**Harmful Traditional and Cultural Practices Related to Violence Against Women and Successful Strategies to Eliminate Such Practices – Working with Men**

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## Introduction

In this paper, I offer an overview of strategies for the primary prevention of men's violence against women. I focus on working with men to end violence against women, and I situate this within a wider framework of violence prevention.

I begin by outlining the rationale for addressing men in efforts to prevent violence against women. I comment briefly on the category of 'harmful traditional and cultural practices' and other forms of violence against women. I then offer a framework identifying six key levels of intervention in violence prevention. I discuss examples of working with men in each, and I identify effective or promising strategies in work with men. The final section of the paper then explores some key challenges in working with men.

## Men's roles in preventing violence against women

Efforts to end violence against women must address men. This notion is increasingly accepted in violence prevention circles. More generally, there is growing international support for the belief that we must involve men in efforts to build gender equality.[1] [2]

The growing emphasis on the need to address men in ending violence against women is fuelled by three key insights. First and most importantly, violence prevention must address men because largely it is men who perpetrate this violence. Most men are not violent and most practise consent in their sexual relations with women. Yet when a girl or woman is subject to physical or sexual violence, the perpetrator usually is male. This also means that men themselves must take responsibility for preventing violence against women. As Berkowitz (2002) states, "Even though only a minority of men may commit sexual assault, all men can have an influence on the culture and environment that allows other men to be perpetrators."

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[1] The rationale for involving men in work toward gender equality has been well articulated in academic writing and at international conferences. See for example Connell (2003); Esplen (2006); Expert Group (2003); Flood (2004, 2007); and Kaufman (2003).

[2] The following three paragraphs are borrowed from Flood (2005-2006).

The impetus for engaging men is informed also by a second recognition, that constructions of masculinity play a crucial role in shaping violence against women. At the individual level, men are more likely to assault if they have hostile and negative sexual attitudes towards women and identify with traditional images of masculinity and male privilege (Flood and Pease 2006). At the level of the immediate context in which violence takes place — typically families or other intimate or acquaintance relationships — male dominance is a strong predictor of the likelihood of physical or sexual violence against women. At the interpersonal level, another predictor especially among young men is attachment to male peers who encourage and legitimate woman abuse. And at the macro-social level, rates of violence against women are higher in cultures in which manhood is defined in terms of dominance, toughness, entitlement to power or male honour, there are rigid gender roles, and violence is condoned as a means to settle interpersonal disputes (Flood and Pease 2006; Heise 1998).

These first two insights boil down to the point that we have no choice but to address men and masculinities if we want to stop violence against women. However, violence prevention work with men has been fuelled also by a third and more hopeful insight: that men have a positive role to play in helping to stop violence against women. There is growing recognition that violence is an issue of concern to women and men alike and that men have a stake in ending violence against women.

Feminist work on violence against women has always recognised and hoped for the positive and non-violent roles that men can play. But this hope only recently has been translated into prevention programs and policy. Some feminist women are nervous about or opposed to men's inclusion, for understandable reasons. Men's participation in anti-violence work involves a delicate politics, as I have explored in detail elsewhere (Flood 2005a). Nevertheless, the inclusion of strategies aimed at men and masculinities is necessary if our prevention efforts are to be successful.

### Involving men in ending harmful traditional and cultural practices

This threefold rationale for involving men in violence prevention applies to all forms of violence against women, including harmful traditional and cultural practices. First, practices such as honour killing of wives, dowry-related violence, forced marriage, and trafficking are often perpetrated directly by men, while other practices such as sex-selective abortion, female genital mutilation / cutting, and early marriage of girl children, are perpetrated with men's involvement and complicity.[3] Second, these practices are sustained by patriarchal constructions of masculinity and unequal gender relations. Third, men do have a potentially positive role to play in eliminating such practices.

While a wide variety of international efforts now seek to involve men in violence prevention, very few thus far have directly addressed harmful traditional and cultural practices in particular. The two forms of violence against women here in which there has been most effort to engage men are female genital mutilation and prostitution. While practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) are perpetrated by communities in general rather than men in particular, it is clear that addressing men's attitudes and behaviours is critical in eliminating them. In Somalia for example, women's organisations campaigning against FGM quickly realised that they must address men. Some men were strongly resistant and hostile to anti-FGM campaigns, and some saw FGM as necessary to ensure their daughters' sexual 'purity' before marriage and preserve their family honour (Dini 2007). In Burkino Faso, it is fathers who play the most important role in deciding

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[3] See the Secretary General's report for discussion of these forms of violence against women (Secretary General 2006: 37-47).

whether to circumcise a girl (Population Council 1999: 93).[4] (I give further examples of efforts to involve men in ending female genital mutilation or cutting in my discussion below of the need to involve male community leaders.) In relation to prostitution and trafficking, clearly it is critical to address the 'demand' side of such industries. For example, a project in the Philippines focused on educating young men (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Asia Pacific 2006), while a number of other community and legal strategies have been tried or canvassed (Hughes 2004).

Whether we are working to end harmful traditional and cultural practices or other forms of violence against women and girls, our efforts must include strategies addressed to men. We will only make progress if we involve men. Violence prevention work among men aims to lessen the likelihood that they will use violence. Effective strategies challenge the beliefs, values and discourses which support violence, challenge the patriarchal power relations which sustain and are sustained by violence, and promote alternative constructions of masculinity, gender and selfhood which foster non-violence and gender justice.

## The primary prevention of violence against women: Definitions, scope, and evaluation

### Defining primary prevention

Violence prevention aimed at men and boys requires a range of strategies at multiple levels of the social order: programs in schools and among youth, media campaigns, interventions among particular groups of men such as athletes and soldiers, and grassroots mobilisations. These strategies can be described as 'primary' prevention, in that they aim to lessen the likelihood of boys and men using violence in the first place. 'Secondary' prevention refers to reducing opportunities for violence by supporting the men who are at risk of perpetrating violence. 'Tertiary' prevention aims to prevent the re-occurrence of violence, and refers to work with men who have already used violence. Tertiary prevention thus centres on perpetrator programs, and it may be more accurate to describe this as violence intervention.

