

Engaging Men and Boys, Changing Norms that Drive Violence Against Women
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Chairman Wolf, Chairman McGovern and honorable members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, thank you for holding this hearing on such an important topic. Violence against women is a gross violation of human rights and a threat to women's health as well as their economic and social well-being. Physical and sexual violence against women and girls is not a pathological behavior carried out by a few men and boys. We know from global research that approximately one in three women will experience physical or sexual violence from a man during her lifetime. In some countries, this figure reaches as high as 71 percent, or nearly three out of four women. In other settings, harassing and teasing girls is considered "a boys' sport," part of growing up and fitting in with other male peers. Elsewhere in the world, newly married men are told they must beat their wives within three months of getting married to show her "who is in charge." And closer to home, in the U.S., we know that too many boys and young men believe that a woman's "no" means "yes" when it comes to sexual consent.

I come to you today as the director of gender, violence and rights at the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and as co-chair of a global network, the MenEngage Alliance, which brings together NGOs and UN agencies working on engaging men and boys in these issues. ICRW works to make women an integral part of alleviating global poverty. We do this by using evidence-based approaches to demonstrate that a focus on women is critical for lasting social and economic change. ICRW is different from other think tanks in that we translate our research into concrete steps that program designers, donors and policy-makers can use to create the conditions in which women can thrive. The practical solutions we develop strive not to impact just one life, but millions. And most importantly, our work empowers women to change their own lives and their communities for the better.

The purpose of my testimony is to show how certain social norms about violence and masculinity can perpetuate violence against women. By social norms related to masculinity, I mean beliefs that women's responsibilities are to care for children while men's are to work outside the home. Or, that men and boys must always be in charge and have to defend their honor if they are insulted by others. Men and boys must be involved in efforts that aim to effectively end violence against women, and I want to discuss how working with them to challenge traditional notions of manhood can prevent violence. Finally, I will show how the recently reintroduced International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) aims to involve men to change social norms about violence.

The traditional international and domestic approach to preventing violence against women is to enact laws that make violence against women illegal and sometimes punishable with a fine, imprisonment, obligatory participation in batterer intervention groups, or some combination of the above. While such laws – and their adequate enforcement – are vital for achieving women’s rights and have shown results in some countries, they are clearly not sufficient.

For example, since 2005, India has had an anti-domestic violence law and is devoting increasing resources to its implementation. Even so, in Andhra Pradesh, India’s fifth largest state with more than 76 million people, fewer than 10,000 men are officially charged annually for using violence against their wives.

And in South Africa, where sexual violence is illegal and punishable by up to five years in prison, a recent survey of men carried out by the country’s Medical Research Council found that 28 percent disclosed that they had raped a woman. It is the highest reported rate of rape worldwide. Yet only one in nine rape victims in South Africa reports their assault to the police, and fewer than 10 percent of reported rapes lead to conviction. In other words, more than 90 percent of rapists go unpunished in South Africa. Even if the country’s justice system had the infrastructure to prosecute all men who use violence against women, there is not enough prison space to put away 28 percent of the adult male population.ⁱ

We must enforce laws and hold men accountable for the violence they use. But legal sanctions are only one element of an integrated approach to preventing violence – an approach that includes providing support for survivors of abuse, strengthening women’s earning capacity so they are in a better position to escape violence and involving health care practitioners in screening for women’s experiences of violence – after all, the health care system is a key space that women of all ages frequent. It’s critical also to acknowledge that men’s use of violence against women is, in much of the world, rooted in women’s limited social and economic power, and in societal beliefs about what it means to be men and women. These are beliefs about expected behaviors of boys and girls that are taught from childhood and often reinforced by society into adulthood. It involves, for example, teaching boys and girls that women should be subservient to men and that women should do whatever it takes (including enduring violence) to keep their family together. These types of societal messages also include teaching that men and boys are entitled to receive certain things from women, such as sex, or that using violence is an appropriate way to resolve conflicts.

To deepen our understanding, ICRW and the Brazilian nongovernmental organization, Promundo, are in the midst of a multi-country study of men’s attitudes and behaviors about violence and gender equality. This survey – the International Men and Gender Equality Survey, or IMAGES, so far has been carried out in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, India, South Africa and Croatia, and will take place in Bangladesh, Rwanda, Cambodia and China by the end of 2010. Combined with a World Health Organization multi-country

analysis of women's experiences with violence, IMAGES provides a comprehensive overview about the factors that drive violence against women.

