



Summary Report of the Wikigender Online Discussion

Engaging Men and Boys to Transform Discriminatory Social Norms

22-31 October 2012

Organised by Wikigender, Sonke Gender Justice Network, Men for Gender Equality
Sweden (Män för Jämställdhet) and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs

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This online discussion on “[Engaging Men and Boys in Transforming Discriminatory Social Norms](#)” ran from 22 until 31 October and it is the 4th [online discussion](#) that Wikigender is organising in 2012. It allowed an extremely rich exchange of views, examples and recommendations on how men and boys can be more and better engaged in transforming discriminatory social norms: a total of fifty-six lengthy and detailed comments were posted and are summarised in this summary report, which will be presented at the seminar "Measuring progress towards gender equality: where do we stand?" on 13 November 2012 in Stockholm, an event co-organised by the OECD Development Centre and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Key Highlights

Key issues

- The power of men to change
- Rethinking ideas of masculinity
- Educating society (both women and men) about gender equality and its benefits
- Recognising the need for an equal share of responsibilities at home
- Engaging men and boys in preventing or ending violence against women and girls
- Examining how gender relations are affected by conflict
- Education from an early age is critical

Examples, case-studies

Training and education

- Training young men to become peer educators by PLAN International
- Using non-formal learning methods in Latvia with young boys
- Ending the circumcision tradition for young men in Kyrgyzstan through increased sexual education in schools
- The FAO' regional project in Eastern and Central Africa to address gender inequality and HIV in food insecure areas
- Instituto Promundo's "Program H"
- The work and perspectives of Sonke Gender Justice Network
- The work and perspectives of Men for Gender Equality Sweden (Män för Jämställdhet)

Community dialogue

- Eliminating female genital mutilation (FGM) among the Maasai community in Tanzania
- A community-based project in the Philippines: "Men's Responsibilities in Gender and Development"
- Challenging normative discourses through the "Men Mobilizing Men in Practice" programme
- Eradicating the practice of Chaupadi with Action Works Nepal
- Challenging social gender norms with HOPEM in Mozambique
- UNFPA's work in support of initiatives that engage men as equal partners to women

Movements led by men

- Movements initiated by men in Indonesia, like the Laki-laki Baru
- Abatangamuco: a movement of rural men in Burundi

Using technology and media

- Combining technology with games to engage with boys by Half the Sky Movement
- Partner for Prevention's work (P4P) via social and mass media in the area of gender-based violence

Action required

- Actions should be coordinated between all stakeholders to optimise the complementarities and comparative advantages
- Reinforce gender equality in a positive light in different settings: the media, schools and the justice system
- All actors should use the “gender and development” approach, where projects should target both women and men
- Countries should ratify the “Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence”
- Policy makers and practitioners need to change the lens through which they view men and women and challenge gender stereotypes and norms
- Actions from governments, UN bodies and civil society organisations should be targeted at encouraging men to support women’s autonomy
- Targeting out of school youth and male teachers in projects is critical

Background and Purpose

While policy-makers and civil society have rightly focussed on the need to empower women as a core strategy to achieve gender equality, there is now growing recognition that engaging men and boys is fundamental for reaching full equality. Indeed, the 2013 theme for the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will be on the Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, and the review theme will focus on the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS.

The OECD Development Centre’s 2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) found that while there has been progress in some areas, discriminatory social norms which undermine gender equality remain persistent and pervasive. For example, while countries are increasingly introducing laws to address domestic violence, female genital mutilation or women’s land rights, this has not translated to a shift in attitudes or practice. Can these discriminatory attitudes and norms be transformed without the buy-in and support of men and boys?

This online discussion was therefore a unique opportunity to focus more specifically on how men and boys can be engaged in transforming such discriminatory social norms to achieve gender equality. Many organisations are now designing innovative projects to engage men and boys in

various gender equality initiatives – social media campaigns to challenge violence against women, community mobilisation programmes to combat early marriage and awareness-raising about men’s role as fathers and carers.

During the discussion we heard from various experiences and could share knowledge on this issue from all corners of the world, including: Nepal, Tanzania, Indonesia, Botswana, South Africa, Latvia, Mozambique, Somalia, Sweden, Burundi, Rwanda, Kyrgyzstan, Honduras and many more. Participants included international organisations, research institutes, economists, policy analysts, academics, gender experts, international and local NGOs, civil society activists and other individuals.

