



*Violence is preventable*



**UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women & UNV  
Asia-Pacific Regional Joint Programme  
for Gender-based Violence Prevention**

# Qualitative Research Training

Researching masculinities and  
violence against women

Developed by Partners for Prevention



# Research goals

- Deepen understandings of masculinities and their connections to violence against women
- To translate research findings into comprehensive evidence-based programme and policy interventions for violence against women prevention, particularly engaging men and boys
- Provide a baseline/benchmark of boy's and men's attitudes and behaviours related to violence against women and masculinities

# Research objectives

- To look in-depth at individual men's life histories to understand how masculinities are constructed across the course of a life, and to understand how this may have impacted men's practices today
- To better understand the trajectory of expression of (counter) hegemonic practices across and throughout men's lives including:
  - Perceptions of masculinities and their relation to violent attitudes and behaviours
  - Influence of social, cultural and religious values on development of masculinities
  - Influences that shape more gender-equitable forms of behaviour among men
- **Look at research questions – keep these questions in mind when interviewing**

# Researching masculinities

- In one sense, we already know much about men
- But we don't know much about the gendered nature of men
- We need to ask questions about things that usually remain unquestioned
- Our role as researchers is to map local patterns and relate them to larger gender orders
- Tensions within gender order often signals space for possible change

# Researching masculinities cont'd

- Gender relations are not a simple, one-dimensional pattern of relations between people – rather, gender is a complex social structure with various dimensions
- A framework for examining the various gender relations in the gender order:
  - power relations
  - division of labour
  - emotional relations/sexuality
  - culture – communication, ideology and discourses
- An individual life deals with gender in these dimensions so we get to this from life history interviews

# What do we mean by masculinities?

- Group work: Discuss and report back.
  - a) How would you define masculinities?
  - b) What do you think “hegemonic masculinity” means?
  - c) How are masculinities shaped or constructed?
  - d) What is the relationship between masculinity and femininity?
  - e) What type of information do you want to get on masculinities from the interviews?

# What do we mean by masculinities?

- Masculinity refers to the socially produced, embodied ways of being men.
- There is **no one masculinity**: Constructions of masculinity vary over time and across and within cultures, creating multiple masculinities.
- Its manifestations include manners of speech, behaviour, gestures, social interaction, a division of tasks “appropriate” to men and women.
- **Masculinity gives power and privilege to men over women.**
- But masculinity is also oppressive towards men who deviate from the dominant notions and practices of masculinity.



# Hegemonic masculinity

- There is often a hierarchy of masculinities in which one (or more) patterns of masculinity is socially dominant and others are marginalized.
- Hegemonic masculinity may not be the most common pattern in the everyday lives of boys and men, only a minority of men might act on it.
- But it is normative in the sense that it embodies the currently most honoured way of being a man and requires other men to position themselves in relation to it.

# Masculinities cont'd

- Masculinity is produced at a number of sites:
  - customary laws and regulations
  - the State and its mechanisms
  - the family
  - religious norms and sanctions
  - popular culture and media
- Gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradiction from models (whether real or imaginary) of femininity.

# Gathering information on masculinities

- What are the multiple masculinities and how do they change over time?
- What does it mean to be a man, according to different people (men and women) – appearance, actions, roles, behaviours, attitudes, etc.?
- How are masculinities constructed in [STUDY PLACE], through family, education, religion, culture, tradition, etc.?
- What is hegemonic masculinity in the context of [STUDY PLACE]?
- How is masculinity related to femininity in this context?
- What are men's relationships with other men and women?
- How does masculinity intersect with violence against women?
- How do women experience violence in relation to masculinity?
- How do men experience the oppression of hegemonic masculinity?
- How does hegemonic masculinity intersect with other forms of oppression related to class, race, sexuality, etc.?

# What do we mean by violence against women?

- **Group work – discuss and report back:**
  - a) How would you define violence against women?
  - b) What types of violence against women are common in [x site]?
  - c) How is violence against women connected to masculinities?
  - d) What information do you want to get on violence against women from the interviews?

# Defining violence against women

- The UN defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

# Defining gender-based violence

## Economic and Social Council definition of gender-based violence:

*“Any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially associated differences between males and females. As such violence is based on socially ascribed differences, gender-based violence includes but it is not limited to sexual violence. While women and girls of all ages make up the majority of the victims, men and boys are also both direct and indirect victims. It is clear that the effects of such violence are both physical and psychological and have long-term detrimental consequences for both the survivors and their communities.”*

# Defining gender-based violence cont'd

- “Gender-based violence” refers to violence that is in some direct way concerned with expressing and maintaining the unequal power relations of oppressive gender orders.
- It includes not only violence against women and girls but also violence against men, boys and transgender individuals who challenge gender and heterosexual norms.
- Gender-based violence takes many forms, including intimate partner violence and marital rape, sexual violence, dowry-related violence, female infanticide, sexual abuse of children, female genital mutilation/cutting, early marriage, forced marriage, non-spousal violence, violence perpetrated against domestic workers and other forms of exploitation.

