norms and GBV. He could be a psychologist or work in another profession: what matters is that he has been trained in the specific methodology to be used. Psychotherapy, however, should only be provided by a trained psychologist in all cases. The group facilitator could also be a man who has used or lived with violence in the past and who has been rehabilitated. There should be a maximum of around 10-12 participants in the group, plus the facilitator, so that everyone has a chance to share their opinions and the facilitator can ensure good control of the group.

- The duration of the programmes should be brief, to avoid discouraging men who might be deterred if they are presented with programmes that are very long. One recommendation would be a three-month series of workshops to present the main concepts and tools (a total of 12 weekly sessions)), with the option of being able to continue for a longer period of time if the participant wishes. There should be options for what is called 'maintenance' once the workshop is over, where participants can attend a workshop or group once a month.

It is recommended that the weekly sessions are held at a time that is compatible with the men's work schedules and last no more than 1.5 hours, so that they are not tiring for the participants.

- In addition to carrying out the workshops, it is necessary to provide the participants with alternative containment and support tools that can help them to reduce their violent behaviours. One approach is to promote interaction among the participants which could include a WhatsApp group where they can communicate with one another or even have a call and chat to calm down or to seek for advice. Participants should be able to contact other participants if they need to calm down, and access to additional sources of support if they need advice. This is common practice in self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous.

In addition, good practices observed in other CSOs can be incorporated into such programmes. One useful tool that can prevent violence is a 24-hour helpline for men – a place where they can be heard and oriented and can reflect in case of emergency.

- It is vital that any intervention model that aims to prevent GBV and that includes men in its strategy must consider its evaluation from the earliest stages of its design. Evaluation is needed to generate more evidence on the results and impacts that a programme has for its participants. Funding for CSO programmes should include the resources needed to evaluate the programmes' impact and results.

Conclusion

'It was very important. I found the programme at a time when I didn't know where to go, when I had a new partner and a baby, and I realized that I was repeating things. I saw it on the internet on a friend's page and saw that it was just what I was looking for. It helped me a lot to stop my violent behaviour and to work on myself.'

Daniel, programme participant

The findings of this research show that CSOs working to prevent and eradicate violence against women in Mexico and that include men in their strategies use similar methodologies. The CSOs interviewed combine reflection groups, workshops, and psychotherapy to achieve their goals. As a central part of their strategies, CSOs review and reflect with men on social norms, gender roles and stereotypes, and domestic violence and its effects, as well as alternative ways to control anger, among other topics.

Almost all participants in the selected programmes reported having more tools to control themselves at times when they feel the urge to use violence at home. These men are happy and enthusiastic about their participation in the workshops, reporting that, as a result, they are able to identify and eliminate gender stereotypes and have improved their abilities to communicate with the people close to them.

There are, however, continued challenges to the improvement of programmes with men. The main challenge is the lack of budget for the CSOs working in this area.

All CSOs perceive a lack of interest on the part of the authorities to finance these programmes. One potential solution would be deeper research that shows the value, of reducing domestic violence in Mexico, including the financial gains and the gains in productivity, among others. Another possible path is to continue to generate evidence on the importance of including men and boys in the prevention and eradication of GBV, and to carry out a campaign that includes decision makers to make them more aware of this issue. One solution mobilised by CSOs has been to look for other sources of financing, such as generating their own income through consultancies or writing and selling books, among others.

Another challenge remains men's reluctance to attend this type of programme, coupled with a lack of dissemination of the strategies and their benefits. The interviews showed that there is a chronic lack of information about gender roles and equality, as well as about the alternatives to violence that men can use for a healthy and equitable masculinity.

The research confirms the crucial importance of continuing to emphasise the importance of this subject with authorities, institutions and CSOs. It is vital to continue with efforts to raise awareness about the alternatives to violence, so that both women and men can live safe and happy lives, free from violence.

Recommendations

'Basically, we are a group of men who are participating in a process of dealing with our violence under a manual and we process what the manual dictates. During the virtual sessions a part of the programme is worked on, and in person the other branches of the programme are dealt with. One example is that a colleague recounts a situation of violence, and everyone participates without judging, without interpreting.'

Luis, programme participant

A series of recommendations has emerged from the analysis and findings of this research for government and for CSOs themselves.