Access the whole thread of comments from the online discussion [here](#).¹

Organisation of the discussion

The online discussion ran from 22 until 31 October and was co-organised by Wikigender, Sonke Gender Justice Network, Men for Gender Equality Sweden (Män för Jämställdhet) and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Participants were invited to comment on:

Engaging Men and Boys in Transforming Discriminatory Social Norms

With the following guiding questions:

- **Key issues:** What are the opportunities and challenges for engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality? How can men and boys be persuaded that gender equality also benefits them? What are some examples of new thinking or evidence in this area?
- **Examples, case-studies:** In your area/region, what are examples of successful programmes in engaging men and boys in transforming discriminatory social norms? (e.g. socio-cultural practices, caring responsibilities, employment rights, gender-based violence; other key issues highlighted in the SIGI) Are there approaches that are more effective than others? How can we harness the power of new technologies and the media? What role does men’s leadership play?
- **Action required:** What actions should governments, donors, UN bodies and civil society take to support the engagement of men and boys in achieving gender equality?

¹ Access all the comments by going to: <http://bit.ly/RHO281>

Key issues

The power of men to change

“The best way to lead is by example...as a father, friend, husband, boyfriend, uncle, brother, cousin and son”

Paul Watson

One participant shared his personal experience of his relationship with his dad, as he was lucky to see his dad as a vulnerable person in some situations and as a strong character in others. These are two sides of a male character that not all little boys see; rather, they tend to only see the “strong father” and think they should grow up in the same way and not show their vulnerability. Seeing both sides is really living the “full life”, not just the “half life”, according to this comment – and this is how all fathers should teach their sons to live. Another participant highlighted the role of **men as powerful agents of change** if they are engaged and trained properly, especially as they are often the decision-makers in a family. One participant stressed the role of men in the business world and how they could be a key “push factor” for gender equality to gain momentum: in reality, while some men fear becoming discriminated against if quotas for women are introduced in boardrooms, others have hardly noticed that there was gender inequality in the workplace or did not feel concerned by it. So what is needed is for men to acknowledge the current gender imbalance issue and lead the change for the future generations: **men are the other side of the gender balance and their voluntary involvement is crucial**. Finally, another contribution put forward the idea that men can be change makers in many spheres of life, whether in decision-making positions, at home, in the workplace, at social events, in the community and other settings.

Rethinking ideas of masculinity

“Working for less rigid masculinities does not mean applauding feminities, and equality needs less rigid feminities as it does masculinities”

Maria Zammit

One participant brought forward the model developed by Carol Hageman-White and her team to understand the factors that are at play in the perpetration of different forms of violence including domestic violence, sexual violence and sexual harassment. She shared her experience working on prevention against women and girls in the UK, where she was struck by the alarming rate of gender-based violence and normalisation of violence in schools. Since **gender roles and dominant masculinities start very young**, they should be tackled early and it is important to recognise the critical role that masculinities play at various levels – whether in laws, popular culture, institutions or everyday relationships. One participant insisted on the notion that **gender relations are multi-dimensional and interconnected**: men are half of the solution in addressing gender inequality and it is essential to train and educate men and boys to redefine masculinity and gender roles. Another example from South Africa highlighted the “Brothers for Life” campaign, which seeks to establish a male identity that relates to healthy, non-violent and more gender equitable behaviour. The campaign draws on the notion of brotherhood to convince men to adhere to new norms and hold