### Scope: Harmful traditional and cultural practices and other forms of violence against women and girls

There is little evidence with which to assess the effectiveness of primary prevention efforts in relation to violence against women in general, let alone in relation to particular forms of violence such as harmful traditional and cultural practices. Therefore, my discussion does not focus on the elimination of harmful traditional practices in particular, but on men's violence against women more generally.

The strategies and insights I offer here are readily applicable to harmful traditional and cultural practices in particular, as they are to other forms of violence against women or girls. At the same time, they may need to be adapted in addressing particular forms of violence. Whether we are addressing female genital cutting, or husbands' rape of their wives, or violence in youth's dating relationships, our strategies must be responsive to the *particular* and *distinct* characteristics of the violence in question: their dynamics and trajectories, the social norms and power relations which sustain them, and the contexts in which they occur.

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[4] At the same time, research in Burkino Faso, Guinea and Eritrea documents that smaller proportions of men than women support the practice of female genital cutting (Population Council 1999: 93; Population Reference Bureau 2001: 24).

There is debate regarding the category of 'harmful traditional and cultural practices'.[5] While I will not explore this in detail, I wish to note that forms of violence against women and girls in Western countries also can be described as both 'traditional' and 'cultural'. In Western countries, men's physical and sexual violence against women has existed for long periods and has been institutionalised and normalised in laws and policies (Straton 2002). Men's violence against women also is cultural, in the sense that it is grounded in and maintained by longstanding social and cultural norms, as the recent Secretary General's report (2006: 31) acknowledges. In fact, in Western and non-Western countries alike, sexual assault and domestic violence are sustained by widespread norms of gender and sexuality (Flood and Pease 2006). For example, sexual coercion operates through 'normal' heterosexual norms and relations among adolescents, according to a study in New Zealand and Britain (Hird and Jackson 2001). Boys' sexually coercive behaviour is seen as 'normal', and girls are compelled to accommodate male 'needs' and desires in negotiating their sexual relations. At the same time, the forms of violence grouped under the category of 'harmful traditional and cultural practices' are likely to have distinct dynamics and determinants.

### Evaluations of effectiveness

In identifying the most promising strategies for the primary prevention for intimate partner violence, we must be guided by both research on the determinants of this violence and evidence for the effectiveness of particular interventions. In relation to the second source of guidance, we face two significant challenges. First, there has been very little evaluation of primary prevention strategies. Most evaluations of efforts with regard to intimate partner violence are focused on tertiary strategies which address such violence after it has already occurred: services for victims, legal responses to violence, treatments for perpetrators, and so on. Of the few rigorous evaluations in existence, many focus on legal interventions in response to intimate partner violence (World Health Organization 2002).

Second, existing evidence regarding the effectiveness of *any* kind of intervention is sparse (Flood 2005-2006). For example, in a recent review of interventions for the primary prevention of partner violence, the authors could find only 11 programs which had been rigorously evaluated (with a pre- and post-test design or a comparison group), and *all* of these addressed adolescent dating violence (Whitaker *et al.* 2006). Many efforts have not had any evaluation, and existing evaluations often are poorly designed, limited to participants' satisfaction, or only assess proxy variables associated with violence against women rather than this violence itself (Tolan 2006).

Nevertheless, there are certainly a wide range of strategies of primary prevention which are promising or worthy of consideration, and there is some evidence with which to assess their effectiveness. Some strategies and interventions clearly are effective: they show evidence of implementation, evidence of effectiveness, and a theoretical rationale. Others are promising: they show evidence of implementation and a theoretical rationale. Other strategies are potentially promising: they have not been tried or evaluated, but they do have a theoretical rationale.

## Violence prevention: Multiple levels of intervention

Contemporary scholarly accounts of men's violence against women take as given that this violence is "a multifaceted phenomenon grounded in an interplay among personal, situational, and sociocultural factors" (Heise 1998). Given that intimate partner violence is the outcome of a complex interplay of individual, relationship, community, institutional, and societal factors, violence prevention too must work at these multiple levels (World Health Organization 2002).

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[5] See for example the critique of the UN approach to 'harmful traditional and cultural practices' advanced by Winter *et al.* (2002), Jeffreys' (2005) argument that Western practices of beauty also maintain women's subordination to men, and critiques of Jeffreys' argument e.g. by Ancis (2006).

In the following discussion, I organise violence prevention strategies among men in terms of six levels of intervention. This draws on the 'spectrum of prevention' identified by Davis *et al.* (2006).[6] I give examples where possible of strategies working with men to end harmful traditional and cultural practices. But because these are so rare, I also give other examples concerned with domestic violence, sexual assault, and violence against women in general.

### Level 1: Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills

The smallest and most localised form of prevention is transferring information and skills to individuals and increasing their capacity to prevent or avoid violence against women. For example, teachers, carers, and physicians may help boys and young men to increase their safety and their equitable attitudes, healthcare practitioners may engage patients and parents to promote healthy relationships, and other community leaders and public figures may speak to boys and men to encourage non-violence (Davis *et al.* 2006).

Among children and youth, there are a range of promising strategies of violence prevention focused on individual knowledge and skills, and these apply to males and females alike. Among young children, these include the provision of quality child care, home visiting programs, intensive clinical work with battered mothers and their young children, and encouraging parental involvement in children's early education and school. Among adolescents and young adults, relevant measures include mentoring programs, premarital relationship education, and welfare-to-work strategies. Given that parental and adult supervision is protective against girls' exposure to intimate partner violence, interventions among parents and other adults in adolescents' social networks are important strategies. And, given that emotionally unsupportive and harsh parenting is a risk factor for domestic violence, interventions to encourage better parenting practices also are valuable (Vezina and Herbert 2007).