Government

- Organisations with programmes that include men and boys for the prevention of violence find it very difficult to obtain funding to carry out their work. In addition, there is competition with organisations that provide care to women survivors of violence in terms of access to funds and resources. However, it is necessary for public programmes and policies to have a comprehensive vision for their work on gender violence. In particular, resources need to be devoted not only to support for survivors, but also to prevention, a stage in which men and boys must also be included. Public policies must consider the importance of both care for women survivors of violence and prevention work with both sexes and allocate sufficient resources to both strategies.
- It is vital to estimate the cost of domestic violence for society. Likewise, an estimate could be made of the minimum expenditure necessary to address the problem of domestic violence in Mexico, aiming to have better data and evidence on the resources required to deal with this problem. Such a study could be presented to decision makers and CSOs, together with an estimated budget and suggested financing options.
- The prevention of violence at an early age is essential. Public policy in the educational sector at both the federal and state levels should be used to promote the prevention and eradication of GBV. The educational curriculum should include the gender perspective and incorporate components to prevent, address, punish and eradicate such violence. The inclusion of both male and female students and their parents would be a good practice. The programme participants interviewed recommended that violence prevention strategies should reach children at an early age. The CSOs interviewed also pointed out that it is essential to build alliances with the education sector.
- There is still resistance to strategies that include men and boys in Mexico's gender violence prevention policy. Dissemination campaigns should be carried out to inform and raise awareness about the benefits of including men and boys in violence prevention. Without their inclusion, the entire weight of the solution to this global problem falls on women and that is too great a burden. While it is necessary to prioritize the survivors of violence for attention, it is also necessary to work on prevention so that this problem does not continue.

Civil society organisations

- As a result of financial obstacles, CSOs in Mexico are unable to evaluate the results and impact of their interventions, particularly over the long term. It is important to look for ways in which the programmes carried out can be evaluated and, therefore, to generate more information on the results of each programme, as well as ways to improve the strategies.
- It is necessary to remember that, for some men, a workshop on gender violence and masculinities will not be enough to stop them using violence in their homes, given that there may be men with additional problems such as psychiatric illness or addiction. Additional treatments are, therefore, needed for them, and it is necessary to take measures to separate the aggressor from their victims. CSOs that work with these men should carry out individual diagnostic work with each participant and refer them and their families to other programmes when necessary.
- Some specialists have been critical of masculinities workshops because: 1) although they help men to better regulate their emotions, they do not really promote a change in behaviour (because the values and beliefs of many men are very entrenched); and 2) male participants may stop exercising extreme physical violence yet continue to exercise psychological violence. It is necessary to go further with strategies that include men and boys and assess whether they bring about a real change in their behaviour.
- It is necessary to consider that working to eradicate GBV is a daily and lifelong task. It cannot be reduced to participation in a 12-session series of workshops. For this reason, it is essential that the groups consider the possibility that, once the workshop is over, the men can continue to attend groups and psychotherapy (known as a maintenance programme).
- The goal is to eradicate violence in all its forms, and this is not only about the violence that men exercise with their partners. It goes further to encompass violence in any interpersonal relationship, and the ways in which conflicts can be resolved in non-violent ways. As seen in international experience and in Mexico, positive results have been observed from working with men to prevent violence against women. It is essential to continue efforts to better assess the impacts of these programme in order to implement the strategies that give the best results.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Civil society organisations selected to participate in the study

Name	Objective	Webpage	Location	State ranking in family violence	How they work with men
JUCONI	Provides professional care through programmes to girls and boys who live on the street, at risk or exposed to family violence.	https://juconi.org.mx/	Puebla	11	They identify the different forms of violence exerted and received by boys and teenagers in their life cycle. Based on this assessment, they offer the services of a shelter, an external centre and re-education.
Fundación Apoyo Infantil	Offers workshops that highlight topics such as: values, self-esteem, sexuality and youth rights, as well as those topics that adolescents define as being relevant in their daily lives.	https://www.fai-son.org/	Sonora	12	Prevention and care in coordination with other organisations. 'Guardians of health for 5 years' is a comprehensive programme for children up to 12 years of age. It includes physical and emotional care with psychological therapy, training workshops, work on activities to prevent gender-based violence and bullying, prevention of addictions, and videos. Provides skills training so beneficiaries can earn an income. Also tackles the management of emotions in adults, especially now with the pandemic, and issues of domestic violence. The target groups are boys, teenagers and men.
Cómplices por la Igualdad (junto con Men Engage)	Aims to create a culture of violence prevention in Mexican families. Conducts courses, workshops and seminars focused on the first area of prevention, which is awareness and awareness of the subject.	https://www.facebook.com/ComplicesPorLaIgualdad	CDMX	1	Reflection or growth groups with men to prevent violence against women, among other activities.

Enfoque de Igualdad AC	Dedicated to research, training, community intervention and the promotion of human rights.	www.enfoquedeigualdad.org	San Luis Potosí	10	They work directly with indigenous communities with workshops and re-education to reduce violence against women and exercise more responsible fatherhood.
APIS Sureste Fundación para la Equidad	Contributes to the prevention of domestic violence, among other activities.	https://apisfundacion.com/sensibilizacion-social/	Yucatán	29	They have two programmes. The first addresses the care of children and adolescents who suffer sexual and family violence and who do not need shelter. The other is for violence prevention and the training of human capital for school teachers, psychologist and social workers to teach concepts to prevent violence in childhood.
Hombres por la Equidad. Centro de Intervención con Hombres e Investigación sobre Género y Masculinidades	Supports the defence and promotion of gender equality.	https://www.hombresporlaequidad.org/	Querétaro	24	Reflection groups to stop violent behaviour that men inflict on their partners. Cognitive behavioural techniques, including life histories, help them understand why they exercise violence. Psychoeducational techniques are applied, and men are taught re-educational techniques.
Fundación Vive 100% Mujer	Promotion of gender equality, defence of human rights and a focus on family and gender-based violence.	http://www.vivemujer.org/index2.html	Estado de México	2	An itinerant module on themes of violence such as violence when dating, school for parents, and child sexual abuse. Shelter for women survivors of violence. A three-month programme includes male children up to 17 years of age who are survivors of extreme violence, offering accommodation, food, clothing, social work and psychological care.
GENDES	They offer a permanent space for men to participate in a re-educational and reflective process.	www.gendes.org.mx	CDMX	1	A focus on men who perpetrate violence, providing individual psychotherapy care and three telephone helplines, among other services.