each other accountable, which is a particularly effective way in promoting change. Such a gender-transformative programme has proven to work better than programmes that are merely gender-sensitive or gender-neutral, according to a 2007 WHO study. For the best results, we must interrogate men's personal accounts and engagement with masculine norms to reveal the complexity and nuances of maintaining a "male identity" and use men's narratives to provide a more contextual analysis of masculinities; at the same time, feminist research should include those movements engaging men. Another WHO report in 2010 described some key elements of successful gender-transformative programmes, such as positive messaging, recognition of consequences of hegemonic masculinity, or acknowledgement that men are not homogeneous. As put by one participant, it is both necessary to transform unhealthy norms and document/publicise underestimated healthy norms among men, as **confronting the negative and emphasizing the positive** can be a lot more effective. When thinking about masculinity, one participant highlighted the need to think about the **various masculinities** that exist: not only the one where men are usually a group oppressing women, but also the one where groups of men dominate over other groups of men – be it because of class, race, caste, cultural or religious reasons. This second type of masculinity is hegemonic. This leads to some reflections and questions such as: would men be willing to change when it comes to giving up power and control? Are men who experience forms of oppression non-oppressive in situations where they are dominant, for example towards their spouses? Can these non-dominant masculinities lead the struggle for a non-violent order and be willing to link with the women's movement for the rights of the oppressed?

Educating society (both women and men) about gender equality and its benefits

"I believe men are half of the puzzle and solution to addressing gender inequality"

Salema Gulbahar

"When men change behaviour, there is an improved daily life, greater income, higher status in their local communities and an overall increased sense of well-being"

Jean Nimumbona

It should be highlighted that gender equality is not just about women: men are also sometimes discriminated against and this is often ignored. When everyone reaches the consensus that "**gender equality is for all**" it will be easier to challenge discriminatory social norms. One participant stressed that the best way for women to be able to walk beside men and not behind them is to **lead by example**: as a father, friend, husband, boyfriend, uncle, brother, cousin and son. Another participant reinforced the need to educate men that gender is not synonymous of women, as this is one of the obstacles when trying to engage men in activities that promote gender equality. One way to do this would be **for men to accept that women can be significant contributors to family income**, as in the case of Somalia, where women dominate petty trade and are therefore increasingly seen as central to the success of their families. However those men should also participate more in the financial responsibility for the household. Convincing men about the important economic role that women play in the family is also key in other parts of the world, where women are not really allowed to work outside the home (for example, in South East Asia and the Middle East and North Africa

regions). Another way to persuade men and boys that gender equality also benefits them is through **practical gender analysis** and other exercises that highlight the distinct skill sets, value and contributions of men, women, boys and girls and how each contribution is unique and benefits to all. One participant shared the outcome of a discussion he had about the definition of gender equality, and the result is that it is both equal responsibility and equal opportunities, for both women and men. In particular, **men's opportunities should be highlighted more** (parenting role, the possibility of showing vulnerability, etc.) Finally, a participant noted that women should also be educated about gender equality and the benefits of involving men in the gender discussion: indeed, some women approach gender equality from an extremely feminist angle that can make men feel threatened or pushed away, which actually becomes counterproductive in the movement for gender equality, as it loses the respect of men. The same applies to another comment, where a participant shared her experience of attending a panel discussion on "CEO champions: the role of women's entrepreneurship and leadership in times of crisis", where only one man took part in the session. Her feeling was that the whole panel discussion was about achieving gender equality in business through bringing more women on corporate boards and therefore completely left out men's voice from the debate.

Recognising the need for an equal share of responsibilities at home

"The promotion of paternity leave is essential to reducing gender inequalities inasmuch as, amongst other things, it strives to reduce rigid masculinities"

Maria Zammit

One participant stressed the need for making **paternity and maternity leave** equal in duration – citing Iceland as an example – and also compulsory for both fathers and mothers. Such a measure would not only contribute to a **more equitable distribution of caring responsibilities** in the home, but would also significantly help to reduce "rigid masculinities" and educate children better on the role of women and men in a family. Even when men are entitled to a substantial period of paternity leave like in Scandinavian countries, not all men claim most of their paternity leave as it is not widely accepted in society, and men are often worried of potential repercussions at work. This means that women are often left at a disadvantage in terms of career advancement, as they have to stay longer out of work. Recognising the importance of **equal share of responsibilities between boys and girls** in a family home is also crucial for gender equality, well-being and prosperity to thrive. Another participant shared her story of a trip in northern India that reinforces the need to provide equal opportunities and access to assets and resources to both girls and boys, so they can equally participate in their family's activities. She stayed with a poor family running a business in the tourism industry and as the business was falling apart she asked whether the girls could help, but the men in the family said that the girls' place was in schools. Yet despite the high priority on education, its quality is rather low in the region. As the business was mainly run via the Internet and the men were the ones owning the phones and the internet access, maybe the solution could be to have Internet lessons provided at school? This way the father could be more likely to accept his daughters' help.

