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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations

Introduction

What can be done to change the social norms that drive the behaviors of men and boys that leave girls vulnerable? The vulnerabilities and disadvantages that girls face emerge directly out of social constructions of gender – identities, attributes, socially expected roles and the social structures set up to enforce those roles. These social norms and identities are internalized by young women and girls and translated into cultural practices and individual actions of those who should protect girls and young women (for example, by parents who may encourage or ignore early coerced sex, allow their daughters to establish relationships with much older men, or allow their daughters to be sold into sex work). These social norms create the conditions in which some young and adult men (in the family or outside of it) sexually abuse girls or use physical violence against them, the preference by some adult men for younger female sexual partners, and the practice of sexual coercion by too many men and boys against girls.

In bringing men and boys into the question, we want to make it clear that this is not to propose an either-or argument, of whether we should devote more time and resources to engaging men and boys in redressing gender inequalities versus working directly with girls to protect and empower them. Both must happen.

The global discourse for empowering girls has generally focused on, among other things, girls' enrollment in public education, reducing or prohibiting early marriage, and economic empowerment. While all of these are key, even when they have been achieved (no small feat to be sure), girls and women are still too often vulnerable. In Latin America and Caribbean on the whole, for example, we see girls enrolled at nearly universal rates at the primary level (in some countries at rates higher than boys). But this enrollment does not leave girls immune to harassment and unwanted sexual advances. In a recent population-based survey in the Caribbean (where girls' rates of enrollment in primary school approach 100 percent, and are higher than those of boys), nearly 50 per cent of young women ages 10-18 reported that their first sexual experience was "forced" or "somewhat forced" (UN Millennium Project, 2005).

Similarly, in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and much of South Asia, girls studying in mixed

review we recently carried out with WHO on program interventions with men and boys in promoting gender equality (Barker, Ricardo & Nascimento, 2006).

How boys are socialized to view girls

The socialization of boys and views about what men and women should and should not do are rooted in childrearing practices from the first moments of life onward. By the age of two or three, children imitate the behavior of same-sex family members. Family members usually encourage boys to imitate other boys and men, while discouraging them from imitating girls. Boys who observe fathers and other men being violent toward women, or treating women as inferior or as objects for their sexual pleasure and use may believe that this as “normal” male behavior.

Research carried out in a number of settings finds that many boys and young men view women as sex objects, as being sexually subservient to men and show little respect for the right of girls and women to bodily integrity and autonomy. In a study carried out by Population Council and colleagues in collaboration with Promundo in slum areas in Mumbai, India, 80 percent of 107 young men ages 15-24 reported having practiced “eve-teasing” in the previous three months. Young men frequently described these incidents with pride. Sometimes, specific forms of teasing or harassment were targeted at girls who challenged the young men in some way. Young men acknowledged the powerlessness that young women faced when teased, and the sometimes passive acceptance of this harassment by those who witness it:

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had to provide sex. If a girl accepted favors or said she would go out with a young man, sex was expected. As one young man related, it would be acceptable to use violence against a woman: “at times when you take her out, have negotiated (that you would have sex) and then she refuses (to have sex)” (Barker and Ricardo, 2005).

Another common practice among young men is that of categorizing women and girls, into those seen as sex objects and those seen as eligible or desirable for marriage. Young men frequently distinguish between girls who are seen as suitable for marriage (“girls of faith” as young men in Rio de Janeiro called them, referring to girls one would have as girlfriends), and “girls of the street”, referring to girls with whom they had short-term and often purely sexual relationships, and who may be subject to even greater harassment and coercion.

In some parts of the world, many young men have their first sexual encounters with a sex worker, in part at least to affirm their manhood before the male peer group. In Thailand, 61 percent of young men report having had their first sexual encounter in this way (Im-em, 1998). In Argentina, 42 percent of secondary school boys interviewed in one study said their first sexual experience was with a sex worker (Necchi & Schufer, 1998). In India, between 19 percent and 78 percent of men report having had sex at least once with a sex worker (Jeebhoy, 1996). In most such sexual encounters with sex workers, young men go in groups that include male family members or peers, frequently out of a sense of obligation to fulfill a socially proscribed role. Such practices reinforce -- and may lead to lifelong patterns -- of men viewing women as their sexual servants.

