**Submission to the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 35/10 of the Human Rights Council**

**Introduction**: Prevention+ is a five-year multi-country programme that envisions a world where healthy, respectful, and equal relationships are the norm. To contribute to making this a reality,

the programme addresses the root causes of GBV – the social, economic, religious, and

cultural contexts that shape attitudes and behaviour that lead to violence – by:

1 Taking a multi-level approach. Prevention+ intervenes at four levels of society – individual, community, institutional, and government – to ensure long-lasting impact, and to transform the mutually reinforcing social and structural factors that support gender-based violence, and allow it to persist.

2 Actively engaging young and adult men as part of the solution. Because gender-based violence occurs most often in the context of relationships, its prevention is a collaborative effort. Prevention+ engages young and adult men as partners and advocates for change — alongside young and adult women — to challenge and transform harmful gender norms and practices.

Rutgers (lead agent), Promundo, and Sonke Gender Justice, along with local partners, carry out programmes with men and women across Indonesia, Pakistan, Uganda, Rwanda and MENA (Lebanon). In Prevention+ programme countries, the following organisations are involved: Rutgers Indonesia, Rifka Annisa, Damar, Pulih, and Rahima (Indonesia); Rutgers Pakistan, Awaz Foundation, and the Community Development Forum (CDF) (Pakistan); Rwanda Men’s Resource Center (RWAMREC), and the Health Development Initiative (Rwanda); Abaad (MENA/Lebanon); and the Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU) (Uganda).

The Program is supported through the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs’s FLOW Fund. TheMenEngage Alliance is a technical partner to the program and promotes Prevention+ objectives internationally through joint policy advocacy, knowledge production and through the promotion of accountable practices for engaging men and boys in eliminating VAWG.

**Theory of change and evidence**: The rigid gender norms and harmful practices that determine an individual’s behavior, and leads to GBV and gender injustice, are upheld and reinforced by the community, civil society and institutions alike. National governments often fail to formulate and/or implement laws, policies and programmes that address the root causes of GBV and gender injustice. Very few programmes are taken to scale. Transforming harmful social norms to prevent GBV and promote gender justice can only be realised if programmes intervene at the individual/relationship, community, civil society, institutional and governmental levels simultaneously, and in a mutually reinforcing manner: as captured theoretically in socio-ecological models.[[1]](#footnote-1) Research shows that well-designed gender-transformative programmes with men and boys that change underlying destructive gender norms are effective for reducing GBV.[[2]](#footnote-2) These programmes reshape gender relations to be more gender-equitable, largely through approaches that “free both women and men from the impact of destructive gender and sexual norms”.[[3]](#footnote-3) If programmes solely empower women outside the context of relationships, this can lead to increased risk of exposure to GBV. [[4]](#footnote-4) On the other side, several studies affirm positive changes in couple conflict as a result of efforts to engage men to support women’s rights in general, and in specific, women’s economic empowerment (WEE). In the past two decades, the work to engage men as allies in women’s economic and social empowerment, and to explore and promote co-operation between couples have been developing more rigour. Thus Prevention+partners with women’s rights organisations to engage men in GBV prevention. This partnership is built on three basic accountability principles to ensure women’s safety; that gender-transformative interventions are developed and implemented in collaboration with women’s rights groups, and that programmes are continuously held accountable to these organisations.

The Prevention+ programme **strategy** seeks to scale-up evidence-based gender-transformative interventions working in concert with key public sectors and CSOs. Data from IMAGES and P4P[[5]](#footnote-5), reveal the context-specific drivers of GBV, identify specific groups of men most at risk of carrying out GBV, and offer select appropriate interventions. At the **individual** and **relationship** level, the programme provides (young) men and women access to information and education concerning relationships, gender (including positive forms of masculinities), sexuality, parenting, and gender justice interventions (*Program H/M[[6]](#footnote-6), The World Starts with Me[[7]](#footnote-7), One Man Can[[8]](#footnote-8)*). Survivors and men using violence are offered individual, couple and group counselling *([Youth] Living Peace[[9]](#footnote-9), Toolkit for Men[[10]](#footnote-10)*). Men are engaged as caring fathers (*Program P[[11]](#footnote-11), MenCare, and MenCare+*), and as partners of women in WEE programmes (*Journeys of Transformation[[12]](#footnote-12)*). High-quality, evidence-based mass & social media and communications strategies that engage men and boys using positive male role models (*One Man Can, Program H/M, MenEngage Alliance[[13]](#footnote-13) movement building*) and bystander approaches (*Living Peace, Program H/M, One Man Can*) are deployed to change social norms and create individual and **community** accountability. Through**institutionalisation** and**capacity building**, the consortium works with CSOs (including women’s rights and WEE organisations), and relevant public services to incorporate gender transformative approaches and gender justice in their programmes and activities. A more enabling **policy and legislative** environment for GBV prevention is critical. A precondition to realise this, are strong international and national coalitions that undertake joint advocacy.