It is particularly important that we address programs and services to boys who have witnessed or experienced violence in families. Boys who have witnessed or experienced violence are more likely to grow up adhering to violence-supportive attitudes and perpetrating violence themselves, reflecting the intergenerational transmission of violence (Flood and Pease 2006). According to a recent review, eight out of ten relevant studies find associations between a history of child physical abuse and men's current physical aggression to an intimate partner (Schumacher 2001).

Prevention efforts among youth can address the associations between domestic violence and poverty, low work attachment, and low educational attainment, and other social factors. Given that a range of internalising and externalising problems are associated with domestic violence, and many are more visible than domestic violence, they should be targeted in interventions among children and youth. Among boys, these include high risk behaviours such as illegal drug use and delinquent behaviour (Vezina and Herbert 2007).

Among older male populations, other direct participation efforts include responsible fatherhood programs and those addressing prisoners' reentry into communities (Rosewater 2003). Premarital relationship education and couples counseling programs try to increase the skills and orientations which are protective against intimate partner violence, for example by teaching communication and conflict resolution skills. Few evaluations of such programs have been conducted, but there is some evidence that they reduce the likelihood of partner violence (Hamby 1998). Focusing on

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[6] I have modified Davis *et al.*'s (2006) framework in two ways. (1) In Davis *et al.*'s (2006) account, the first level of intervention, "Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills", includes workshops and education sessions. I address these instead under "Promoting Community Education". (2) The fourth form of intervention, "Engaging, Strengthening, and Mobilising Communities", expands Davis *et al.*'s recommendation regarding "Fostering Coalitions and Networks".

interventions at this individual level, there is little evidence with which to evaluate the effectiveness of such strategies in preventing intimate partner violence.

### Level 2: Promoting Community Education

I define 'community education' broadly here, focusing on four streams of education: face-to-face educational groups and programs, communication and social marketing, local educational strategies such as 'social norms' and 'bystander' approaches, and other media strategies such as media literacy and media regulation.

#### Face-to-face educational groups and programs

Educational strategies among young people embody the recognition that children and adolescents are key population groups for violence prevention (Rosewater 2003). Violence-supportive attitudes are already well established in adolescence. Younger males are particularly likely to endorse violence against women, and some gender norms among adolescents 'normalise' sexual coercion (Flood and Pease 2006). Boys and young men therefore are a particularly important group for intervention.

The most extensive body of evidence in the evaluation of primary prevention efforts concerns educational programs among children, youth, and young adults. From a series of US evaluations of violence prevention education, delivered in schools and universities in particular, it is clear such interventions can have positive effects on males' attitudes towards and participation in intimate partner violence (Flood 2005-2006; Whitaker *et al.* 2006). Male (and female) secondary school and university students who have attended rape education sessions show less adherence to rape myths, express less rape-supportive attitudes, and/or report greater victim empathy than those in control groups. Existing evaluations show that not all educational interventions are effective, changes in attitudes often 'rebound' to pre-intervention levels one or two months after the intervention, and some even become worse. However, education programs which are intensive, lengthy, and use a variety of pedagogical approaches have been shown to produce positive and lasting change in attitudes and behaviours (Flood 2005-2006). For example, evaluations of the Safe Dates program among American adolescents found that four years after the program, adolescents who had received the program continued to report less physical and sexual dating violence perpetration (and victimisation) than those who had not (Foshee *et al.* 2004). Far less evidence is available concerning the effectiveness of violence prevention education among other adult male populations such as professional athletes.

Some contemporary education programs for boys include materials addressing boys' attitudes to female genital mutilation. In Egypt, the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) runs the New Visions program. The program addresses boys aged 12 to 20, teaches life skills and seeks to increase their gender sensitivity, and thus far over 15,000 boys have completed the course. A 2004 evaluation found that participants had adopted more gender-equitable attitudes, including less tolerance for female genital mutilation and gender-based violence (CEDPA 2005). The program has also been adopted for use in India (CEDPA 2002).

Other countries and organisations also have developed education programs for boys addressing gender issues. One of the most well documented programs has been developed by Program H, a consortium of NGOs based in Brazil and Mexico. In sites in which young men were exposed to weekly educational workshops (and a social marketing campaign), they showed improved attitudes towards violence against women and other issues (Schueller *et al.* 2005). In South Africa, young and older men who participated in workshops run by the Men As Partners project were less likely than non-participants to believe that it is acceptable to beat their wives or rape sex workers (White *et al.* 2003: 22). In Nigeria, Conscientizing Male Adolescents is a long-term program focusing on sexism and the development of critical thinking skills (Population Council 2003). Discussion

groups and forums also are being used among adult men to prompt questioning and transformation of dominant constructions of masculinity, such as in Zimbabwe (Mtutu 2005), India (Karlsson and Karkara 2004), and Nicaragua (Esplen 2006: 6).

There are other promising strategies of primary prevention among children and adolescents which take place outside school settings, although there is less evidence of their effectiveness. As Rosewater (2003) notes in the US context, the youth who are most vulnerable to domestic violence (whether as victims, perpetrators, or witnesses) are those who are out of school and unemployed, live in poverty, have incarcerated parents, are receiving welfare, are leaving juvenile detention or foster care, or are young parents. Prevention programs not only should address adolescents in schools, but those who have dropped out of school, and should address adolescents through other means and contexts associated with increased risks of victimisation (Vezina and Herbert 2007). Whitaker *et al.* (2006) emphasise the need for culturally specific interventions, programs targeted to specific at-risk populations and environments, and using settings such as families, community and faith-based organisations, and media.

