

**Trends in Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination and Efforts to Engage Men
and Boys in Ending it**

**Oral Testimony As Prepared
for the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on International
Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy and Global Women's
Issues**

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Honorable Chairwoman Boxer, Ranking Member Paul and other members of the Subcommittee, thank you for holding this hearing on such an important topic.

We all know by now the global extent of violence against women: an estimated 30 percent of women worldwide will experience physical or sexual violence from a man at some point in their lives, the majority of those husbands or partners or men they know. We have a growing body of evidence on the impact of this violence on women's and girls' lives, in terms of personal, political, economic and health consequences. What we too often neglect is that we also know which men are more likely to use violence against women and girls.

From household surveys we and partners have carried out in more than 16 countries globally, we know that men who see their fathers or another man use violence are up to 2.5 times more likely to use violence against their wives or female partners. Men who themselves experienced violence in school, the home or the community are nearly twice

as likely to use violence against women and girls. Men who witness and experience various kinds of violence growing up, and those who believe they are entitled to women's bodies are more likely to rape. Men who are displaced by conflict, men who are economically stressed, men who binge drink or drink excessively, and men who think their peers support their use of violence against women are also more likely to use violence against women.

The bottom line is that men who use violence against women have often witnessed or experienced violence in childhood, or have been socialized into believing that they are entitled to having power over women and girls. And they often have male peers who support them in their use of violence. This is not the behavior of a few bad men. It is part of the norms and attitudes about what it means to be men and women, and it is about how we raise our sons and daughters to see this violence as acceptable or not. The good news is that with this information, we know how to break cycles of violence against women.

Let me offer an example. I want to tell you about Marcio, a man from the favela of Santa Marta in Rio de Janeiro. Santa Marta is a setting where gang violence and violent response from the police against gangs has been chronic, where a third of parents use violence against children, where nearly half of children have witnessed a homicide, where men and women struggle to find adequate work and to provide for their families, and where a third of households have no adult man present at all. Marcio said this: "Once my father came home, he was drunk. He hit my mother. Her eye was swollen for

a week. His version of manhood was just that: having lots of women, drinking, parties. I never had presents from my father, or him playing with me. I had this: violence and him abandoning us.”

In group sessions that Promundo organized, Marcio told us about the pain and anger he felt in repeatedly witnessing that violence. He also talked about how he managed to avoid repeating the violence he saw around him: by talking about that pain, participating in a campaign and outreach activities that Promundo carried out in his community, and by finding other men like him working to break the violence. He told us: “Sharing my story with other men, I was able to overcome what I saw growing up. And I could help other men get over the violence they had seen too.” Marcio is now a devoted father to a young son. To watch him interact with his son is to affirm that cycles of violence can be broken, to see that even men who witnessed this violence and experienced it can become supportive and non-violent fathers and partners.

We start with the assumption that men who have used violence must be held accountable for that violence. But we also know that that there is no way to lock up or imprison a third of the world’s men. We must have functioning justice sectors, and committed individuals within them. Many of our partner organizations, such as Vital Voices and others, train members of the police and justice sectors, to take services and justice for victims seriously. But we must equally forcefully say this: we know that prevention works. We know how to end cycles of violence. And it’s time to scale up the approaches

that work. It's time for a bold vision to take what we know works to change attitudes, and to work with men and boys to break the cycle of violence against women and girls.

Let me offer a few examples:

First, we can train teachers and youth workers in carrying out school-based prevention models. In Brazil, we use online continuing education courses to instruct teachers in how to carry out group education with students about questioning the norms that underpin gender-based violence and gender inequality overall. In a year, we can reach more than 3,000 teachers, who in turn can reach more 250,000 students with a curriculum called Program H that calls young men and women to question the norms and attitudes that support inequality and violence. We have seen, as have other organizations doing this work, that such activities carried out with young people has the potential to shape and influence life-long attitudes about manhood and womanhood.

Second, we can scale up what we call bystander intervention programs, in which men, like Marcio and many others, can be trained how to speak out when they see other men condone or use violence. Via sports-based programming, on the soccer fields, and in locker rooms, Promundo, Futures without Violence, Sonke Gender Justice, Breakthrough and other organizations engage men and women in questioning the violence they see around them and appropriate ways to intervene. This is in effect the idea that if "you see something, you say something." You see your friend getting drunk and inappropriately harassing a young woman, and you speak out or offer help. You hear a man using

violence, you speak out, you offer help, you make it known that it is not an acceptable behavior. You hear a public official use language condoning violence, you question it.

