POLICY AND PRACTICE BRIEFING # 5

ENGAGING MEN AND YOUTH IN TACKLING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

NONE in 3

Preventing Domestic Violence

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Engaging Men and Youth in Tackling Domestic Violence

This Policy and Practice Briefing is drawn from qualitative research carried out as part of the None in Three Project, an EU-funded initiative for the prevention of domestic violence (DV) in the Caribbean (www.noneinthree.org). Overall 109 participants (49 women and 60 men) from Grenada and Barbados participated in the research which was carried out between April and July 2016. Of the 60 men (age 26+) and young men (16-25) (referred to throughout as 'youth') who participated in the study, 23 were from Barbados and 37 from Grenada. In Barbados, 14 men and 9 youth participated and in Grenada, 23 men and 14 youth. Their participation was in the form of focus groups and individual interviews.

The men and youth were from two specified groups: offenders (men and youth who had been convicted of violence against women) and non-offenders (men and youth from the general public and who had no conviction of violence). There were 11 offenders in total from both countries: four men in Barbados and two in Grenada; three youth in Barbados (young offenders but not for a gender based offence) and two in Grenada. There were 45 non-offenders from both countries: 10 men in Barbados and 17 in Grenada; six youth in Barbados and 12 in Grenada. (Full report available here - http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/30898/).

The None in Three project is established on the principle of inclusivity and for this reason engaged in research to obtain the perspectives of men and youth within what was primarily domestic violence research with women. The focus of Policy and Practice Briefing No 5 is on *Engaging Men and Youth in Tackling Domestic Violence* – other briefings are available as follows:

- Policy and Practice Briefing No 1- Safeguarding the Rights of Pregnant Women affected by Domestic Violence

- Policy and Practice Briefing No 2- Safeguarding the Rights of Women with disabilities affected by Domestic Violence

- Policy and Practice Briefing No 3 -Safeguarding the Rights of Women living with HIV affected by Domestic Violence

- Policy and Practice Briefing No 4 -Safeguarding the Rights of Women in Same-sex Relationships affected by Domestic Violence

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Overarching Themes from the Research

Men and youth are impacted by violence too (though to a lesser extent) but they have no avenues to access support. Male victims of abuse by women are treated in a derisory manner by peers and professionals since they are expected to be in control. Furthermore, there are few social spaces available for men to challenge cultural expectations and pressure to behave in dominant ways.

The influence of gender inequality, gendered identities and gendered role expectations is geared towards promoting patriarchal values and seems unremitting in protecting male privilege and sense of entitlement and in creating the social and cultural conditions in which domestic violence flourishes.

There is a high degree of intentionality that lies behind much abuse. Domestic violence is rarely a one-off incident of aggression which happens as a consequence of loss of control and for the women in this study was more likely to reflect a continuum of violence and abuse.

From the evidence provided by women, perpetrators often plan how best to inflict harm; they make choices that suggest the acts of coercion, control and violence they inflict are intended and targeted. Where violence was regarded as being a consequence of the loss of control, this was primarily because of the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Violent behaviour (physical, sexual and emotional) as a feature of interpersonal relations can become embedded within family and community life and in this, women as well as men are implicated in that this becomes the primary means by which children learn to emulate adversarial rather than non-violent conflict resolution skills.

There are clear links between early abuse in childhood (especially child sexual abuse) and domestic violence in adulthood – for many of the women in our research, these experiences simply could not be disentangled.

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KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Men and youths' perspective on what counts as DV

- All of the male participants in the None in Three research seemed to be more aware of the physical and psychological aspects of domestic violence as opposed to the financial and sexual aspects

- Of all the men and youth in the study, only one out of 60, identified that sexual abuse was domestic violence

- Financial abuse was not identified as domestic violence by the youth, they *did* suggest however that women's lack of economic power made them vulnerable to abuse.

Is it cultural?

- Young men said they thought it was cultural to exert forms of power and control over women and in this respect they were just fulfilling what society expects of them
  - *At least that's what I saw with my dad. They feel like they're entitled to that person. They want them to control (sic), its like a power thing*

- *I think that it gives them [men] the belief that maybe women should be treated in a certain way, violently*
- *Well I think what happens is the young men they see these things happening and they think it's the norm, and that becomes part of their culture*
- *It's very traditional and ingrained how men always want to rule and the people in charge want to conqueror and to achieve. It is still part of the male culture.*

- The term 'culture' was also used by men to describe the sets of expectations and behaviours that were inculcated in them as they grew up- to be tough and aggressive- repressing emotions and feelings as cultural markers of masculinity

- Yet, men also described the need to express their feelings, acknowledging that the options for doing so were very limited due to the cultural messages that regard such behaviour as inappropriate

- The cultural messages which militated against men expressing feelings and emotions on the one hand whilst encouraging macho-ness and violence on the other, were said to be transmitted through families and reinforced by peers

It works both ways

- On one level, men seemed to view culture as something that existed outside of them, seemingly not fully recognising that they were an integral part of how cultural beliefs are created and perpetuated. Prescribed patterns of behaviours were assigned them, no choice was exercised or available but to follow suit

- On another level men's comments revealed their exercise of choice and agency in expressing being male, being that alpha male
  - *… you don't want to be considered the wimp or the weaker, the weaker person, the weaker guy, you always wanna be that alpha male. So it's probably how some of us are reared, how we were raised and then the media also tend to perpetuate that style*