Even more subtle and perhaps more widespread is the exchange of sex for gifts, and the encouragement or acquiescence of parents to younger girls going out with older men. In a sample survey we carried out in low income settings in Rio de Janeiro with approximately 600 parents, nearly 25 percent of parents agreed with the statement: “I would let my 15-year-old daughter go out with a 29-year-old man.” In a recent group discussion with mothers of teenage children in one of the neighborhoods, when asked this same question, nearly all the mothers acknowledged the power differentials of a 29-year-old man compared to a 15-year-old girl, but said that such behavior was “natural” -- in effect that girls “naturally like older guys who can buy them things.”

Indeed, if boys are socialized in much of the world to believe they have sexual rights over girls (particularly those seen as sexually “loose” or available), we also know that girls are frequently socialised to accept male control of sexual decision-making, as has been confirmed in numerous studies on sexual violence (Jeebhoy and Bott, 2003). A study in South Africa found that young women identified their ideal relationship as one in which the male made the decisions, including the use of condoms and the timing of sex (Harrison et al., 2001). Among 11 to 15 year-old school-going young people in Jamaica, 69 per cent of boys and 32 per cent of girls agreed with the statement that ‘if you really love your [partner], you should have sex with them’ and more than half (58 per cent) of boys and 30 per cent of girls said that if a boy ‘spends a lot of money on a girl’ she should have sex with him (Eggleston and Hardee, 1999).

For both young men and women, economic disempowerment has important implications for their sexual behavior and the resulting vulnerabilities. An ethnographic study in an Eastern Cape township in South Africa, suggested that the lack of economic and recreational

opportunities for youth led to sexual relations being used as a means for gaining respect and social status (Wood and Jewkes 2001). In addition, low-income young men in many settings in Africa frequently express frustration over the fact that young women are largely attracted to those young and older men with income. Older men, who tend to have more money, also seem to be “watching and showing off their money” to compete with younger men (Mataure et al. 2002). Young women in turn may pursue sexual relations with older men, who generally have jobs and more resources. In other cases, social structures that determine when men receive land and are socially sanctioned to marry, mean that mostly older men are able to marry. This can contribute to inter-generational tension, in which young men see older men as having access to women (particularly young women who are their age-mates), jobs, resources and subsequently greater power (with widely discussed implications for HIV vulnerability).

Finding, understanding and promoting resistance

In analyzing these findings related to the socialization of boys and men, there are always some young and adult men who question these inequalities. Some young men are able to recognize that their own discourses and actions – carrying out sexual harassment with and before the judging eyes of their male peers – were partly performative. A few young men make an effort to understand the difficulties that young women face. Some young and adult men are keen

identify the costs of traditional versions of

control.” Or, “Everybody knows that you should use a condom, but in the heat of the moment” Campaign slogans use language from the community and images are of young men from the same communities – acting in ways that support gender equality.

These concepts, initially tested in Brazil, have since been adapted in other settings. In the case of India, a community-based campaign was developed included comic books, street theatre, posters, and a cap and t-shirt (worn by peer promoters) with the campaign slogan, developed by young men, called the “Real Man Thinks Right”. The logo shows a young man pointing to his head, as if thinking. One comic book shows a young man questioning another man who repeatedly uses violence against his wife. Campaign slogans reinforce the message that it is possible for men not to use violence against women. For example, one campaign poster reads: “Raju (a man’s name) never uses violence against Rakma (a woman’s name). This happens.” Pre-testing found that given widespread acceptance of violence against women, we needed to affirm that there are men in the community who do not use such violence. Similarly, another poster reads: “When Anju does not want to (have sex), Sandeep does not force her. This is possible!” Both are followed with the campaign slogan: “The Real Man Thinks Right.” These messages are acted out in street theatre reaching more than 500 community residents (many of those out-of-work young men).