Such strategies have been used to good effect in contexts affected by war, militarism, and civil conflict. In Namibia for example, participatory research, community plays, resource centres, and family visitors' programmes have produced shifts in attitudes and behaviour, including a decline in boys' ritualised sexual violence against girls in hostels (Kandirikirira 2002).[7]

**Including peer education and mentoring**

Interventions among boys and young men in general should be complemented by other strategies aimed at addressing particularly intensive forms of support for violence in the peer cultures and group norms of some boys and young men, such as peer education and mentoring. Intervention with boys and young men identified as at risk of violence perpetration or already using violence therefore may be valuable in changing the potentially life-long violent trajectories of those males who are already using violence (Flood and Pease 2006).

Peer-based strategies are of particular value. In violence prevention education, programs for men are more likely to be effective if they use peers in leadership roles (Flood 2006-2006). Increasing interpersonal sanctions, in which friends and relatives strongly condemn domestic violence, has a significant effect on violence-supportive attitudes (Tsoudis 2000). Non-violent men can play a powerful role as peer educators. For example, in an action-research project in low-income settings in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, young men who questioned prevailing violence-supportive views were trained as peer educators to foster gender-equitable relations in their communities (Barker 2001).

<u>Communication and social marketing</u>

Communication and social marketing campaigns are one of the more common means of primary prevention of intimate partner violence. There is evidence that social marketing campaigns can produce positive change in the attitudes and behaviours associated with men's perpetration of intimate partner violence (Donovan and Vlais 2005). Soul City, a multimedia project in South Africa, is one of the most thorough and well-evaluated examples of this strategy. It combined prime-time radio and television dramas with other educational activities, and the evaluation "found increased knowledge and awareness of domestic violence, changed attitudes and norms, and greater willingness on the part of the project's audience to take appropriate action" (World Health Organization 2002). Given the evidence that some messages, appeals, and campaign elements will be more effective than others, social marketing efforts should draw on available guides to effective communication (Campbell and Manganello 2006; Wray 2006).

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[7] Also see Barker and Ricardo (2005) and Dini (2007).

Men's groups and networks have adopted a wide range of creative communication strategies, including the use of film in India to encourage men to reflect on their relations with women (Roy 2001), 'guerilla theatre' in South African bars to spark discussion, the distribution of pamphlets to men in community markets in Cambodia (Kaufman 2003), and a 'Walk Across America' to raise community awareness about violence against women. In Brazil, Program H developed postcards, banners, and comics which drew on mass media and youth culture to promote respectful identities and gender-equitable lifestyles among young men and women. Program H is extending these campaigns in India and elsewhere. In the USA, Men Can Stop Rape have developed an innovative poster campaign centred on the theme "My strength is not for hurting", encouraging men to practise consent and respect in their sexual relations. In Kenya, Men for Gender Equality Now makes use of radio, television, newspaper, and a 'traveling conference' in which they use song, theatrical performance, visual arts, and seminars at community gathering places such as markets, schools, and churches (Miruka 2007). Some social marketing campaigns use well-known male celebrities, actors, or athletes to help address boys and men, whether in trying to prevent acid attacks on girls and women in Bangladesh (Karlsson and Karkara 2004) or to encourage norms of consent and non-violence among young men in Australia and the US (Flood 2002-2003).

Local educational strategies: 'social norms' and 'bystander intervention' campaigns

Three further approaches are promising ones for the primary prevention of intimate partner violence, with both a theoretical rationale and evidence of implementation. More local campaigns have been developed to shift community norms in particular contexts regarding intimate partner violence. Using the 'social norms' approach, US campaigns on university campuses have highlighted the gap between men's perceptions of other men's agreement with violence-supportive and sexist norms and the actual extent of this agreement. By gathering and publicising data on men's attitudes and behaviour, they seek to undermine men's conformity to sexist peer norms and increase their willingness to intervene in violent behaviour (Flood 2005-2006). Given the evidence that perceived group norms do influence men's willingness to engage in sexually aggressive behaviour (Bohner *et al.* 2006), such strategies are particularly valuable. They could be adopted in universities, workplaces, and other public institutions.

Using a 'bystander intervention' approach, other campaigns have sought to place "a sense of responsibility and empowerment for ending sexual violence on the shoulders of all community members". They teach men (and women) skills in de-escalating risky situations and being effective allies for survivors and foster a sense of community responsibility for violence prevention (Banyard 2005). Both approaches are promising ones for the primary prevention of intimate partner violence.

Other media strategies

At least three kinds of intervention are relevant in relation to the media's influence on community attitudes towards violence against women: better news reporting, media literacy, and regulation.

**Better news reporting**

In a 'media advocacy' approach, journalists and news media have been encouraged to portray intimate partner violence in appropriate ways, for example as social problems requiring public intervention (Ghez 2001; Wray 2006). Such interventions can make a significant difference to news coverage. For example, the Rhode Island Coalition against Domestic Violence (USA) worked with journalists to develop a best practices handbook on news coverage of intimate homicides. Such incidents had often been portrayed as unpredictable private tragedies, but post-intervention they were more likely to be framed as social problems requiring public intervention (Ryan *et al.* 2006).

**Media literacy**

We should be encouraging media literacy, especially among children and youth but also among adults. Teaching critical viewing and thinking skills improves viewers' ability to ignore or resist anti-social messages and reduces the negative impact of portrayals of violence (Flood and Pease 2006). It is particularly important that we tackle boys' consumption of sexist and violence-supportive media such as pornography (Flood 2007a).

**Media regulation**

Perhaps the most controversial form of intervention into media is the regulation of media content. In Australia, government regulations already have strong prohibitions on the portrayal of violence in film and television, and these include prohibitions on portrayals of sexual violence or coercion in adults-only pornographic materials. However, two aspects of media content whose regulation should be considered concern portrayals of violence in children's television and forms of Internet pornography. In relation to the latter for example, children and adults alike in Australia are routinely exposed online, both accidentally and deliberately, to forms of Internet pornography which are outside Australian classification guidelines and which include sexually violent and misogynistic portrayals (Flood 2007a).

