



I would like to start by thanking the Division for the Advancement of Women for the invitation to speak here today. It is a tremendous honour to have this opportunity to share my thoughts on how best to engage men and boys

Men's use of violence against their intimate partners varies in frequency across different societies. A landmark WHO multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women interviewed over 24,000 women from 15 sites in 10 countries. The proportion of ever-partnered women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner in their lifetime was between 15 and 71 per cent<sup>2</sup>.

While men's violence remains all too pervasive, the period since Beijing has included progress towards the goals set of engaging men and boys in addressing gender based violence and in achieving greater gender equality. I will focus on three areas of achievement: the development of policies and declarations calling for efforts to engage men and boys, the strengthening and expansion of civil society work with men and boys, including the development of the global MenEngage Alliance, and the emergence of an evidence base showing that work with men and boys can contribute to positive changes for women and for men.

Following on the heels of the Beijing Platform for Action, many international declarations and commitments have been ratified which call for governments and UN agencies to take concerted action to engage men and boys for gender equality. These include: the 2001 and 2006 UN General Assembly Special Session on HI

Men's Association for Gender Equality educates men about women's newly gained rights to property, inheritance and divorce. In Kenya, Men for Gender Equality Now uses theater and community mobilization to insist that the criminal justice system holds perpetrators of violence

attitudes and behaviour, and many of the others were regarded as promising.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, the Medical Research Council's evaluation of the Stepping Stones intervention implemented in the Eastern Cape showed the latter led to significant changes in men's attitudes and practices including significant reductions in intimate partner violence and other practices that are high risk for HIV transmission.<sup>4,5</sup>

In Brazil, Instituto Promundo's intervention with young men on promoting healthy relationships and HIV/STI prevention, showed significant shifts in gender norms at six months and twelve months. Young men with more equitable norms were between four and eight times less likely to report STI symptoms with additional improvements at 12 months post intervention.<sup>6</sup>

These studies confirm that men can change their gender related attitudes and relations in relatively short periods of time.

The work of civil society organisations is inspiring and the emerging evidence base both compelling and exciting. However, men's violence against women remains pervasive in many parts of the world. Why, if so many initiatives are in place across the world to involve men and boys in achieving gender equality, have we not had

To truly transform gender inequalities, it is necessary to go beyond scattered, small-scale interventions and efforts (no matter how effective), towards systematic, large-scale, and coordinated efforts.

Policy can be used in at least three distinct ways. Firstly, policies can require government to scale up successful NGO projects and implement them nationally by, for instance, integrating gender activities into national schools curricula or training staff from government departments to integrate promising practices into their day to day work, including community health workers or social development outreach workers. Secondly, policies can be implemented that change public perceptions of gender roles and practices, such as through the implementation of social welfare laws that encourage men to be more involved in family life and create social services that facilitate women's full participation in the labour force. Thirdly, policies such as gun control and laws aimed at reducing excessive consumption of alcohol can reduce risk factors for violence whilst also delinking notions of manhood from alcohol and gun use.

However, the development of policies is not a guarantee that they will be well implemented or implemented at all. Leadership and support from senior policy-makers and decision-makers (many of whom are men) is vital to generating good outcomes from gender equality policies. Leaders need to model gender-egalitarian practices and publicly endorse gender equality in their workplaces and in their public roles. Examples of actions that demonstrate commitment to gender equality include holding other men accountable for sexist comments and behaviour or for voting against gender-progressive legislation.

By virtue of their status as binding commitments, policies create opportunities for civil society organisations to demand that policy makers comply with their obligations. However, most civil society organisations currently doing work with men have little advocacy experience. If policy approaches are to be used to take gender work with men and boys to scale, it will be necessary to build the capacity of civil society organisations to engage in advocacy aimed at demanding implementation of such policies. Without this, policy efforts are unlikely to achieve much and may, in fact, have the unintended consequence of drawing skilled programme staff into time-consuming but ultimately ineffective policy development efforts.

Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW) based in India provides a useful example of advocacy to support implementation of hard won policy gains. The 2005 Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act came provides "protection against physical, verbal and sexual abuse and the right to shelter and economic freedom<sup>7</sup>". In collaboration with women's rights organisation, MASVAW coordinates the *Ab To Jaago!* (Wake Up Now!) Campaign which provides rights based education to urban and rural communities about the provisions of the DVA so as to maintain pressure on Government for full implementation<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> The Times of India, *Act is alright, but will it be implemented?* 27 Oct 2006,

<sup>8</sup> <http://dvactupcampaign2007.blogspot.com/2007/12/lucknow.html> accessed on January 20, 2008

Sonke Gender Justice has used a combination of media advocacy and progress reports to draw attention to the gap between policy development and implementation, most recently issuing a scorecard at the 2010 CSW rating South African government department efforts to implement their commitments to involving men and boys. The report is available at [www.genderjustice.org.za](http://www.genderjustice.org.za) and describes significant accomplishments in the area of policy development with inconsistent implementation of commitments and obligations. The report shows, for instance, that few government departments in South Africa currently carry out any activities aimed at involving men and boys in achieving gender equality and reveals that none have costed workplans or coherent strategies to monitor or evaluate their ad-hoc efforts to engage men and boys in achieving gender equality.

Gender work with men and boys has often taken the form of workshops. This work is important and plays an important role in developing leaders at the community level. However, workshops reach only a small number of men and boys at a time. To be effective, work with men and boys will need to include a broader range of strategies that reach larger numbers of men and also address the many factors shaping gender roles and relations including community education, community mobilisation, media advocacy, policy development and advocacy for the implementation of existing policies.

As policy makers and activists build on the achievements of the last fifteen years, it will be important that they not limit their vision to simply supporting the implementation of workshops but instead develop and roll out multifaceted initiatives that reach large numbers of men with multiple messages.

The United Nations Secretary General's UNITE to End Violence Against Women Campaign provides an excellent example of a campaign that seeks to mobilise millions of men from all walks of life, including high level political leaders, to take action to end men's violence by promoting coordination across all UN agencies.

Campaigns such as Brothers for Life, currently underway in South Africa, also offer useful examples of initiatives that combine mass media with community education and mobilisation to support the implementation of existing policies, in this

work to scale, it will be important to establish a set of principles that guide the work and ensure that it remains true to its goal of achieving