**National examples:**

**Pakistan:**

The Prevention+ programme in Pakistan has introduced innovative approaches for ending gender based violence such as:

Institutionalisation of Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA): Partners and stakeholders, including government representatives and CSO staff, were capacitated as master trainers for GTA integration at institutional level.

GBV legislation review: A legislation review of pro-women laws was conducted, using a GTA lens, to understand the policy steps needed to achieve gender equality, and challenge gender stereotypes and norms in society.

IMAGES survey: Carried out in close collaboration with the Ministry of Human Rights, Government of Pakistan, the “International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)” was conducted to offer insight on how to engage men to achieve gender equality, and challenge gender stereotypes, negative social norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women, at national level.

Community engagement to transform harmful gender norms: Community facilitators and secondary school teachers were capacitated on the following terminologies: gender justice, gender equality, positive masculinities, and responsible fatherhood. They are now organising community sessions to raise awareness amongst men and boys, and women and girls.

Religious leaders as change agents: Religious leaders and local communities capacitated as change agents for gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls as a strategy to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls.

Media engagement: Radio and Cable TV campaigns on responsible fatherhood and men engagement for addressing unequal gender norms and power relations in society. Participation in national mainstream media to raise awareness on men engagement and positive role of men for the prevention of GBV.

**Challenges:** State policies in Pakistan are strict towards INGOs and national NGOs, and office registration with the Government is a daunting task. Shrinking spaces for civil society are also felt in the collection of data for any type of research study. Despite these, Rutgers Pakistan has been successful in keeping close ties with the Government of Pakistan, and advocating for Government co-ownership of the MenEngage model to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence, and promote gender equality. These efforts resulted in the successful completion of IMAGES in Pakistan, with the support of, and facilitated by the Government of Pakistan. The evidence produced through IMAGES is expected to form the rationale for future interventions to achieve gender equality and women empowerment, with the engagement of young and adult men.

**Involvement of women and girls, including women’s rights organisations:** In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Women Development in Sindh, Rutgers Pakistan was a key advocate for the successful establishment of the Provincial Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-Pakistan) to safeguard and promote women’s and girls’ rights at provincial level. Rutgers Pakistan works with women rights organisations, through networks, alliances and movements. In 2018, this collaboration will be strengthened through joint capacity building initiatives, lobbying and advocacy, and media campaigns to end gender-based violence, and promote gender justice. Through Prevention+, the capacity of women rights organisations on accountability tools, and national and international advocacy will also be strengthened.

**Rwanda:**

Institutionalising GTA in Karongi district schools and Parents Evening Dialogues Forum:Through the MenCare+ programme, training modules on gender and positive masculinity (based on *Program P* and *Program H/M*) were developed to support young people and couples to advance SRHR, promote gender equality, and prevent GBV. Evaluations of groups of young men and women module trainees found that after 15 weeks in the programme, there was reduced acceptance of intimate partner violence, and increased support for gender-equitable attitudes, among other positive SRHR outcomes. Through Prevention+, the modules for young men and women – called Boys4Change clubs – have been updated and implemented in schools with teachers and students. At village level, monthly government-regulated community meetings host Parents Evening Dialogues to discuss community-identified issues, and provide training for couples and parents to contribute to reducing GBV and empowering women in Karongi. These Parents Evening Dialogues resulted from Program P. Findings from a randomised controlled trial of this intervention in 2017 show a significant drop in women's experiences of sexual and physical intimate partner violence (publication forthcoming).

Partnering with the Ministry of Gender and Family promotion (MIGRPROF), and Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) to mainstream GTA in schools, and in the 2018-2021 Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS III):Currently under development, RWAMREC contributed to the review of the EDPRS III to institutionalise the engagement of young and adult men in GBV prevention. The EDPRS III is a strategy paper that helps the country achieve its national goals (i.e., to become a middle-income country, to improve quality of life through poverty reduction, etc.), and 2030 Agenda commitments.

Engaging media, religious leaders, health centres, the police force, etc., as agents of change: RWAMREC aims to work within existing structures and institutions that can effectively promote GBV prevention and families’ well-being. For example, long-term partnerships with media institutions are being formed by building their capacity to understand and report on GBV prevention and gender justice. Work with religious leaders aims to promote more gender-equitable behaviour amongst community members, including institutionalising a more proactive response to cases of abuse (i.e., through pre-marital counselling, sensitisation of community members, and referrals of difficult cases to relevant structures etc.). RWAMREC also works with the police force and health centres, enabling them to provide more adequate, preventive and responsive gender-appropriate services to community members.