### Level 3: Educating Providers (and other professionals)

Organisational and workforce strategies for the primary prevention of intimate partner violence are scattered and underdeveloped. On the other hand, organisations and workforces are a common site for the development of improved responses to the occurrence of such violence. These include training police and legal staff in appropriate responses to intimate partner violence, developing coordinated community responses, sensitising health care providers, and developing protocols for the proper management of abuse (World Health Organization 2002).

Such efforts do improve professional responses to the victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence, increase women's safety, and assist their processes of recovery. However, these strategies in organisations and workforces may also be complemented by more preventive approaches. We know for example that workplace training can improve attitudes towards sexual harassment, among employees in universities and in government workplaces (Antecol and Cobb-Clark 2003). Doctors, teachers, police, child care workers, and other professionals can play an important role in transmitting information, skills, and motivation to clients, community members, and colleagues, and they can be effective advocates for prevention policies (Davis *et al.* 2006).

Workplace strategies often involve working with *men*, given that police, law, and medical institutions typically are dominated by men. However, very little primary prevention work has been conducted with men in workplaces in gender-sensitive ways. At the same time, there are some inspiring and promising instances of such work. For example, the US Family Violence Prevention Fund encouraged coaches (and other adult men, including fathers, teachers, uncles, older brothers, and mentors) to teach boys that there is no place for violence in a relationship. Similarly, in a series of countries in south and central America, the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) is training soccer coaches to promote more gender-equitable masculinities among boys (Schueller *et al.* 2005). In Islamabad, an NGO called Rozan has run gender violence sensitization workshops with police on gender-based violence (Lang 2003), while Men for Gender Equality Now in Kenya plans to forge stronger relationships with police and military forces to improve violence prevention (Miruka 2007).

Another key form of violence prevention relevant to this area of action is increasing workforce and organisational capacity to prevent intimate partner violence, by developing resources and technical assistance.[8]

### Level 4: Engaging, Strengthening, and Mobilising Communities

To prevent intimate partner violence, we must change the social norms, gender roles, and power relations which feed into violence. There is a growing consensus that strategies of community engagement and community mobilisation are central to this project (Family Violence Prevention Fund 2004a). The bulk of primary prevention efforts thus far have addressed individuals and their intimate relationships, while community and societal strategies have been under-utilised (Michau 2005). We must build local communities' capacity to respond effectively to violence and encourage their ownership of the issue. And we must address the social contexts in which intimate partner violence occurs (Rosewater 2003). Given the evidence of implementation and a theoretical rationale for efforts involving community development and community mobilisation, such strategies are promising ones.

There is growing experience, and sophistication, regarding violence prevention strategies at the community level. The US-based Family Violence Prevention Fund provides a useful overview of five key strategies for effective community engagement. These are:

1. Raise awareness of the problem of intimate partner violence and establish social norms that make violence unacceptable.

2. Develop networks of leaders within the community.

3. Connect community members to services and informal supports when they need help.

4. Make services and institutions accountable to community needs.

5. Change the social and community conditions that lead to violence. (Family Violence Prevention Fund 2004a)

Promising community education strategies include community and media education campaigns, workshops and curricula in schools, 'community action teams' designed to involve communities in building strategies for community safety, awards programs for responsible media coverage and effective community leadership in violence prevention, and holding religious and political leaders accountable for providing clear messages that intimate partner violence is unacceptable (Davis *et al.* 2006). Other strategies include family policies and programs which support positive parenting and encourage shared power and decision-making. For example, some campaigns focus on expectant and new fathers, addressing them through prenatal education and obstetrics clinics (Gault 2006). In terms of changing the social and community conditions that lead to violence, one key strategy is to link violence to other issues which influence community well-being, such as poverty, affordable housing, access to health care, and economic development.

#### Involve male community leaders

We must also involve male community leaders in such efforts. For example, while religious beliefs historically have been used to justify violence against women and church clergy at times have been complicit in this violence (Flood and Pease 2006), religious institutions and leaders also have a potentially powerful role to play in encouraging an ethic of non-violence. Christian churches in

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[8] Relevant strategies include expanding and publicising the pool of expert trainers in violence prevention, funding capacity-building efforts, and extending the availability of technical assistance and resources (Oregon Department of Human Services 2006).

recent years have begun an intense examination of clergy's roles in perpetrating and perpetuating child sexual abuse, and a similar, albeit smaller, examination is under way in relation to domestic violence. The spiritual and theological understandings of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other world religions each contain emphases and values which could serve to undermine community tolerance for violence against women. Spiritual and religious leaders should be encouraged to challenge violence against women and gender inequality, whether as practised among their adherents or as defended in theological teachings, through public statements, sermons, teachings, and religious materials.

Some programs in Egypt, Gambia, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan working to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and other harmful traditional practices have consciously involved men: raising men's awareness of FGM, undermining their support for FGM, lessening their resistance to anti-FGM campaigns, and enlisting their public support to help change community norms. Some organisations train male community leaders and educate adolescent males (Khafagy 2001). Others mobilise male community and religious leaders to issue religious declarations opposing FGM, take public stances, and lead community efforts (Dini 2007; Kaufman 2003). In Senegal, the NGO Tostan emphasises that successful efforts to abandon female genital cutting and child marriage must address all actors within the systems which perpetuate these practices. They work with women, and religious leaders, excluded ethnic groups, traditional leaders and healers, many of whom are men (pers. comm., G. Gillespie). Recruitment and education of supportive male leaders is an important strategy in efforts by Women for Women International to build gender equality in Nigeria, Iraq, and the DRC (Morris 2007).