- Men highlighted violence may be used by both male and female in adversarial intimate partner relationships; violence was seen as the prerogative of both. Conversations also need to include women who are violent
  - *…they got some spiteful women that would look to give you back something*

When violence is more than noise

- The youth in the study regarded intimate partner violence as a norm in their communities, an everyday occurrence, as one young man said, like dogs barking
  - *That is lovers quarrel. That is just them. So to me, I know it's wrong, I would not involve in that, but it just became like a dog barking at me, that's how violence and fighting was after a while, no different than dogs barking. It's an everyday thing*

- Several men and youth saw the portrayal of violence in the media as influencing the behaviour of boys, where differing types of music and television shows were seen as greatly influencing children and the perpetration of domestic violence

- o *I think there is a lot of influence from the music, television, most of the popular TV shows, Power Rangers or any one of them depicts violence, you have to fight, you have to, it's always a good guy a bad guy*

Influencing factors

- Several men felt that fatherless children and children whose fathers were not relevant in their lives were vulnerable to becoming violent

- Consistent with other research (Henning et al., 2005 Stuart et al. 2006), some externalized reasons given by men for domestic include relationship conflict, infidelity and perceived provocation such as being insulted and belittled

- A common thread across all the participants, both men and youth, offenders and non-offenders, were views that the attitudes of women as partners and as mothers played a major role in domestic violence

- Some men suggested that some child rearing practices such as physical punishment and verbal abuse meted out by mothers to children might be a boy's first exposure to violence; these experiences when combined with societal expectations about the role and behaviour of men contributed to the extent of violence in society

  - o *I feel that the biggest abusers, to me, are women..., and then it becomes violent because then they cuff the children, the girls in their back and slap the boys; that is violence…*

- The discourse within focus groups seems to support the findings on the dominance of masculine identities based on patriarchal values. For example, some of the older men in the group expressed the belief that women's advancement (economic, educational and emancipatory) added to the problem

- Many of the men in this research had been exposed to family violence throughout their own childhoods but did not believe in its acceptability and were committed to helping men to find non-adversarial ways to deal with their frustration

Interventions suggested by men to help men

- Counselling emerged as the most common intervention suggested by men to help men deal with violent behaviour

- Both men and youth voiced the need for positive parenting as a means of imparting values of non-violence in children. Of note, men recognised that children could not choose the types of households they grew up in and where there are parenting deficiencies suggested that the church and the school should play a role in instilling values of respect and non-violence

- Most participants expressed the view that education and community-based programmes could do much to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence and also to reduce community violence. Activities that build resilience and self-esteem were seen mentioned as critical
  - o *Activities that make one feel good about oneself*

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- There is a need to strengthen and, or implement an integrated gender transformative policy whose focus is the empowerment of men and women. One which recognises that men's past experience with childhood abuse can be related to mental health problems and the perpetration of intimate partner violence, and that this often goes under-recognized and untreated (Haegerich & Hall, 2011)

- Conduct periodic research on social and cultural norms – inclusive of men and women relations – likely to maintain gender based violence (GBV), keeping abreast of changing patterns of engagement.e.g., awareness of new technology impact

- Plan, implement and monitor interventions (e.g., training and therapeutic interventions) with both men and women as a well researched shift from the duality of working with individual gender to some joint approaches e.g. developing a common campaign on GBV

- Develop a fatherhood policy, where fathers are supported to be involved in the strengthening and care of their families, recognising the benefits as extensively shown in the research literature to their own well being and that of their sons and daughters. By extension this involvement is also shown to help to minimise domestic violence

- Have policy acknowledge and reflect a clear understanding of differing gendered vulnerabilities and the problem solving differences of men and women for their influence on GBV

- Make use of a social ecological perspective in policy development, cognisant of various seminal factors Influencing men's perpetration of violence (Haegerich & Hall, 2011)

- Have policy promote programmes of mentoring (man to man) in violence prevention aimed at reducing men's violence against women. For example, developing non-violent models of traditional masculinity   which help with promoting self esteem, resilience and emotional intelligence, challenging and reconstructing male norms that equate strong manhood with dominance over women.

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

- Services ought to have multi-pronged practices for involving men and boys as key agents in violence-reduction. For example, these should include men as role models in diverse areas, as leaders and as partners in working with other men and boys to promote healthy and positive constructs of masculinity (Kaufman, 2001)

- Programmes should utilise knowledge benefits from regional and international movements which engage men to partner in fostering a world where peace is pursued, violence is reduced and gender equality is achieved. One example is the MenEngage Call for Action listed below

- Regional and national programmes such as Partnership for Peace (Barbados) and Man to Man (Grenada) which work in a rehabilitative way with perpetrators of domestic violence should strengthen this legacy through ongoing evaluation of their interventions

- National programmes working with perpetrators should consider extending their legacies to working with youth at risk of gender based violence (as potential victims and abusers) to help change the predictors of violence. These programmes should also aim to promote good mental health and wellbeing and help males and females move away from accepting stereotypical gender norms and unequal power relations between men and women. A regional example is Programme H-M-D - a Toolkit for Action in Brazil.

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USEFUL RESOURCES

Aggression Replacement Therapy. Available at
https://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=254

MenEngage Call for Action: Post-2015 Agenda. Retrieved from http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/MenEngage-Post-2015.pdf

Model Programme Guide. Available at https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/Topic/Details/1

Programme H-M-D a toolkit for action http://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Program-HMD-Toolkit-for-Action.pdf