Engaging men and boys in preventing or ending violence against women and girls

“Engaging men and boys should not be considered as an end in itself, but should be regarded as a means to an end”

Raymond Brandes

Educating men on the **differences between men and women, relationships, mutual respect** should start at an early age and within home. One view was that perpetrators of violence often grow up in situations of conflict and abuse in the home and replicate these models of violence between their parents in their own relationships as they grow up. One participant who ran awareness-raising workshops in a prison in Nicaragua recognised that despite the enthusiasm of imprisoned men to change, it is difficult to make change happen for them because of the violence they experience themselves on a daily basis in the prison from other prisoners or from the guards. Two participants agreed that prevention work is the most efficient way, especially with young people or grown-up men that are not in prison.

However, participants recognised the need to acknowledge the fact that even if most perpetrators of violence are men, not all men are violent and many would like to do something about it. Those men should be engaged to educate male perpetrators on issues such as family and care giving. Many experiences showed that if engaged strategically, **men can change from being violent to being respectful towards their spouses**. Such programmes should be further implemented by donors, civil societies, UN agencies, international NGOs and many others to achieve the desired results. Another participant stressed that all spheres of the government need to be engaged to organise talks about masculinity and include such talks in the education curriculum of schools.

A participant explained that in Botswana, the gender and development discourse has mostly focused on women as victims, while men were often portrayed as a problem – but recently the government and other stakeholders have started to **engage men and boys more via a number of programmes in areas such as sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and domestic violence**. One contribution from the White Ribbon Campaign in Namibia asked that men take responsibility for preventing violence against women, that they intervene against the violence of other men and address the root causes of violence. Partners for Prevention (P4P) is also doing great work, using **primary prevention programming** through community mobilisation and group education. P4P also identified a framework for action to prevent gender-based violence in 7 key action areas called **PREVENT: Produce and apply evidence; Respond to, support and protect those who experience violence; Empower women and girls; Value community engagement; Educate youth and adolescents; Nurture healthy family relationships; and Target alcohol and drug abuse**. One participant gave the example of an unusual and interesting experiment that took place in Colombia, during the administration of a former mayor in Bogotá: the mayor had decided that there would be a day in which only women would be allowed to go out at night, leaving the men and boys at home. The measure was quite shocking and perhaps for this, it made many people aware of gender inequality and indirectly it sensitised men about the issue of gender-based violence.

Examining how gender relations are affected by conflict

“While many studies and efforts have been carried out to empower women and assist them in recovering from rape, fewer have examined the impact of disempowerment on men and on how gender relations are affected by conflict”

Dean Peacock

One participant shared the results of a survey carried out in June 2012 in Goma, North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo by Sonke Gender Justice Network, Promundo-US and the Institute for Mental Health of Goma. The “International Men and Gender Equality Survey” targeted over 700 men and 700 women in Goma and its surroundings to **examine the impact of disempowerment on men and how gender relations are affected by conflict**. The findings of the survey were quite alarming as they highlight the normalisation of rape and even rape-supportive attitudes by the interviewed men, as well as high levels of economic stress. The results call for social development, humanitarian and human rights responses.

Education from an early age is critical

“The greatest influence on modelling positive gender norms can occur at [a] younger age”

Laxman Belbase

A couple of participants highlighted the fact the **young boys and girls should be educated at an early age** about the gender differences and gender roles. In particular, one example came from the organisation Save the Children Sweden who has been working on engaging boys and young men since 1997 using lifecycle and socio-ecological based strategies. **Childhood and adolescence are often viewed as the best period to formulate positive attitudes** and Save the Children Sweden adopts a child rights based approach in its projects to empower boys and girls so they become agents of change in their communities. In 2008, Save the Children implemented a project with Safer Society, a youth (girl) led organisation, to initiate social behaviour change. The project was extremely successful as the reported levels of violence among boys decreased, the police enforced laws and policies in the community following better reporting and boys and young men volunteered to empower their peers on the various issues discussed. This project showed that childhood and adolescence are times when boys and girls start to internalise gender social norms and therefore it is the best period to influence positive development and for boys to adopt more equitable visions of manhood.

