Gender hypothesis no longer adequate

State, commerce central actors in reproducing violence

Sexual violence against men a war strategy

Language bringing out power vs powerlessness effective in VAW prevention efforts

Synthesis of Discussions at the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium 2014

Session:

Understanding and Responding to Gendered Roots of Violence

Looking at Individuals, Systems and Structures
The session 'Understanding and Responding to Gendered Roots of Violence' held during the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium 2014 – Men and Boys for Gender Justice, organised in New Delhi from November 10-13, addressed how to end violence by moving beyond the separation or division of the field of violence prevention. The session also witnessed presentations around key research on the drivers of men’s use of violence against women including rape and against other men. As moderator Sanjay Srivastava, Professor, Department of Sociology, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, said, “Violence is not simply a biological or physical act but is located within a specific social and cultural context and there are possibilities of changing that particular context. That’s what we want to address here.”

### Patriarchy Theory on Wife-Assault under Siege

Lori Heise, Director, Gender Violence and Health Centre, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK, said variations in the extent of intimate partner violence (IPV) seen by several studies across the world lead to many questions. And one of the important ones is to what extent can gender-related factors explain the differences. “The gender hypothesis is under siege now,” she said, citing articles that challenged the role of patriarchal social norms and the ideologies of men’s violence against intimate partners, saying ‘the evidence for theoretical patriarchy as a cause of wife assault is scant.’

“We now have 88 comparable surveys on partner violence from around the world,” she said (See Back Page ‘Learnings’). Her conclusion was that levels of violence are lower where women have a higher status, where more of them have completed secondary school and have greater economic rights. “In countries that have higher incomes, maybe 3-4% of women are beaten on an average in a year. Some of the lower and middle income countries have much higher rates. Is it the actual amount of money that people have or is the GDP a marker for something else?”

**GDP Not Important, Serves Only As Marker**

A more sophisticated analysis, she said, shows that GDP is not important. GDP serves as a sort of marker for a series of social transformations that tend to go in tandem with economic empowerment and development. “What’s really driving this is the norms around the acceptability of wife abuse and male control of female behavior. Two other factors which seem very important are women’s property rights and discriminatory family laws. In settings where women lose custody of their children or where they don’t have maintenance rights or leave a relationship, that’s very predictive of societies that have higher rates of violence,” Heise said.

She however said that there is no one cause of violence and that it is the interplay of a bunch of factors acting at different levels of the social ecology. “One of the things predictive of relationships that are high in violence is that there is very poor communication and there is high conflict in general. Those relationships are embedded within communities. They have norms and ideas and institutions that communicate to that couple and to those individuals how they should be in the world and that’s embedded in the micro- and macro-economic structures. Things like market ideology and consumerism influence and filter down through community and then hit individuals to form their attitudes, aspirations and behaviours.”

### State, Business Are Central Structures Reproducing Violence in South Africa

Kopano Ratele, Professor, Institute for Social and Health Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, and Co-Director of the Medical Research Council cited four prominent cases of

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**This is Working**

Violence is preventable — in programmes it has been successfully reduced by 30-50% not within generations but within 2-3 years, thus providing evidence of what works

- **Sasa!, Uganda:** Community mobilization programme based on promoting shared power between women and men reduced IPV by 52% over 3 years
- **Stepping Stones, South Africa:** Community reflection groups reduced physical violence reported by men by 38% at 2 years post-intervention
- **GiveDirectly, Kenya:** Unconditional cash transfers lead to a 30-50% reduction in reports of physical IPV and a 50-60% reduction in forced sex within marriage
- **Ujama, Kenya:** Girls who participated in a self-defense and empowerment training had 62% lower rate of rape than non-participants, 10.5 months post intervention
murder in his country and pointed out that men were involved in committing them just as they are in most cases of violence. The murder of Anni Dewani on her honeymoon with millionaire businessman-husband Shrien Dewani, he said, illustrated the interplay of the powers of state, nationality, money, sexuality, race and gender. The second case was of the police firing on striking mine workers around the Marikana platinum mine belt in which 44 people were killed. “Is masculinities an adequate explanation for what happened? It appears we cannot only focus on men but the police, business and the state as the central actors and structures that reproduce violence.” Other cases were that of international athlete Oscar Pistorius killing his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp and the killing of well known South African footballer Senzo Meyiwa.

“Violence is a condition that boys and men, as much as women and girls, survive. If we are to stop its reproduction feminists must think creatively how to help men and boys understand that the performance of masculinity deeply compromises their own lives.”