### Foster coalitions and networks

We must also foster coalitions and networks to increase the 'critical mass' behind particular prevention efforts, improve collaboration on interventions, and reduce unnecessary competition among organisations. We need coalitions between researchers and community providers, among art and music organisations, between grassroots organisations and sectors of government, and with businesses and workplaces (Davis *et al.* 2006; Expert Group 2003: 33).

### Mobilise communities through events, networks, and campaigns

Community development strategies are complemented by strategies of community mobilisation. We must not only educate men and women but also organise them for collective action (Greig and Peacock 2005). While community education strategies are vital, we must also move beyond them to take up more activist involvements (Peacock *et al.* 2006). These are needed to change the social norms and power relations which underpin men's violence against women. In addition, actively involving men in efforts to end violence against women enhances the effectiveness of this work and men's sense of a personal stake in this project (Kaufman 2001).

We must create opportunities for individuals to mobilise their communities through events, networks, and campaigns. Examples of key strategies here include community workshops and events (in which both the preparation process and the product are tools of education and mobilisation), work with influential groups and community 'gatekeepers', cultural tools of art and drama such as murals, competitions, and street theatre, and fostering grassroots men's and women's groups and networks committed to advocacy for non-violence and gender equality (Greig and Peacock 2005). It is particularly important that we mobilise men through such work, because of many men's greater endorsement of violence-supportive attitudes, men's roles as community leaders and gatekeepers, and men's relative absence from efforts to end violence against women.

Around the world, a variety of grassroots men's groups and networks work to engage men in personal and collective efforts at violence prevention (Flood 2005a). The most widespread example of an anti-violence campaign organised by men is the White Ribbon Campaign. The White Ribbon Campaign is the largest collective effort in the world among men working to end

men's violence against women. It began in 1991 on the second anniversary of one man's massacre of 14 women in Montreal, Canada, and it has now spread to the U.S.A., Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia and Australia. Men are encouraged to show their opposition to men's violence against women by purchasing and wearing a white ribbon. In pinning on the ribbon, men pledge themselves never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women. In some countries, the White Ribbon Campaign also involves year-round educational strategies, including advertising campaigns, concerts, fathers' walks, and fund-raising for women's organisations.

Another well developed example is EngenderHealth's Men As Partners program, which uses community education, grassroots organising, and advocacy for effective policy implementation. Other groups and networks can be found across the USA (Flood 2005a) and in countries such as India, Cambodia (Lang 2003), Namibia (Odendaalm 2001), and Kenya (Miruka 2007). In South Africa, Hope Worldwide (part of the Men As Partners network) builds on community education workshops by encouraging men to form 'community action teams' to take local steps to prevent violence against women (Tshabalala 2005). Similarly, members of Men for Gender Equality Now in Kenya intervene in actual episodes of violence using 'rapid response committees' (Miruka 2007).

In many instances such men's groups and networks are initiated by men themselves, but in others, women's groups and organisations have nurtured and trained male anti-violence advocates. In Fiji for example, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre began training male advocates from the police force, religious groups, education, welfare, and health fields. In Pakistan, the NGO Rozan recruited and trained male volunteers to run White Ribbon Campaign activities in their communities (Lang 2003). In the Philippines, the Kauswagan Community Social Centre conducted the Southeast Asian Regional Workshop on Men's Role in Violence Against Women in 2001 (Ragas 2001). Capacity-building is critical to the effectiveness of men's anti-violence work, including training for advocates (Miruka 2007) and resource development.

Studies of men's anti-violence and gender equity groups find that the male participants undergo positive transformations in their attitudes and behaviours, although some investments in traditional masculinities remain (Coulter 2003; DeKeseredy *et al.* 2000; Hong 2000; Peacock 2006). Similarly, for both men and women conducting anti-violence peer education on university campuses, this involvement acts as a form of consciousness-raising in which they are both politicised and radicalised (Gold and Villari 2000).

### Foster alternative, non-violent norms and practices

One of the key goals of community engagement is to foster alternative norms and practices centred on non-violence, gender equality, and social justice. Among men, this should include positive constructions of identity which are alternatives to socially recognised forms of manhood associated with violence and gender inequality, and alternative rites of passage (Barker and Ricardo 2005). This may be particularly important in eliminating harmful traditional practices. In Gambia for example, the Foundation for Research on Women's Health, Productivity and the Environment (BAFROW) mobilised both men and women to promote alternative coming-of-age ceremonies for girls (Kaufman 2003).

### Level 5: Changing Organizational Practices

Changing the practices of organisations and institutions can have a significant impact on community norms. For example, media outlets can restrict violence-supportive representations, healthcare institutions can adopt workplace policies modeling egalitarian relationships, and churches may encourage their members to relate in non-abusive ways (Davis *et al.* 2006). Universities, technical and further education (TAFE) institutions, and other professional bodies involved in training social workers, judges, police, priests, and other professions should integrate

materials on violence against women in their curricula. And in medicine and health systems, we need interventions to train and educate health personnel (Taft 2004), as well as other strategies such as routine screening and other case-finding approaches (Laing 2001).

### And organisational or institutional cultures

Violence-supportive attitudes are encouraged and institutionalised in the peer relations and cultures of particular organisations and contexts, especially in male-dominated and homosocially-focused male university colleges, sporting clubs, workplaces, and military institutions (Flood and Pease 2006). While there is great variation in the extent to which such contexts are characterised by violence-supportive social norms, it is also clear that some are particularly hostile to and dangerous for women. Intensive interventions in such contexts is necessary to address their violence-supportive local cultures.

There are some powerful examples of sporting institutions taking action to address tolerance for or the perpetration of violence against women among professional male athletes. In Australia, the professional sporting codes of National Rugby League (NRL) and the Australian Football League (AFL) are developing education programs for their players, codes of conduct, and other measures in response to a series of alleged sexual assaults by players in 2004 (AFL 2005). Education programs should be adopted at both community and professional levels of sport, particularly in the male-dominated, team-based, contact sports which appear to have the highest potential for violence-supportive norms and social relations.

