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Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence



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**Irish School of Ecumenics**  
Centre for Gender and Women's Studies

**Engaging Men and Boys in Preventing Men's Violence Against Women: Progress and Challenges**

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[www.gbv.ie](http://www.gbv.ie)

@ICGBV\_Ireland @MichaelGLFlood #EngagingMen

## Engaging Men and Boys in Preventing Men's Violence against Women: Progress and Challenges

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## Who is this guy?

- Profeminist activism, including e.g.
  - Men Against Sexual Assault
  - XY (once a magazine, now a website, [www.xyonline.net](http://www.xyonline.net))
  - White Ribbon Campaign
- Community education and advocacy
- Academic research & teaching
  - Funded research on engaging men in preventing men's violence against women
  - Other research, e.g. on men and gender equality, pornography, etc.


## Violence against women

- Women experience an enormous variety of forms of violence, directed at women as women.
- The many kinds of (& names for) gendered violence;
  - Domestic violence, family violence, wife-battering, intimate violence, intimate homicide, femicide;
  - Sexual violence, sexual assault, rape, marital rape, gang rape, date rape, acquaintance rape, indecent assault, sexual harassment, sex-based harassment
  - Child abuse, child sexual abuse
  - Homophobic violence, hate crime, lesbian-bashing
  - Elder abuse
  - Female genital mutilation
  - Enforced prostitution
  - Enforced sterilisation
  - Enforced abortion
  - Female infanticide
  - Enforced motherhood
  - Bride-burning; Footbinding; Witch-burning

- Broadening and challenging traditional / dominant definitions of violence.
- Physical violence typically is accompanied by other forms of abusive and oppressive behaviour. Such as;
  - Threats of violence, intimidation, sexual assault, coercion, emotional abuse, financial control, insults and mind-games, control and isolation.
  - And minimising or denying the violence, refusing to accept responsibility, and blaming the victim.

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## Intimate Terrorism / Coercive Controlling Violence



## A continuum of controlling behaviours

Violence against women isn't only about physical and sexual violence.



- Critique of pathologising and individualising explanations of men's violence (in which violence is seen as the actions of 'sick' individuals, 'psychos', etc.). Instead;
  - Violence is perpetrated by normal men and in normal families, in the political context of gender inequalities.
- Violence is a choice:
  - Those who use violence choose where and when they do the violence. And how they use the violence: e.g. controlling where they hit, and with what degree of force.
- Links between men, masculinity and violence:
  - Not biological, but social, cultural, and historical.

## Exercise: Which men?

- There are 1,000 men in the building next door.
  - Which one should your daughter / female friend date?
- Which of these men is most likely to perpetrate violence against women, which men are least likely, and why?
  - What would it be useful to know about them?

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## Causes and context

- Three broad clusters of factors shape men's violence against women:
  1. Gender roles and relations
  2. Social norms and practices related to violence
  3. Access to resources and systems of support

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## (1) Gender roles and relations

- Men's gendered attitudes and beliefs
  - Men's agreement with sexist, patriarchal, and sexually hostile attitudes.
- These are grounded in wider social norms regarding gender and sexuality.
  - Violence is part of 'normal' sexual, intimate, and family relations
- The power relations of relationships and families
  - These interact with conflict between partners.

## (1) Gender roles and relations *cont'd*

- Peer and organisational cultures
  - Some men have rape-supporting social relationships, e.g. in sport, gangs and peer groups, male residential colleges on campuses, and the military.
  - Some contexts involve gender segregation, strong male bonding, high alcohol consumption, sexist social norms, etc.
- The gender roles and norms of communities and cultures.
  - E.g., there are higher rates of VAW in cultures which emphasise male dominance in families, male honour, etc.

## **(2) Social norms and practices related to violence**

- Domestic violence resources
- Violence in the community
- Childhood exposure to intimate partner violence
  - Children, especially boys, who either witness violence or are subjected to violence themselves are more likely to adhere to violence-supportive attitudes.

## **(3) Access to resources and systems of support**

- Low socioeconomic status, poverty, and unemployment
  - The factors which accompany disadvantage, e.g. crowding, hopelessness, conflict, stress, or a sense of inadequacy in some men.
- Lack of social connections and social capital
  - Social isolation is both a cause and a consequence of wife abuse.