So far, we've found through IMAGES that a significant number of men believe that being violent towards women is normal, and that there are times "when a woman deserves to be beaten." This was the sentiment among 13 percent of the men surveyed in Croatia; 21 percent of those in Brazil and 65 percent in India. (Forty percent of Indian women also thought women deserved to be beaten.)

Results from the research show that four factors are highly correlated with men's use of violence: (1) men's experience of violence in the home, school or their community when growing up; (2) their belief or adherence in rigid norms about what it means to be a woman or man; (3) alcohol use; and (4) economic stress. We are finding that when boys at an early age are exposed to violence from adults (fathers, mothers and other caregivers) and from other boys and men, they too often learn that violence is an acceptable behavior. They learn that violence goes unpunished and is often even glorified, particularly when used against those who have less power. Finally, they learn and internalize social messages that women owe certain things to men – caring for children, sex, keeping the house clean, fidelity – and that when women violate these, violence is acceptable.

It is important to recognize that there are many men and boys who do not support this violence and that many boys who are exposed to violence growing up do not repeat it as

adults. From research in Brazil, India and parts of Africa, we also know something about the factors that can reduce the likelihood that a man will use violence against women.

These are:

- Growing up in a family where violence is not tolerated or where violent men are held accountable;
- Having peers or social groups that do not support use of violence against women;
- Having an awareness and acceptance of belief in the rights of others;
- Being able to reflect critically about the consequences of violence;
- Living in communities where leaders speak out against violence; and
- Having alternative means of expressing frustration, anger or resolving conflicts.

These findings help us understand what kind of programs work best to prevent and reduce men's use of violence against women. In reviewing the evidence of effective programs to engage men, we have seen that those that were most successful sought to change traditional gender roles and promote more equitable relationships between men and women. In other words, the evidence demonstrates that violence prevention programs aimed at men and boys cannot simply say "don't use violence," or "violence against women is against the law." They must instead work with boys and adult men to question societal ideas about what it means to be men and boys. By that, I mean teaching boys that being a man doesn't mean being superior to a woman, that "no" from a woman does not really mean "yes" and that caring for children and supporting women's work outside the home are good for women and men. Or, for example, the messages of the "Coaching Boys into Men" program in India, which is coordinated by ICRW and the

Family Violence Prevention Fund. Endorsed by one of the country's most famous cricket players, the effort finds "teachable moments" through the national sport of cricket to say that being a man does not entitle you to use violence and that harassing girls does not make you a "real man." Instead, being a man really means respecting women and accepting them as equals. Violence prevention programs also must encourage men who feel that violence against women is unacceptable to reach out to other men to question their behavior. This can be done through campaigns, street theatre or school-based activities in which young and adult men engage with other men to get across the fundamental message that using violence is not what it means to be men.

In sum, existing evaluation research suggests that well-designed group education with boys and men, particularly when combined with community outreach and mass media and communication strategies, can help change men's attitudes about violence against women. There is some evidence that such efforts can also lead to actual behaviour changes – as affirmed by men and by women. Indeed, we believe these programs with men and boys can work even better when they are combined with working with women and girls. That way, women and girls are also informed about their rights, access to services and legal recourse in case they experience violence.

For example, in Brazil and India, ICRW, Promundo and partners work with young men ages 15-25 in schools and community centers with a combination of group education sessions and campaigns at the community level or in schools using posters, theatre, video clips, community radio and public service announcements. These efforts are designed by

the young men, and promote new ways of being a man that do not include being violent against women. One year after the programs, rigorous impact evaluation studies found that men's attitudes about the use of violence against women had changed in both countries. In India, men reported being less violent towards women, and fewer women reported being victims of violence, compared to no change in a control group.ⁱⁱ

Meanwhile, in South Africa's "Stepping Stones" program – an initiative that promotes healthy couple relationships – male participants reported having fewer sexual partners, higher condom use, less transactional sex, less substance abuse and less perpetration of intimate partner violence.ⁱⁱⁱ And in Nicaragua and South Africa, soap operas combined with group discussions have been shown to lead to similar changes in attitudes and behavior. The soap operas had story lines in which men questioned other men about their use of violence, and men and women discussed how to have more cooperative relationships.

However, the problem with such programs is that they are often too short in duration and do not have the long-term funding to scale up. Indeed, none of the examples above have had funding or the opportunity to expand their work nationally in their countries. This is precisely where public policies come in. Reaching up to 2,000 young men in Mumbai, India, or 1,200 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is not sufficient. We must also change how social norms are reinforced in key institutions and spaces where men and boys are often present, namely the armed forces, workplaces, prisons, schools, sports activities, community centers, public spaces, even bars and community dances, as well as in the public health system.