Impact evaluation with more than 750 young men in Brazil found a significant change in attitudes related to gender-based violence (compared to a control group that showed no change), increased condom use, lower rates of STIs. Qualitative components of the evaluation included interviews with female partners who confirmed positive changes in how their male partners treated them. In the case of India, while still in the testing phase, the number of young men who reported sexual harassment of girls after the intervention dropped by more than half.

At the current stage in the process, the partner organizations are starting work in Brazil, India and Tanzania with groups of young women and men together – forming partnerships based on equality – and designing messages and carrying out group educational activities with mixed groups of young men and women.

Program H, of course, is not the only initiative using this approach to engaging men and

men who participated in the program reported a greater willingness to question or act on incidents of gender-based violence that they witnessed.

In India, the NGO Sahayog has started a multi-state effort to engage men at the community level to start local efforts to reach men with messages to end violence against women and girls. Qualitative evaluation with men acting as promoters found significant change in how they treated their female partners, but also resistance to their changing behaviors and attitudes by family members.

In South Africa, the Men As Partners initiative engages men via the police force, the military, trade unions, universities and schools to carry out activities in these settings to reach men with messages about gender equality.

While evaluation data is often lacking, there is increasing evidence that such efforts work to achieve attitude and behavior change among men and boys. An ongoing literature review we carried out in collaboration with the World Health Organization identified 57 interventions with men and boys in the areas of SRH, MNCH, GBV, fatherhood and HIV/AIDS prevention that had some impact evaluation and in some way applied a gender analysis – a recognition of salient versions of manhood as being part of the problem – in the intervention. Of the 57 studies analyzed:

24.5 percent were assessed as effective in leading to attitude or behavior change;

38.5 percent were assessed as promising in leading to attitude or behavior change; and

36.8 percent were assessed as unclear.

Those programs reviewed that were classified as gender transformative (meaning they in some way specifically and deliberately addressed parts wo Tc0.1t0 Tc0.g0.1t38h-20.1d3.5(m)8.3(eaning t)7.

Taking such experiences to scale and remaining questions

The programs reviewed for WHO provide ample evidence that men and boys can and do change attitudes and behaviors in the short-term as a result of programme interventions, and that such outcomes are, in nearly all cases, positive for the well-being of women and girls, and men and boys themselves. There are no magic bullets found among the program interventions. Instead, comprehensive, multi-theme interventions that include specific critical discussions about salient, social meanings of masculinities show the highest rates and levels of effectiveness. Nonetheless, there are a number of challenges that remain:

Almost none of the programs were longer term, following men and boys for more than two years, and nearly all have been relatively small-scale.

Only a few of the interventions ask women and girls directly about how men and boys changed.

Few of the programs go beyond measuring individual attitude and behavior change to assess changes in social institutions and practices (in the health sector, the public school, and other public institutions).

Few if any of the programs have included cost data, that is an analysis of what it costs to achieve large scale change in social constructions of gender.

Only a few programs have engaged men, boys, girls and women in a comprehensive, integrated approach that understands gender as relational.

In returning to the question at the beginning of this document: There is evidence of positive impact of efforts to engage men and boys in gender-based health inequalities. More evidence is needed, to be sure, and such programs have been mostly small-scale and short-term. But the evidence confirms that slow change among men is not inevitable, but neither is quick, lasting change easy to achieve in terms of gender norms and structures.

In concluding this document, it is important to affirm those issues that have been left out and questions that remain. First, we affirm that there are thousands of programs reaching men and boys with messages or reflections about masculinities that were not included in the review because they do not have evaluation data (or published evaluation data that meets WHO-defined criteria of rigor) or because existing evaluation data was not readily available. These unevaluated programme experiences deserve attention as we explore ways to scale up work with men and boys to reduce gender inequalities.

In terms of remaining questions, the following are just some that emerge from this review:

Are some attitude and behavioral outcome indicators more important than others in terms of men, boys and gender equality? For example, might there be some key “gateway” behaviors that create pathways to broader gender transformation among