**Challenges:**

While the Government of Rwanda has shown significant engagement and support to advance gender equality, the District has limited capacity to oversee, support, and report on outcomes of Parents Evening Dialogues. In general, there seems to be more interest in economic development programmes, rather than social empowerment or gender justice programmes. Hence, this has implications for sustained funding, and government ownership of GBV prevention programmes.

**Involvement of women and girls**

RWAMREC collaborates with the Ministry of Gender and Family promotion at national level, and with the National Women Council (NWC) at the District level to implement the Parents Evening Dialogues. The NWC receives training on the topics of gender and GBV prevention, and capacity building on reporting and accountability, in order to more effectively support the project. Finally, RWAMREC collaborates with FEMNET – the African Women's Development and Communication Network – to build the capacity of RWAMREC staff in media engagement, campaigning, reporting, and advocacy.

**Indonesia**:

Institutional Gender Transformative Approaches: In the last five years, Rutgers Indonesia and partners in Indonesia have been carrying out a comprehensive approach to prevent and respond to GBV. Four community dialogue modules were prepared to lead at least 8-series of discussion with fathers, mothers, boys and girls groups. The module looks into how individuals understand femininity and masculinity, how to build a healthy relationship, how to recognise violent behaviour, and how to manage anger. The Government has also started to work with parents, instead of women or men alone.

Promote and provide male perpetrator counselling, in the context of intimate partner violence: Rutgers Indonesia, Pulih, and Rifka Annisa trained community counsellors, health providers, and the police to counsel young and adult men. Male counselling is one way to prevent recurring intimate partner violence, by providing spaces for male self-reflection on norms. Male counselling is also demanded by the spouse, as part of the rehabilitation programme of her husband, to avoid the stigma attached to divorce.

Engaging religious leaders: The KUA (Religious Office Affairs) and religious groups in society have also initiated efforts to prevent gender-based violence, as well as child marriage. Activities include conducting socialisation trainings/conversation, signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU), case referrals, conducting pre-marriage courses, and providing mediation sessions in religious courts. The involvement of religious leaders (and institutions) as change agents through advocacy and campaigns at sub-district level, is as well, an important and effective initiative, and one that increases the uptake of messages, in the context of a Muslim society.

**Challenges:** There is endless debate over allocating funds for prevention vs. victims support, especially within the Ministry of Women Empowerment. Gender-based violence prevention is considered in competition with reducing high maternal and child mortality rates in Indonesia. Investing resources in engaging men is also not the first choice, in as long as women’s empowerment remains a challenge. Solid data and evidence that leverage male engagement to end GBV is scarce.

**Involvement of women and girls, including women’s rights organisations:** The programme in Indonesia has always been under scrutiny by other women’s rights organisations, even when all implementers are from women’s rights organisations. For the more popular conservative groups, the message of gender equality is tagged as a western value. It is less acceptable than the concept of good family *(keluarga sakinah)*. Gender equality is seen as a threat to men’s place as leader of the family, based on religious values. On the other hand, advancing good-family values may also be interpreted as returning to patriarchal values.

**Uganda:**

Male Involvement Learning Centre Initiative (MLC) Reproductive Health Uganda is working with Sonke Gender Justice to implement initiatives to engage men, boys and women to prevent gender-based violence and/or violence against women. The first MLC was implemented in the Midwest district of Uganda in Hoima, informed by a conceptual framework that combines male involvement strategies namely, men as: equal partners, agents of change, and as users of SRH services. The initiative included hosting community and school sensitisation programmes, gender-focused group discussions, and the incorporation of male involvement in gender-transformation sessions in church programmes, and in sports, and games. The initiative demystified gender norms and roles (e.g., promoting shared decision-making responsibilities between men and women); lowered tolerance for gender-based violence and gender stereotypes; increased male participation in reproductive health issues and partner support in accessing different reproductive health services; and increased male uptake of SRH services, including HIV/AIDS counselling and testing services.

Says Kenney Akuguzibwe, peer educator promoting male involvement:“*This has greatly reduced cases of gender-based violence. When we started, we had many cases to mediate where couples would frequently fight. Such have reduced as we talk.*” Some of the mothers in the intervention community also expressed appreciation for the improved attitudes of men towards gender equality: “*As we talk there is division of labour in our home. When myself, I cook, he fetches water; I may go to fetch firewood, he stays home with the children, at times we till together*” Jennifer Kabakumba – mother of three children.