An integrated policy response to men's use of violence against women must include:

- Making violence prevention and gender equality a part of the school curriculum from early childhood onward and holding teachers accountable for abuse and violence they may use against students either inside or outside school.
- Making gender equality and violence prevention part of teacher training, something ICRW is beginning in three states in India – Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.
- Ending or reducing corporal punishment and acknowledging the links between violence that children suffer in the home and the violence they use later on. Sweden and Norway are examples where corporal punishment has been significantly reduced and where violence against women has declined according to national household sample data. A growing number of countries are introducing legislation, aimed at changing social norms about the acceptability of corporal punishment, along with laws to end violence against women.
- Policing public spaces to reduce sexual harassment and sexual assault, as is being done through UNIFEM's Safe Cities for Women and Girls initiative.
- Implementing prevention activities with men and boys like those described here, together with adequate support and protection for survivors of violence.
- Engaging the police and armed forces as allies in ending impunity related to violence against women, encouraging them to take seriously women's reports of violence, and training the police and military how to protect the rights of women and girls.
- Engaging men as fathers, caregivers and role models for boys and girls through education campaigns, fatherhood training activities and paid paternity leave that

encourage changes in how societies view what it means to be men, with an emphasis on making care giving part of that.

Within this vein of policy response, I applaud the recent reintroduction of the International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) in both chambers of Congress. It represents an important step toward eliminating violence against women and ensuring that the approaches I've mentioned are part of the solution. IVAWA in part encourages regularly involving men and boys in efforts to change social norms and attitudes that perpetuate violence. The legislation also calls for better research about violence against women. As a research organization, ICRW knows the importance of rigorous, systematized data collection, monitoring and impact evaluation. Passage of IVAWA would improve the quality and coordination of research and evaluations as well as fund original probes of proven intervention programs. By drawing attention to effective programs that are viable for expansion – and by increasing available funding for them – our work to reduce violence will have greater impact.

The International Violence Against Women Act has strong bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress and I urge Congress to pass this legislation without delay. Endorsing IVAWA would ensure that efforts to comprehensively prevent and respond to violence against women and girls worldwide are integrated into U.S. foreign policy and foreign assistance programs. This legislation represents a strong statement by the United States that violence against women is unacceptable and would make the elimination of

violence against women and girls a priority in American diplomacy and foreign assistance.

Supporting women's human rights and recognizing men's role in ensuring women's and girls' right to a life free from violence will bring the world a step closer to alleviating poverty. Indeed, research evidence shows that women can play a critical part in the social and economic development of nations when they have access to economic resources. But the world's women are less likely to be able to take advantage of those resources or fully contribute to their families and communities if their days are defined by threats or acts of violence against them. Finally, in reaching out to men, it is important that we help them understand that empowering women, achieving equality for women and ending violence is also good for men. We know from research that men are more likely to live healthier, longer and more fulfilling lives when they are involved in their children's lives, participate in care giving, share domestic activities and do not use violence.

Our final take-home messages are these: (1) women and girls have a right to lives free of violence, (2) we have a good idea about works to prevent men's use of violence against women, and (3) women, men and children all benefit when we engage men and boys to end violence against women.

ICRW stands ready to support your efforts. Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering your questions.

ⁱ Mathews, S. Abrahams, N. Martin, L. Vetten, L. van der Merwe, L. & Jewkes, R. (2004). “Every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner”: A National Study of Female Homicide in South Africa. Gender and Health Research Group, Medical Research Council, Tygerberg, 7505.

ⁱⁱ Pulerwitz, J., G. Barker, and M. Segundo. (2004) *Promoting Healthy Relationships and HIV/STI Prevention for Young Men: Positive Findings from an Intervention Study in Brazil. Horizons Research Update*. Washington, DC: Population Council.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jewkes, R., K. Wood, and N. Duvvury. ‘I Woke Up After I Joined Stepping Stones’: Meanings of a HIV behavioural intervention in rural South African young people’s lives. *Social Science & Medicine* (submitted); Jewkes, R., M. Nduna, J. Levin, N. Jama, K. Dunkle, M. Koss, A. Puren, and N. Duvvury. Impact of Stepping Stones on HIV, HSV-2 and sexual behaviour in rural South Africa: cluster randomised controlled trial. *British Medical Journal* (submitted).