## **(3) Access to resources *cont'd***

- Neighbourhood and community characteristics
  - Such as poverty, unemployment, lack of collective efficacy, disintegration of family and community, etc.
- Personality characteristics (and antisocial behaviour and peers)
- Alcohol and substance abuse
  - Men may use intoxication to minimise responsibility, or as a way to overcome women's resistance.
- Situational factors: separation

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## **Shifts in violence against women**

- Shifts in the contexts for men's violence against women
  - The pornographication of popular culture
  - Positive and negative shifts in community attitudes
- New mediums for abuse
  - New forms of abuse, such as the non-consensual production or distribution of images
  - New mediums for old forms of abuse such as stalking.

## **Why engage men and boys?**

1. It is largely boys and men who perpetrate this violence.
2. Constructions of masculinity play a crucial role in shaping men's and boys' violence against women and girls.
3. Boys and men have a positive role to play in helping to stop violence against women.

## **More reasons to engage men**

- Men can change men.
  - Men's attitudes and behaviours are shaped in powerful ways by their male peers.
- Men can use institutional power to promote change.
  - E.g., senior male 'champions of change'
- Involving men means that women do not have to make change alone.

## Violence prevention

- Forms of prevention:
  - Before the problem starts: *Primary* prevention
  - Once the problem has begun: *Secondary* prevention
  - Responding afterwards: *Tertiary* prevention
- *Primary* prevention: Aims to lessen the likelihood of initial perpetration or victimisation.
- All contribute to each other.

## Multiple levels of intervention

- Men's violence against women is the outcome of a complex interplay of individual, relationship, community, institutional, and societal factors.



Figure 3 - Ecological model proposed by the World Health Organization

- Six levels of intervention – a spectrum of prevention.

## Level 1: Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills

- To increase individuals' capacity to prevent or avoid violence.
- Including;
  - Programs for boys who have witnessed or experienced violence in families.
  - Interventions in parenting and family relations
    - E.g., MenCare campaign



## Level 2: Community education

- Face-to-face educational groups and programs
  - E.g., 'healthy relationships' education or 'respectful relationships' education in schools
  - Australia: Increasingly integrated into school curricula
- Other strategies take place outside school and university settings.
  - Including peer education and mentoring.

## Discussion groups fostering gender equality: On US college campuses



### Discussion groups fostering gender equality: Men's Resources International training, Liberia



### Community education *continued*

- Communication and social marketing
  - Public education / awareness-raising campaigns
  - Multi-component community mobilization campaigns

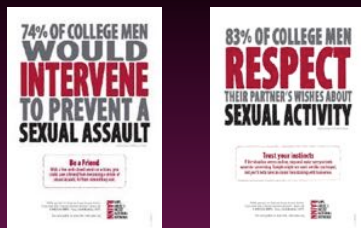
### Building men's support for non-violence: Men Can Stop Rape campaign (USA)



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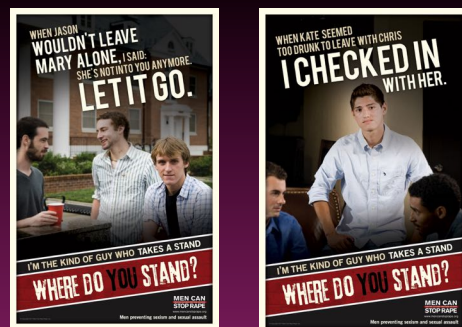


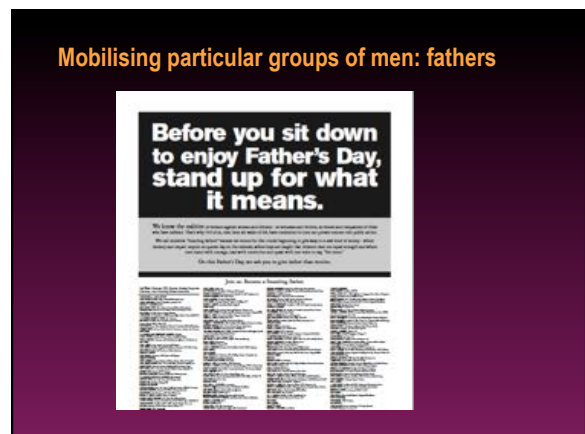
### Social norms campaigns



E.g., closing the gap between men's perceptions of other men's agreement with violence-supportive and sexist norms and the actual extent of this agreement