Source: Own elaboration with data from the web pages of the CSOs.

Annex 2. Characteristics of the eight civil society organisations surveyed in Mexico

Variable	Description
Number of civil society organisations (CSOs)	8
Average age of the people surveyed (from CSOs)	47.7 years
Women surveyed (in charge of the programmes or Director of the CSO)	50%
CSOs that have been working for 10-20 years	75%
CSOs that have been working for more than 20 years	25%
Average number of workers in the organisation	24.8
Organisations working on public policy	75%
Organisations that have an emergency helpline	1
Organisations that have a clear methodology for their interventions	All
Organisations that document their methodology	All
Field of incidence in public policies (area in which CSOs seek to influence public policies or target their advocacy).	Government and legislative branch
Main problems in the locality where the CSO operates	Poverty and insecurity

Source: Own estimates based on the Survey of CSO Strategies to reduce gender violence, including men and boys by Simetría AC.

Annex 3. Characteristics of the beneficiaries surveyed

Variable	Men	Boys
Number of beneficiaries surveyed	8	4
Average age	43	13.2
Single	38%	100%
Married/cohabitating	62%	NA
Own children	50%	NA
Lives with their partner	50%	NA
Incomplete elementary school	NA	25%
Incomplete mid school	NA	25%
Complete mid school	NA	25%
Incomplete high school	12.5%	25%
Bachelor's degree	75%	NA
Master's degree	12.5%	NA
Currently working	100.0%	0

Source: Own estimates based on the Survey of Beneficiaries of Strategies to reduce gender violence, including men and boys by Simetría AC

Annex 4. Perceptions of the beneficiaries on the results of the programmes

Participant	How do you feel since participating in this programme	Benefits of the programme	Do you apply what you learned in the programme in your family, with your children and partner?
1	More confidence in myself	Socialise and more respect.	Yes I apply it
2	Very good	More equity and non-violence	No, maybe 60%, but when I get upset I forget the learnings
3	Reconocer y evitar la violencia.	Eliminate gender stereotypes	Yes of course, but it is difficult
4	Very good	Improve my diet	Yes, I always try to bring the best for my children
5	Protected	Better performance in school and work	Yes, I apply it with my family
6	Better	Violence is not the way	Yes, he applies it sometimes with his sister
7	I stop violence	Identify the types of violence	Yes
8	Be aware of violence	Identify the types of violence	Yes
9	I like it a lot	Better communication in relationships	Yes
10	Good, now I identify violence	You identify with other men in the same situation	Yes, with my family, with my children, with my partner and even professionally, it can be extended to all areas.
11	I like it	Self-observing actions, generating agreements, raising awareness of what can cause violence.	Yes, sometimes in a very fluid way and sometimes I realize that I still have a lot to improve
12	Accompanied and with more hope	Self-control, better relationships	Not completely, a percentage yes, but I still have to improve many things and be constant

Source: Information based on the Survey of beneficiaries of Strategies for CSOs to reduce gender-based violence, including men and boys by Simetría AC.

Annex 5. Specialists who reviewed and validated the proposed guide to include adult men in the prevention and eradication of violence against women in Mexico

Name	Field	Experience
Gabriela Josefina Saldivar Hernández	Psychologist	Researcher in Medical Sciences of the Directorate of Epidemiological and Psychosocial Research of the Ramón de la Fuente Muñiz National Institute of Psychiatry
María del Socorro Leal y Núñez	Sociologist	Graduate in Sociology from the Universidad Iberoamericana and a master's and PhD in Psychology from the Universidad Iberoamericana. Currently dedicated to the private practice of psychotherapy.
Roberto Octavio Garda Salas	Economist	General director in Hombres por la Equidad AC. He holds a master's degree in sociology from UNAM. Doctoral candidate in Critical Studies by the 17th Institute of Critical Studies of the CDMX.

About ALIGN

ALIGN is a digital platform and programme of work that is creating a global community of researchers and thought leaders, all committed to gender justice and equality. It provides new research, insights from practice, and grants for initiatives that increase our understanding of – and work to change – discriminatory gender norms. Through its vibrant and growing digital platform, and its events and activities, ALIGN aims to ensure that the best of available knowledge and resources have a growing impact on harmful gender norms.

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Guanajuato, Mexico, 2019: group of men talking on the famous bridge of love. © Aberu.Go/shutterstock.

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