There are also powerful examples of agencies addressing their own gender relations. For example, Lang and Smith (2004) describe the experience of a development agency working to model gender-equality itself, by addressing its own policies, staff and organisational culture. Similar and substantial initiatives in military institutions, university colleges, and other workplaces also would be desirable.

## Level 6: Influencing Policies and Legislation

Legal and policy reforms in relation to intimate partner violence have been largely concerned with tertiary responses to intimate partner violence. Yet law and policy also are crucial tools of primary prevention, at national, state, and local levels. At the broadest levels, national and state-based plans of action for eliminating intimate partner violence are necessary elements in any systematic prevention effort. As a recent review of Australian prevention efforts emphasised, we require a whole of government approach, with a national funding base, involving integrated prevention plans at national and state levels (Office of the Status of Women 2004).

Law and policy are critical tools too in establishing and disseminating particular strategies of primary prevention. For example, they are necessary in establishing and spreading violence prevention curricula for schools and universities (including sexuality education addressing sexual violence prevention), influencing the availability and consumption of alcohol, determining the content of advertising, pornography, and other media, and restricting gun use. Again, government policy and programming should address the role of men and boys in eliminating violence against women (Expert Group 2003: 32).

### The criminal justice system

The criminal justice system only responds to a very small proportion of domestic violence and sexual assault matters, given both low rates of reporting and attrition through the legal process (Stubbs 2001). At the same time, the criminal justice system does have an important symbolic role in shaping community perceptions of violence against women, and strong legal sanctions do encourage community intolerance for this violence (Flood and Pease 2006). Therefore,

strengthening legal responses to violence against women will have positive effects not only for the victims and survivors of this violence but for community attitudes in general.

Again, men can play an important role here. For example, in Pakistan, some male lawyers and judges have worked to encourage appropriate convictions for perpetrators of violence and to advocate for the rights of women vulnerable to honour killing (Lang 2003).

### Research monitoring and evaluation

Finally, ongoing research into the determinants of intimate partner violence is needed to extend our understanding of the risk factors for, dynamics of, and populations most at risk of violence. In addition, our efforts at primary prevention themselves must be subjected to rigorous scrutiny. Outcome-based evaluations of existing prevention programs, and investment in evidence-based prevention programs, are necessary in furthering our prevention efforts (Office of the Status of Women 2004). We should work to increase the effectiveness of violence program interventions by incorporating evaluation components in programs, increasing practitioners' understanding of and ability to implement program evaluation, engaging researchers in program evaluation, and identifying and disseminating successful and promising activities (Oregon Department of Human Services 2006).

## Challenges in working with men

I will conclude by discussing some of the key challenges in working with men and some of the key strategies which are effective in engaging, educating, and mobilising men. I draw here on the documentation of a growing body of experience and expertise in working with men.[9]

### Providing for men

First, there is the challenge of whether to address men at all. Among many women's groups and organisations there is understandable caution about working with men. Involving men in gender policy and programming can threaten funding and resources for programs and services directed at women, and it can mean the dilution of the feminist content and orientation of services. At the same time, there is a clear feminist rationale for working with men: that we will need to change *men* – men's attitudes, behaviours, identities, and relations – if we are to make progress towards gender equality.

I have written elsewhere (Flood 2007b) of the principles which should guide any work with men. Above all, this work must be pro-feminist. It must be guided by feminist content and framed with a feminist political agenda. It must be done in partnership with, and even be accountable to, women and women's groups. And it must involve the protection of 'women's space', women-only, and women-focused programs. Second, this work must be committed to enhancing boys' and men's lives. Third, work with men must acknowledge both commonalities and diversities, and the complex ways in which manhood and gender are structured by race, class, sexuality, age and other forms of social difference.

### Reaching men

The second challenge is how to reach men. There are two clusters of strategies here: go to men, and bring them to you. Successful strategies for going to men include peer education, targeting of

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[9] See for example publications by Bannon and Correia (2006); Esplen (2006); Family Violence Prevention Fund (2003, 2004b); Flood (2005-2006); Funk (2006); Greig and Peacock (2005); Instituto Promundo (2002); Lang (2002); and Ruxton (2004). Also see the following collection of websites and online resources on men's roles in building gender equality and ending violence against women: http://www.xyonline.net/links.shtml.

the workplaces, sporting and entertainment events at which men dominate, and community outreach strategies to reach young men in clubs, video arcades, and other places where young and adult men congregate (United Nations Population Fund 2000). The other side of reaching boys and men is bringing them to you. For example, there have been efforts to make sexual and reproductive health services more attractive to men or 'male-friendly', and such efforts can be transferred to other kinds of community services.

### Appealing to men

Third, how do we appeal to men? How do we engage their interest and commitment? What kind of *message* should we offer to boys and men? There is widespread acknowledgement that what works best is to begin with *the positive* – to begin with what is working, with the fact that most men treat women and girls with respect, that most men do not use violence, and so on. Approaching men with a 'deficit' perspective, focused on the negative, is likely to prompt defensiveness (Lang 2002; Ruxton 2004). However, beginning with the positive does not mean condoning men's endorsement of sexist or oppressive understandings and practices. Any work with men must retain a fundamental, feminist-informed concern with gender equality and a critique of those practices, understandings, and relations which sustain inequality.

Second, it is useful to ground the language and content in men's own experience and concerns. We must ensure that our interventions are culturally appropriate – where this is understood as embodying not just a sensitivity to cultural diversities, but a sensitivity to *gender* cultures and the diverse constructions of masculinity and sexuality which are dominant in particular social contexts and communities (Flood 2005-2006). Effective approaches address boys' and men's own needs, both reflecting on the gendered specificities of male socialisation and engaging males in redressing gender inequalities (Barker and Ricardo 2005).