### Bystander intervention campaigns






## Community education continued

- Local educational strategies:
  - 'Social norms' campaigns: closing the gap between actual and perceived agreement with violence-supportive norms
  - 'Bystander intervention' campaigns
- Other media strategies
  - Better news reporting
    - 'Uncovered' project
  - Media literacy
    - 'It's Time We Talked' project
  - Media regulation



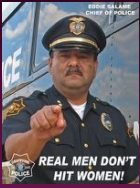
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## Pornography education: 'It's time we talked'



## Level 3: Educating providers and other professionals

- Educating professionals
  - E.g., screening programs by health professionals
  - Sometimes involve working with men in male-dominated institutions.
  - Examples: with coaches, police, military forces, and faith-based leaders



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

- Need to change the social norms, gender roles, and power relations which feed into violence against women.
- Promising strategies of community engagement and strengthening...

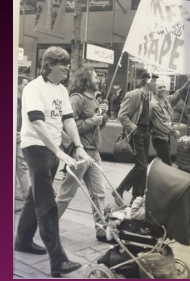
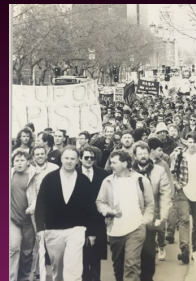
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## Level 4 *continued*: Mobilising Communities

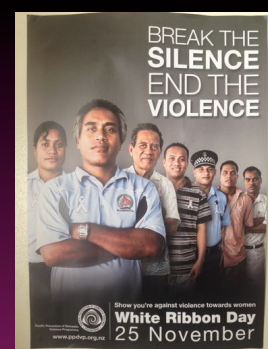
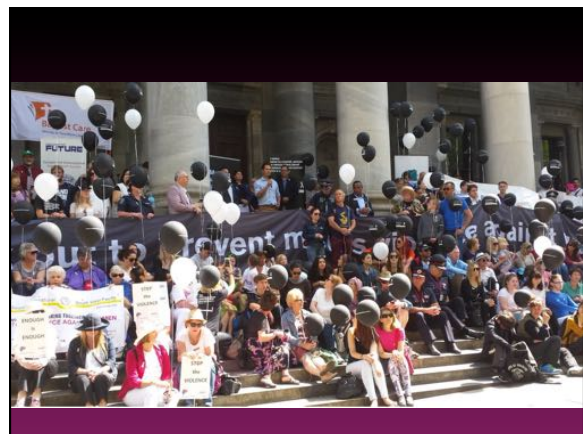
- Mobilise communities through events, networks, and campaigns.
- Build grassroots men's groups and networks.
  - White Ribbon Campaign
  - Men As Partners program
  - Many other groups...

## Men Against Sexual Assault (Australian grassroots profeminist activism, early 90s)



## White Ribbon Australia: Key activities

- Community events: 800+ in 2016
- White Ribbon Ambassadors:
  - 1,000 men
- Breaking the Silence Schools Program:
  - 350 schools
- Workplace Accreditation Program:
  - 23 organisations already, and 67 in the 2015 intake
- Awareness raising, marketing and engagement initiatives



### Mobilizing men for gender justice: South African Men as Partners Network



### 'Walk a Mile in Her Shoes' campaign (Los Angeles, 2007)



### 'Walk a Mile in Her Shoes' campaign (Perth, 2014)



## Level 5: Changing Organizational Practices

- Changing organisational and institutional cultures and systems
  - Example: whole-of-school violence prevention
- Intervening in male-dominated and homosocial contexts
  - Example: a sporting institution taking systematic action to address sexual assault: the Australian Football League.
  - Example: the Australian military

## On campus? A comprehensive strategy is needed...





## Level 6: Influencing Policies and Legislation

- Law and policy are crucial tools of prevention. They:
  - have a wide-reaching effect;
  - can shift social norms;
  - help establish particular strategies of prevention; and
  - enable violence prevention work



## Men's anti-violence work: Achievements

- Is well established, through significant national and international groups and networks
- Shows evidence of effectiveness
  - 3 reviews of published studies...
- Has increasing support through both international commitments and state and national government policies
- Is growing in scale and sophistication
- Is based on feminist frameworks and done generally in collaboration with women

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## Limitations

- Much of the work isn't done by men.
- The growing focus on engaging men and boys in prevention is politically delicate. It has:
  - diminished the legitimacy of women-only and women-focused programmes and services; and
  - fuelled the invalidation and marginalisation of the expertise of women and the women's sector.
- Much of the work engaging men and boys in violence prevention is conceptually simplistic and thus ineffective.
- There is much which is unknown about effective practice.