Examples and case-studies

“The work of our training and community mobilisation unit is premised on the notion that men have a personal stake in change and that their change is most likely to endure if they become advocates for change themselves”.

Dean Peacock (Sonke Gender Justice Network)

Training and education

There is a two-year pilot project with young men implemented by **PLAN International** in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Germany on **gender justice**. Young men are trained through a series of workshops reflecting on concepts of masculinities, violence sexuality to become **peer educators** for other young people. In July 2013 they will all meet together to share their experiences and reflect on how they can engage with other young people on topics related to gender justice. This will lead to the creation of a toolkit for the peer educators.

Another experience was shared from **Latvia**: a female rights organisation engages boys to combat **gender-based violence, human trafficking** and promote gender equality using non-formal learning methods and educating groups of young boys on gender roles and relationships in society, the media, schools and their families.

One participant talked about the circumcision tradition for young men in **Kyrgyzstan** – which is strongly influenced by the nomadic lifestyle, communist ideology of the Soviet time and religion – and the related consequences of STDs, HIV and AIDS. It was stressed that the **sexual education** of children in Kyrgyzstan needs to be improved within school, as parents know very little about the topic and are therefore unable to advise their children.

The **FAO** is also implementing a regional project in **Eastern and Central Africa** to address **gender inequality and HIV** in areas where food insecurity persists. They train both men and women farmers and youth in farming techniques and educate them on health issues. By using a gender equal methodology, the results show that men’s views towards women has changed in a more positive way and relationships have been more equal in terms of household decision-making. Further, this led to less food insecurity. One key aspect of this project is that it empowers women without disempowering men.

The work of **Instituto Promundo** was also mentioned, in particular its **“Program H”**, aiming at engaging young men in the promotion of **sexual and reproductive health** and successfully implemented in Latin America and other regions.

Our Wikigender partner in this discussion, **Sonke Gender Justice Network**, has shared their work through the video **“Can’t Just Fold Your Arms”**, a documentary film about their quest to transform men in post-Apartheid South Africa. The work of Sonke Gender Justice Network started in 2006 in South Africa and uses a mix of trainings and workshops, policy work at the highest levels of government as well as advocacy work to address HIV and AIDS, reduce gender-based violence and promote equality and social justice. An important aspect of Sonke’s work is community education and mobilisation work: workshops are the starting point for many men who follow them, and who

subsequently join a Sonke Community Action Team or CAT and start to develop and implement action plans. CATs have a direct impact on its members, on people reached by CAT activities and on the broader community through theatre and music aiming at shifting gender social norms, by providing condoms, by sharing information on how men can support a rape survivor, etc. This approach is also successful as the presence of men advocating for gender equality influences other men to change. On top of this, Sonke works on strengthening citizen activism and improving rights literacy, to sustain these efforts on a larger scale. Finally, the notion of social capital is an important component of Sonke's community mobilisation and CAT approach, especially its bridging and bonding dimensions between community members, government representatives, NGOs and donors. Sonke's work reaches 25,000 men and women every year through its workshops and face-to-face interactions. The success of their approach is also measured through surveys. For example following Sonke's One Man Can Campaign, 50% of the participants responded that they were taking action to address acts of gender-based violence in their community and 61% reported increasing their use of condoms.

Our Wikigender partner **Men for Gender Equality Sweden** (Män för Jämställdhet) also shared their work and perspective on engaging men and boys more to transform discriminatory social norms. Their contribution highlighted the need for a holistic approach when thinking about engaging men and boys; this means taking into account the relative power positions and privileges of men and boys to that of women and girls, the vulnerabilities that dominant forms of masculinities create for men and boys and the diversities that exist within any population of men. For example, one target group that can be reached effectively are fathers-to-be, through the perspective of their future child's needs. Another target group to work with in primary violence prevention and to change dominant masculinities are teenage boys. Men for Gender Equality Sweden are adapting programmes for teenage boys that come from the US and are based on bystander approaches, where rather than addressing men only, everyone is considered a helpful bystander. Another point made by Men for Gender Equality Sweden is that governments should start to understand better how dominant masculinities are generated and shaped and how they relate to gender inequities and can be reformed – as the expertise in this field is still housed primarily among civil society organisations and academia. For this, more long-term and sustainable funding is needed for gender-transformative programmes and initiatives. Finally, successful interventions and policies need to be scaled up.