“These cases point to the same problematic -- why are men implicated in the violence in the way they are?” Underlining the high incidence of violence in South Africa, Ratele said it is approximately twice the global average. Studies indicated that the number of murders in his country was five times the 2013 global rate of 600,000 murders and the rate of murder of females was six times the global rate. About half of females were killed by intimate male partners, he said, adding that men's social power facilitates and reproduces men's violence against children and other men and women. However, men's violence arises not only out of patriarchy, defined as the rule of men and military and economic power, but also from different global and local expressions of racism, casteism and homophobia.

33% Men in Conflict Zones Sexually Assaulted

Wynne Russell, Social Policy and Research Officer, Tasmanian Council of Social Service, Australia, spoke about the issue of sexual violence against men and boys in conflict situations. In violence like this, gender is particularly starkly visible, she said, adding that other elements of conflict certainly also apply -- such as race and religion, poverty and inequality.

Giving statistics of sexual violence against men recorded from 27 conflicts in the last decade, Russell said 32.6% of adult males surveyed have suffered such violence. “Sexual violence against adult males can be the ultimate act of patriarchal control, a mechanism by which men are kept in a position subordinate to other men. It is gender-based violence. For perpetrators, dominating another male can add to the sense of power. For survivors, it is an attack on their masculine identity. On the masculine identity of other men, for instance by raping a woman in front of her husband, that is a communicative action directed at her husband. The main impact of sexual violence is physical, including gender mutilation or castration, psychosexual, that can include feelings of feminisation, psychosocial, and feelings of loss of respect of wives, families and communities,” Russell said.

“In terms of changing military culture, we still have a very long way to go. It's necessary to advance arguments as to how this violence does not serve their purposes”

Sexual violence against males in the context of conflict is intended as a strategy of war. It's less of a social practice than a military practice. “Two key issues are ending impunity and challenging military cultures. In terms of ending impunity, international instruments are increasingly moving towards gender-neutral language. However, international human rights instruments are better at emphasising men’s responsibilities than acknowledging men's vulnerabilities. The language frequently becomes more and more female-specific with the result that when it comes to implementation of measures, frequently men and boys are absent from the final recommendations. And in international criminal tribunals male-directed sexual violence is prosecuted as torture rather than as rape.”

Uniting Male, Female Rape Victims in Uganda a Challenge

David Onen Ongwech

David Onen Ongwech, Programme Manager, Refugee Law Project, Kampala, Uganda, announced that their work with male survivors of sexual violence was being misinterpreted by a homophobic community and the project was suspended seven months ago for 'promoting homosexuality'. Ongwech said, “We provide counselling and psychotherapy support to individual survivors, many of who have not even told their spouses what they went through. From there we moved to counselling in groups for males and females.”

Ongwech said the key question they faced was how to bring female and male
groups to jointly advocate their cause. “It is difficult because women and girls are seen as victims and men and boys regarded as perpetrators. The men’s groups are as fierce as the women’s groups. Some men say they have been abused by women commanders in captivity, so how do they meet women who are a representation of the figure that abused them? Some of the women say they have a huge trauma of having children born out of rape and ask what will change if they sit with the men?”

“We need to brave institutional barriers and push forward the discussion about bringing male and female survivor groups together. I think they can provide substantive support to each other and be allies in efforts to combat violence against women.”

“Learnings from 88 Comparable Studies”

- Intimate partner violence most common form of violence against women
- No one cause, violence is interplay of factors at different levels of the social ecology
- Long term health consequences for abused men and women
- Types of violence overlap, ‘life burden of violence’ must be addressed synergistically
- Embedded ‘gender regimes’ filter down communities to individuals
- Prevalence of patriarchal triggers (women transgressing gendered norms) and situational triggers (events like arguing about children or money)
- Predictors across settings: single greatest - children being abused/witnessing abuse; role of alcohol; partners in relationships with poor communication and high conflict in general
- Higher income countries have lower violence against women
- Women’s higher status significant in lowering violence
- Social norms are key — violence higher where wife abuse and male control of female behaviour acceptable

Men, Women Relate To Language Of Power

Jean Kemitare, Program Manager, Raising Voices, Kampala, Uganda, speaking about her NGO’s community mobilisation programme, SASA!, said it uses the language of power “because concepts of gender rights can be abstract but power is tangible and because violence against women (VAW) is difficult to address as it is very personal. Also, the language of gender, VAW and inequality can be divisive and can create a distance and has considerable baggage. Power is personal – both women and men easily relate to it,” she said.

On the components that make for an effective power discussion, Kemitare said these include grounding the work within the community, with activists engaging the community beginning with their social networks – men engaging men and women engaging women. Then there is an informal nature of community mobilisation – casual, integrated and organic processes that are intimate and personal. The third component is deepening community activists’ own understanding of power – unpacking it and making meaning of it at a personal level and supporting their own journey of reflection and change. And finally, all this is sustainable as it impacts many other facets of life, primarily relationships with children, participation in the community and self-efficacy.

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