Prevention+ activities: The MLC provided a good foundation to continue the work under the Prevention+ programme. RHU has trained practitioners to reach out to boys and girls, men and women, to increase the knowledge and skills necessary to effect a change in their attitudes, and to address negative values and beliefs that promote GBV at four intervening levels i.e., individual/relationship, community, institutional and government level. More than 500 community facilitators, including religious and cultural leaders, media, leaders of women groups and youth groups and teachers, have facilitated focus group discussions, and other dialogue meetings on GBV prevention across three rural districts in Uganda.

**Challenges:** It is increasingly difficult to work on GBV prevention and gender transformation in a very patriarchal context. One example of this is the role of national media in influencing discourse. Lately, media has been popularising narratives on male victims of violence (apparently perpetrated by women). This is a dangerous narrative that increases the divide between genders, and is not based on facts or representative data.

**Involvement of women and girls, including women’s rights organisations:** RHU has a long-standing work relationship with several women’s rights organisations, including the Centre for Human Rights and Development (CEHURD), and the women’s rights network based in the Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP). The facilitators and beneficiaries of the Prevention+ programme include both women and men. In certain cases, women play a leading role in the implementation of Prevention+, for example in the Bushenyi district.

**Conclusion:**

The path to transforming structures and systems to create a world free from gender-based violence is long and complex. However, Prevention+ partners believe that the long-term realisation of healthier and happier societies is possible. The Prevention+ programme applies gender-transformative approaches to engage young and adult men as allies for gender equality throughout all intervention levels. Evidence and practice from the four countries of Prevention+ give insight in how this important work can be done.

*Declaration:* The information provided can be made available on the OHCHR website.

1. Bronfenbrenner, U. / The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

CDC / The Social-Ecological Model: A Framework for Prevention. - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, March 2015.   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. WHO / Engaging men and boys in changing gender-based inequity in health: evidence from programme interventions. Washington: World Health Organisation, 2007.   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Dworkin, S. et al / The promises and limitations of gender-transformative health programming with men: critical reflections from the field. – Cape Town: Culture, Health & Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Slegh et al / ‘I can do women’s work’: reflections on engaging men as allies in women’s economic empowerment in Rwanda. – In: Gender & Development, 21:1, 15.30, 2013   [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Coordinated and created by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women, IMAGES is a multi-country study on men’s and women’s attitudes and practices related to gender, including GBV. It has been carried out to date in more than 13 countries with more than 30,000 women and men and is the most comprehensive study globally on men’s attitudes and practices. Learn more: <https://promundoglobal.org/programs/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Launched in 2002 by Promundo and partners and now used in more than 22 countries, Program H (and later Program M) encourages critical reflection about rigid norms related to manhood and encourages transformation of stereotypical roles associated with gender. Learn more: https://promundoglobal.org/programs/program-h/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Worlds Starts With Me (WSWM), developed and led by Rutgers, combines sexuality education with learning IT skills. This comprehensive programme used in 10 countries in Africa and Asia helps young people to address sensitive issues around love, sexuality and relations. Learn more: <https://www.rutgers.international/what-we-do/comprehensive-sexuality-education/depth-world-starts-me> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The One Man Can (OMC) Campaign, led by Sonke Gender Justice as part of Prevention+, encourages men to become actively involved in advocating for gender equality, preventing gender-based violence (GBV), and responding to HIV and AIDS. Learn more: http://www.genderjustice.org.za/community-education-mobilisation/one-man-can/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Living Peace, led by Promundo as part of Prevention+, provides psychosocial support and group education to men and their partners in post-conflict settings to address the effects of trauma and develop positive, nonviolent coping strategies. Learn more: https://promundoglobal.org/programs/living-peace/ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The Toolkit for Men, developed by Rutgers as part of Prevention+, can be used for counselling men who want to stop intimate partner violence and become a more respectful partner. Learn more: https://www.rutgers.international/our-products/tools/toolkit-men-male-counselling-context-intimate-partner-violence [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Program P, led by Promundo as part of Prevention+, provides concrete strategies and activities to engage men globally in active fatherhood from their partner’s pregnancies through their children’s early years. Learn more: https://promundoglobal.org/programs/program-p/ [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Journeys of Transformation, led by Promundo as part of Prevention+, promotes women’s economic empowerment by engaging men as allies in transforming harmful gender attitudes and behaviours that impact progress. Learn more: https://promundoglobal.org/programs/journeys-of-transformation/ [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. MenEngage is a global alliance made up of dozens of country networks spread across many regions of the world, hundreds of non-governmental organizations, as well as UN partners seeking to provide a collective voice on the need to engage men and boys in gender equality, to build and improve the field of practice around engaging men in achieving gender justice, and advocating before policymakers at the local, national, regional and international levels. Learn more: www.menengage.org [↑](#footnote-ref-13)