Community dialogue

There is a programme on **female genital mutilation** (FGM) among the Maasai community in **Tanzania**, spearheaded by **UNFPA with support from the UN inter-agency gender group**. In this case, as women were adamant in stopping the practice, men were constantly engaged in discussions on the dangers of exercising FGM. Some men then said that some Maasai men were looking to get married outside of the community as they preferred uncircumcised women. This sent a strong message to the Maasai women, as they were made aware that if the practice continued, they would lose their men to other communities. The effect was that cases of FGM slowly started to decline.

Another example came from the **Philippines**, with a community-based project on **“Men's Responsibilities in Gender and Development”**, where men and boys learnt to accept the concept and values of gender and reproductive health through a **discussion on domestic violence**. Some

important lessons learnt were that it is essential to have voluntary men as “gender champions” to help raise awareness; involve women’s and youth organisations as well; and include government officials in information campaigns and trainings

One participant mentioned the **“Men Mobilizing Men in Practice” programme** of the **Institute of Development Studies** at the University of Sussex in the **UK**. The programme aims to mobilise men to challenge and change the institutional policies and cultures that enable sexual and **gender-based violence**. Mobilising Men works with local NGO partners in different countries: the programme recruits and trains male and female activists in different institutional settings to develop campaigns addressing sexual and gender-based violence. In this comment was shared a video of the programme in Uganda enacted by the Refugee Law Project of the School of Law of Makerere University in Kampala. The video shows how the programme enables the participants to challenge normative discourses that sexual and gender-based violence is simply men seen as perpetrators and women seen as victims.

One participant shared the example of the work carried out by **Action Works Nepal**, an organisation working in the Karnali region, which is a very rural, poor and conflict-affected area of the country. Amidst the many different issues faced by the women in the region, **the practice of Chaupadi** is especially widespread: 98 per cent of the households follow the practice, which consists of women and girls having to stay in a shed during menstruation and childbirth. This can have traumatic consequences for women and girls, as they can suffer from animal bites, extreme cold, rape and other forms of sexual harassment. This discriminatory practice also restricts women’s and girls’ mobility, as during Chaupadi they cannot go to school or participate in any type of social gathering. Action Works Nepal is working successfully with the local traditional healers to eradicate the practice, but much work remains to be done, especially in other regions of Nepal. Donors should be made aware of this, as resources are needed to continue this work.

Another example is **HOPEM in Mozambique** that **challenges social gender norms** through a variety of programmes: “Men in the Kitchen” challenges the stereotype that men do not do any care work; “Art without violence” fights against gender-based violence through artistic expression; “Star Man” aims to eliminate gender-based violence through the testimonies and training of perpetrators of violence. All these programmes have proved successful, as the participants started to question their perception of gender norms and some deeply entrenched customs were being challenged, for example early marriage; the practice of “Kutchinga” (when a man sleeps with his brother’s wife after his death); or the tradition that upon the husband’s death, all belongings are taken from the widow by the husband’s family.

One participant reminded how in the **International Conference on Population and Development’s (ICPD) Programme of Action** gender relations were at the core of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights – but still today these are mainly viewed as women’s issues. **UNFPA’s country programmes** are among those that support initiatives that **engage men as equal partners** to women and engage them as champions of gender equality and women’s rights, as required by the ICPD Programme of Action. The next challenge will be to go beyond simply raising awareness about issues such as gender-based violence, preventing HIV or improving maternal health and truly address the underlying patriarchal norms that precisely lead to gender-based discrimination and inequality.

Movements led by men

A participant named a few examples from **Indonesia** of movements initiated by men and feminist groups, such as the **Laki-laki Baru** or “**New Men Movement**”. She also mentioned the **Oxfam Australia programme** working with local communities from the Nusa Tenggara Timor and Nusa Tenggara Barat Indonesian provinces on issues such as **gender-based violence and fatherhood**, which brought some success: for example husbands started to help their wives with domestic chores and managed to contain their emotions and anger in some difficult situations.