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## Inspirations for involvement?

- What inspires men to become involved in efforts to end violence against women?

## Some common themes in male paths to involvement

- Connections to individual women: a mother, a partner, a friend, a sister, a daughter
- Connections to individuals and groups who model egalitarian gender roles and relations
- Exposure to feminist and progressive ideals and frameworks
- Commitments to other ethical, political, and/or spiritual ideals
- Experiences of violence

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## Violence against women is a men's issue

- Most men do not assault women. But physical and sexual violence is perpetrated overwhelmingly by men.
- Violence against women is men's problem;
  - VAW makes all men seem a potential threat
  - Men have to deal with the impact of other men's violence on the women and children that they love
  - As bystanders
  - As perpetrators

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### What men must do

1. Put our own houses in order.
  - Build non-violent, respectful and equitable relations with the women in our lives.
2. Challenge violence and violence-supportive behaviour around us.
  - Become positive bystanders.
3. Work for wider social and cultural change
  - Shift the attitudes, behaviours, and gender inequalities which feed into men's violence against women.

### Start with yourself

- Don't use violence.
- Build respectful and non-violent relations with women.
- Boycott and resist sexist and violence-supportive culture.
- Inform yourself of the realities of men's violence against women.

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### Be an active and involved bystander

- Intervene in violent incidents.
- Challenge perpetrators and potential perpetrators.
- Support victims and survivors.
- Be an egalitarian role model.
- Challenge the social norms and inequalities which sustain men's violence against women.

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### Personal strategies for strength, support, and inspiration

- Be bold.
- Learn a language for speaking about violence against women.
  - Speak from the heart
- Get comfortable with the F-word and the G-word.
- Find and build communities of support.

### Take-home messages

1. 'Engaging men' is firmly established as a field of practice within violence prevention and gender justice efforts.
2. There are effective ways for men to take part in projects of personal and collective change.
3. Men who care for women and care for justice must act to end violence against women.

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## Resources

- Online resources on men's roles in ending violence against women:
  - <http://www.xyonline.net/category/article-content/violence>
  - See over for key readings...
- Dr Michael Flood's publications:
  - <http://www.xyonline.net/category/authors/michael-flood>
- Contact:
  - [mflood@uow.edu.au](mailto:mflood@uow.edu.au)
  - @MichaelGLFlood

## Key readings on engaging men

- Work with men to end violence against women: A critical stocktake (journal article, 2015). URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28295552\\_Work\\_with\\_men\\_to\\_end\\_violence\\_against\\_women\\_a\\_critical\\_stocktake](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28295552_Work_with_men_to_end_violence_against_women_a_critical_stocktake)
- Preventing Male Violence (book chapter, 2015). URL: <https://www.academia.edu/10441436/>
- From Working With Men and Boys to Changing Social Norms and Reducing Inequities in Gender Relations: A paradigm shift in prevention of violence against women and girls. (With Rachel Jewkes and James Lang). URL: <https://www.academia.edu/9526624/>
- Current Practices to Preventing Sexual Violence and Intimate Partner Violence (book chapter, 2014). URL: [https://www.academia.edu/7095750/Current\\_Practices\\_to\\_Preventing\\_Sexual\\_Violence\\_and\\_Intimate\\_Partner\\_Violence](https://www.academia.edu/7095750/Current_Practices_to_Preventing_Sexual_Violence_and_Intimate_Partner_Violence)
- Men Speak Up: A toolkit for action in men's daily lives (Report, November 2011): [http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/Research\\_series/Men\\_speak\\_up\\_Flood\\_2011.pdf](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/Research_series/Men_speak_up_Flood_2011.pdf)
- Where Men Stand: Men's roles in ending violence against women (Report, November 2010). URL: <http://www.xyonline.net/content/where-men-stand-mens-roles-ending-violence-against-women>
- Men's positive roles in ending violence against women (a short piece). URL: <http://www.xyonline.net/content/mens-positive-roles-ending-violence-against-women>
- Involving Men in Efforts to End Violence Against Women (journal article, 2011). URL: <http://www.xyonline.net/content/involving-men-efforts-and-violence-against-women-journal-article>