Third, we use the health sector to reach men, in particular via pre-natal visits.

We've seen that violence by men against women often goes up during pregnancy. In some of the settings we work in, up to one in five women experiences violence during pregnancy. We're working with partners and with the health sector, in a model called MenCare+, in Rwanda, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia to use prenatal visits as a place to both screen for violence and to recruit expectant fathers to prevent it.

Specifically, we train health workers to carry out sessions with men on how to communicate better with their wives and partners, how to raise their children in non-violent ways, and how to better understand their roles in maternal and child health. With this program, men are becoming more involved and less violent fathers. The expanded reach of pre-natal services for women in countries around the world, gives us a tremendous opportunity and entry point; around 60-80% of fathers across countries are attending at least one prenatal appointment with their partners or wives. This interaction with the health system provides a key opportunity to engage men in doing their share of caregiving and to be involved fathers, as well as to reduce violence. And we use infrastructure that already exists.

Fourth, we can use the power and reach of economic empowerment programs for women. Micro-credit and micro-finance programs for women have been one of the success stories of international assistance and development. An estimated 125 million women are

reached globally with these programs, many of those programs supported by USAID and other international donors. These programs work to give women income security and autonomy. At the same time some studies show that couple conflict can increase as women are economically empowered via such programs. Thus, we have seen that such programs can work even better if we use them as a space to recruit men via community outreach and group education with messages about couple cooperation and communication. When we have done this, we see that income gains are improved--that is women have even more income--couples cooperate more and couple conflict is reduced.

And finally, we're using the workplace as a space to reach men. To give an example, in Brazil we work with Petrobras, the national petroleum company, to encourage workers not to engage in sexual exploitation by having sex or paying for sex with underage girls. Of course this is against the law and men should not be doing so in first place, but we have carried out surveys in Brazil finding that 14% of men in the cities surveyed reported having paid sex with a girl under the age of 18.

We know that this sexual exploitation often happens around spaces where lots of men are away from home. Petrobras and other employers ship men to various parts of the country to build new natural gas and petroleum installations, and too often, sexual exploitation comes along with that. Of course, Petrobras and others work with the Brazilian government to hold accountable those who traffic young girls, but we think that's not enough. We carry out campaigns and training with human resources staff to promote discussions with the workers about why men pay for sex with under-age girls. We work

to create a culture in the workplace in which men question each other about this. At the beginning of these sessions, we'll hear men say things like this: "I paid for the party and drinks and she paid me back." At the end of the sessions, their peers will question this, speak out against it, and take those messages into bars and other spaces. In other words, we stop the demand before it happens while collaborating with the legal authorities to hold perpetrators accountable.

These approaches work. We have been able to evaluate impact, as partners have in many other settings, and we see changes in attitudes, and reductions in violence. Our challenge has been taking them to scale and sustaining them. Funding is too often inconsistent and short-term.

So what can the US government do? Consistent funding is necessary and IVAWA would be a key step toward that. In addition, the US government can look across its existing women's empowerment programs – economic empowerment; agriculture development; land title and legal rights initiatives; maternal, newborn and child health programs; HIV prevention, workplace interventions and others – and find ways to add approaches for reaching men to its existing initiatives. We can build on the existing infrastructure and existing large-scale programs to engage men with these approaches. In no way should this prevention work with men take away from the existing work to empower women economically and socially. It can and should be part of integrated prevention efforts. We have consistently found that if we use this existing infrastructure—in schools, the health

sector, the workplace or sports-based programming—we can reach men and boys for as little as \$5-\$10 per beneficiary in some settings.

We stand by colleagues around the world who call for ending the impunity that surrounds men's use of violence against women and girls. But punishing perpetrators is not enough. Two weeks ago in London, the US took a lead with others in calling for ending impunity around sexual violence in conflict. But that call and too many others like it do not go far enough in saying what we know works to prevent violence against women, including sexual violence, from happening in the first place. It is not enough only to hold accountable the perpetrators. We need to reach all the boys and men, like Marcio, who witness and experience violence, to break cycles of violence—to create a generation of boys and men who do not use nor believe in using violence of any kind against women and girls. And we know how to do it.