Another example of a successful example was given from **Burundi: Abatangamuco**, a movement of rural men that decided to challenge the **traditional expectations of gender roles** by undergoing personal change, sharing their personal experiences and doing local outreach activities through collaborating with CARE Burundi. These men started by questioning their way of life, and noticing how domestic abuse, useless spending of family resources or not participating in their spouses’ domestic work was unproductive and detrimental to economic development and well-being. They looked at how particular aspects of traditional ideals of masculinity are counterproductive for efforts to achieve other ideals. The Abatangamuco message should be recognised and followed so that more communities see their life improved; governments and all stakeholders should implement the necessary laws and all ratified conventions.

Using technology and media

Another way of engaging men and boys is through **technology**. One participant talked about a mobile phone and **internet game** developed by “**Half the Sky Movement**”. As mobile phones and technologies are becoming increasingly available in developing countries, such an educational game is a good way to reach the hardest to reach on sensitive and diverse issues, including the differences between girls and boys, the importance of education or safe health behaviour during pregnancy. Combining technology with games has proven to be very successful in this case, as demonstrated by the positive reactions of the boys and girls who played the game, as they found that they learnt a lot while being entertained.

Some examples of promising approaches initiated by partners of **Partner for Prevention (P4P)** in the area of **gender-based violence** include: the use of social media to raise awareness and develop capacities on gender-based violence prevention, in combination of on ground activities; the use of mass media in combination with theatre; school-based programmes; film production and discussion creation; the transformation of masculinities through awareness-raising; working with religious, cultural or political male leaders to change their perspectives; and male counselling with perpetrators.

Action required

“The field of engaging men and boys in gender equality has maybe left its earliest phases but I still see it as fairly embryonic. I think it is important that governments and donors systematically and strategically fund initiatives based on an understanding of where the field is.”

Klas Hyllander (Men for Gender Equality Sweden)

“Until proponents of gender equality are able to push the agenda in a truly transformative way (...), addressing the underlying gender norms which impede progress and view the concept of gender to not only mean ‘women’, we will continue to address the symptoms and not the cause.”

Leyla Sharafi

1. **Actions should be coordinated** between all stakeholders to **optimise the complementarities** and comparative advantages. In terms of gender-based violence prevention, it would be useful to follow the 5 steps for effective primary prevention programming and the PREVENT framework for action by Partners for Prevention (P4P).
2. Another participant commented that gender hierarchy follows the same principle as hierarchies based on class, race, religion or caste: the groups who are at the top of the hierarchy take their privileges, opportunities and access to society for granted and find it very difficult to compromise when it comes to creating a level playing field. Taking the example of human rights that are taught to us, exemplified by positive examples, we should do the same when it comes to gender equality: **we need to constantly reinforce gender equality in a positive light in different settings** – the media, schools or the justice system.
3. One participant thought that **all actors should use the “gender and development” approach**, where projects target both women and men. This would also help to lower the number of gender-based violence cases, which often happen when men in a given community feel threatened as women are becoming more empowered via women-specific activities. For example, a programme like the cash-voucher programme targeting women from poor households leaves men unsupported, which can lead to tensions in the household. It is therefore important to gain the support of men in such programmes by engaging with them.
4. One participant referred to the **“Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence”** and said that we should be putting pressure on states to **sign and/or ratify the convention**. This is a unique international treaty tackling violence against women in a comprehensive and effective manner, making it an obligation for state parties to the convention to work with men and boys to achieve gender equality. The convention needs at least 10 ratifications to enter into force and only Turkey has ratified it so far (23 countries have signed the convention). This represents a step forward in the area of violence against women, gender equality and the inclusion of men and boys in gender-related efforts in a number of countries, but we need more countries to ratify it.