Third, emphasise the shared benefits for men and women and, in particular, the ways in which men will gain from gender equality. Most if not all contemporary societies are characterised by men's institutional privilege (Messner 1997), such that men in general receive a 'patriarchal dividend' from gendered structures of inequality (Connell 1995). However, men can be and are motivated by interests other than those associated with gender privilege (Flood 2005a). There are four important resources in men's lives for the construction of egalitarian and non-violent identities and relations. There is *personal well-being:* men pay heavy costs for conformity with dominant definitions of masculinity (Messner 1997). There are men's *relational interests*: men's care and love for the women and girls in their lives. There are men's *collective and community interests*. Gender reform benefits the wellbeing of the communities in which men live. For example, men may recognise that they and their communities benefit from flexibility in divisions of labour which maximise labour resources or from improvements in women's health and wellbeing. Finally, there is *principle*. Men may support gender equality because of their ethical, political, or spiritual commitments – their support for ideals of equality or liberation, their faith-based belief in ideals of compassion and justice, and so on.

In appealing to men, we must also work to minimise their reactions of defensiveness and hostility. In educational work on violence against women, many men already feel defensive and blamed about the issue, and defensive reactions are common among men attending anti-violence workshops. Measures that can lessen men's defensiveness include approaching males as partners in solving the problem rather than as perpetrators of the problem, addressing men as bystanders to other men's sexism or violence, creating safe and non-judgmental environments for open discussion and dialogue, using male facilitators, and acknowledging men's own victimisation (Flood 2005-2006).

### Educating and changing men

What works in educating men? A growing body of expertise, particularly from the experience of efforts to improve men's understandings and awareness of violence against women, suggests that the following strategies are useful.[10]

- Use men to engage men: male facilitators and educators, and women and men working together.

Male educators tend to be perceived as more credible and more persuasive by male participants (Flood 2005-2006). They can act as role models for other men, and having men work with men embodies the recognition that men must take responsibility for helping to end gender inequality. At the same time, having mixed-sex educators is a valuable demonstration to participants of egalitarian working relationships across gender.

- Use all-male groups and workshops.

- Create safe spaces for men to talk and learn.

- Offer programs which are comprehensive, intensive, relevant to the audience, and based on positive messages, and which address cognitive, affective or emotional, and behavioural domains.

- Make your interventions culturally appropriate – including sensitivity to *gender* cultures.

- Address culturally specific supports for gender inequality. And draw on local resources and texts in promoting gender equality.

For example, Christian men may defend gender inequality by claiming that male dominance is mandated by God and legitimated in the Bible. This can be undermined by finding *other* Christian accounts which reject such privilege, including Biblical references which state that God created man and woman equally, that a Christian marriage should be a partnership, and so on. Other aspects of this work include placing 'tradition' in its social and historical context, showing that 'tradition' has varied over time and is shaped by many forces and factors, and inviting assessment of the positive and negative aspects of tradition (Greig and Peacock 2005). A second strategy is to look for and build on local resources, texts, and norms in promoting gender equality.

- Match your intervention to men's stage of change.

Interventions should be matched to men's level of awareness about and willingness to take responsibility for problems of violence and gender inequality. First, education programs can take men through different developmental stages over the course of the program. Second, different educational approaches can be used with men who are at different stages of awareness and commitment.

- Use innovative and engaging techniques to foster men's support for and commitment to gender equality.

These might include exercises in gender reversal or 'walking in women's shoes', listening directly to women's experiences, local stories and examples, personalising women's suffering by drawing on men's relationships with women in their lives (mothers, sisters, aunts, daughters, and so on), making comparisons with other forms of inequality or unjust power, drawing on culturally appropriate texts and stories in critiquing gender inequality such as religious texts, local myths and fables, and, on the other hand, using the language of human rights, fairness, justice, and so on.

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[10] See Flood (2005b; 2005-2006) for more detailed discussions of some of these strategies.

- Be prepared for, and respond to, resistance.

We must be prepared to respond to men's reactions of defensiveness and hostility when they do occur, and more generally to forms of resistance – delaying tactics, lip-service, tokenism, and so on (Ruxton 2004; Morris 2007). While some men act in support of gender equality in their personal or public lives, other men actively resist gender equality. Resistance represents the defence of privilege, but also can express men's fears and discomfort regarding change and uncertainty (Greig and Peacock 2005). It is useful to acknowledge and work with men's fears about gender equality and acknowledge men's own perceived victimisation.

- Focus on the practical action men can take.

It is essential that our work with men explore the concrete actions that men can take to advance gender equality. Some of the obvious forms of action men may take up include: Making a commitment to specific changes in their families and personal relations; Telling other men and boys in their communities about their experiences with the program (and this is also a very valuable method of recruitment); Working as peer educators, whether on an informal basis or more substantially; Presenting the program to other organisations in their communities; Mentoring a young man; Conducting outreach for future workshops and other activities; Developing theatre pieces to be performed in the community; and effecting change within their faith-based organisations (Greig and Peacock 2005).

- Assess the impact of your work.

Systematic evaluation should always be part of our efforts.

### Mobilising men

These educational strategies must be part of a broader effort aimed at mobilising men and communities and work towards broader forms of social and political change, as I argued in relation to the fourth level of intervention above.

## Conclusion

Preventing men's violence against women will require sustained and systematic efforts at the levels of families and relationships, communities, institutions, and societies. Men must be engaged in this work: as participants in education programs, as community leaders, as professionals and providers, and as advocates and activists working in alliance with women. We will only make progress in preventing violence against women if we can change the attitudes, identities, and relations among some men which sustain violence. To stop the physical and sexual assault of women and girls, we must build on the fact that most men do not use violence and that most men, if only privately, believe that such violence is unthinkable. We must erode the cultural and collective supports for violence found among many men and boys and replace them with norms of consent, sexual respect and gender equality. While some men are part of the problem, all men are part of the solution.

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