5. A couple of participants agreed that it is important that **policy makers and practitioners change the lens through which they view men** (often only as the perpetrators of gender-based violence) **and women** and **challenge gender stereotypes and norms** – which means that they should focus on convincing both men and women that gender equality is for the benefit of society as a whole.
6. One comment focused on health issues, recommending that actions from governments, UN bodies and civil society organisations should be targeted at **encouraging men to support women’s autonomy** with regards to reproductive health and choice. This in itself would constitute a step towards equality
7. **Targeting out of school youth and male teachers** in projects is critical, for example in southern Africa most youth does not attend school and they often develop anti-social behaviour (HIV and AIDS is a big issue in the region). To reach them better we should readapt the work that is done with youth and teachers in large urban settings in the global north – such as involving well-engaged youth leaders and using a support group like a football club – where social norms can be learned and challenged. Further, we should remember to focus also on educating boys and men, not just girls.

Lessons learnt?

This online discussion benefited from a truly rich exchange and perspectives that showed that while we often talk in terms of “what about including women, the other half of the planet?”, we should rebalance the way in which we frame our gender equality discourse and seek to include men as “the other half of the planet that counts too” – if we are to achieve concrete results in improving the well-being of our societies and eliminating gender inequalities.

There are certainly obstacles to overcome and many challenges ahead, especially as it was recognised that the discussion around involving men is still at its very initial stages. Much remains to be done at community, national and international levels: at the macro level, gender stereotypes (gender roles in the family and in the community, for example) and discriminatory social norms (such as chaupadi, early marriage or kutchinga) persist and constitute the biggest barrier to overcoming gender inequality across many countries. At the micro level, the lack of good quality education and training for young boys and girls about gender roles, expectations and women’s autonomy is another obstacle. Yet examples of many successes and enablers around the world were brought to the table during the online discussion in areas such as reproductive health, gender-based violence and discriminatory practices such as FGM or Chaupadi, among others – using gender-transformative approaches, peer education among young men, non-formal learning methods, workshops, technology and social media tools, positive testimonies, leadership models and listening to and rethinking ideas of masculinity, among others.

Most importantly, the discussion showed a real consensus on the importance of engaging in a dialogue with men and boys about issues that also concern them, and for programmes targeting women to also consider the role of men and boys in addressing inequalities. The findings of this discussion will certainly illuminate the discussions that will take place at the seminar on “Measuring progress towards gender equality: where do we stand?” on 13 November 2012 in Stockholm.

Resources shared by participants in their comments:

Reading:

- A Research Report on "[Understanding Masculinities in Public Transport](#)," Kathmandu, Nepal submitted by Radha Paudel, Founder/President of Action Works Nepal (AWON)
- [Factors at play in the perpetration of violence against women, violence against children and sexual orientation violence](#): A Multi-level Interactive Model
- [Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality](#), Vignettes from Asia and Africa (2011) – UNFPA
- New Sonke-Promundo Report on [Images Report on Men, Masculinities and GBV in Eastern DRC](#) Reveals Alarming Attitudes About Rape Amongst Many Men
- [Effects of the girl and boy group method](#): A gender and social psychology perspective on gender equality youth work on Åland and in Latvia - Åland Islands Peace Institute
- Helen Clark: [Broadband Commission for Digital Development](#) – UNDP
- Council of Europe [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#)
- [Partners for Prevention](#) (Resources)
- [What can men do to support reproductive choice?](#) – IPAS
- [The night for women only in Bogotá](#) (in Spanish)
- Alan Berkowitz papers on [Social Norms](#)
- [Preventing Sexual Aggression among College Men](#): An Evaluation of a Social Norms and Bystander Intervention Program (uploaded on Wikigender)

Organisations and Initiatives:

- [Half the Sky Movement](#)
- [SWATI](#) (Society for Women's Action and Training Initiatives), India
- [MenCare](#) – campaign
- [Program H](#), by Instituto Promundo (article on Wikigender)
- [Sonke Gender Justice Network](#)
- [Men for Gender Equality Sweden](#) (Män för Jämställdhet)
- [Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#)
- Video: [N-Peace Awards 2012](#), Nepal
- Video: [Can't Just Fold Your Arms](#) – Sonke Gender Justice Network's quest to transform men in post-Apartheid South Africa
- Video: [Mobile Games: Reaching the Hardest to Reach](#)
- Video: [Half the Sky Movement: The Game](#)
- Video: [We Are Man - End Violence Against Women](#)
- Video: [Narratives of change](#)