# Connections between violence against women and masculinities

- Violence against women is rooted in power relations among women, men, girls and boys.
- Men are the primary perpetrators of violence against women but often experience violence themselves.
- Violence against women is linked to dominant notions of “what it means to be a man”.
- Research shows boys and men can be **positive agents for change**.



# Research on violence against women and masculinities

- In the interviews, we want to capture the following:
  - Various forms of violence against women and how they are connected.
  - How violence against women stems from and reinforces gender inequality and discrimination.
  - Connections between violence and masculinity.
  - Violence against women as shaped by the interaction of a wide range of factors, including histories of colonialism and post-colonial domination, nation-building initiatives, armed conflict, displacement and migration.
  - How the specific expressions of violence against women are influenced by economic status, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, religion and culture.

# Qualitative Research Training

Ethics and safety of researching  
violence against women and  
masculinities

Developed by Partners for Prevention, with input from Professor Rachel Jewkes, Medical Research Council, South Africa



# Ethics & safety

- Pillars of any research involving human subjects:
  - respect
  - do no harm – attention to safety issues
  - maximize possible benefits
  - justice in distribution of burdens and benefits of research

# Informed consent

- Given by competent participants: Participant must be mentally mature and sound enough to understand the consequences of agreeing to participate.
  - Issues: age, mental illness or disability, communication disability, abuse of drugs or alcohol.
- In practice: we are only interviewing adults.
- Researchers must make a judgment about mental competence and, if in doubt, should talk to supervisor.

# Information

- Participants must be adequately informed about the study to understand and appreciate its purpose, risks and benefits.
- In practice:
  - Information must be provided in a language that is easily understandable to the participant.
  - Discuss the contents of the consent form and testing the participant's understanding enables active consent.
  - Full information must be provided on risks and benefits.
  - Participants must have “take home” information about the study, with contact details for researchers.
  - Informed consent must be proven – recorded in writing.

# Basic ethics kit

- Information leaflet – presents the study to the community and participants, has contact detail of the research team and sources of support for a range of problems.
- Information sheet for participants – which is appropriately detailed and explicit about the fact the interview contains questions about violence.
- Consent form at end of information sheet – two copies, one for you and one for them.

# Voluntary participation

- Participation must be a free choice:
  - Adequate information is essential.
  - Participants must be told that their participation is voluntary.
  - If participants request to consult with someone before deciding to participate, they should be able to do so.
  - Participants must be clear that refusal to participate will not result in any negative consequences.
  - Financial incentives to participate should not be overwhelming.

# Do no harm: Safety of participants and researchers

- Confidentiality :
  - For disclosure of victimization – risk of revenge.
  - For disclosure of perpetration – essential that research participants are not placed at risk by information elicited in research.
- Practical protection:
  - Interview in private – no one older than age 2 within ear-shot.
  - Ensure that details are not kept to enable a third party to link a named person to an interview:
    - no names recorded.
    - signed consent forms separate from interview.
    - nothing on the consent form to link to interview.
  - Restrict the number of people who know about the violence focus.
  - Public accounts of purpose (health and relationships or family) versus private accounts (must include real nature of questions).
  - Secure all research information – locked offices, passwords, codes, etc.



# Perpetration

- No harm must arise from research participation.
  - We are obligated to protect participants who disclose perpetration in response to our questions.
- Ensure that information is not elicited that could be used in legal proceedings.
  - This includes identified victim or perpetrator of child or stranger rape cases.
- National laws may limit confidentiality in research.
  - Be aware of the legal situation (child abuse, for example, commonly has mandatory reporting).

# Minimizing distress caused by research

- Plan the interview timing, venue, etc. around the participant's convenience and comfort.
- Acknowledge that revisiting prior victimization can be distressing – field staff need to be able support distressed participants in interviews – more later.
- Sources of further support – referral to NGOs, helplines, psychology services, etc.

# Harm related to perpetration disclosure

- Perpetrators often try and minimize their actions – it is essential that there is no collusion from the researchers.
- We don't want to deliberately harm any participants – don't lecture them on their bad behaviour after asking about it.
- Remember the obligation to be respectful also applies to the analysis of data and writing up research findings on victimization and perpetration.

# Protecting the research team

- Physical safety:
  - From crime, violent men, etc. as well as study-related violence.
- Protection:
  - Discussing responsibilities, planning procedures, local guides, etc.
- Emotional safety:
  - Protection from vicarious trauma, including limiting work load, debriefing and chance to express emotions, relaxation, supervision and breaks.

# Maximize the benefits of the research

- Use data as fully as possible – data analysis – and ensure it is rigorous.
- Disseminate research findings as fully as possible to enable influence on policy and services to be maximized.
- Share information with the community – through media work, Internet, briefing documents, etc.
- Never underestimate the political sensitivity and intense passions around research on gender-based violence; great care and thought is needed around presentation and interpretation of findings.

# Methodological rigour

*To be ethical, research must be methodologically rigorous, and to be methodologically rigorous, it must be ethical.*

# Qualitative Research Training

Life history methods for research  
violence and masculinities

Developed by Partners for Prevention, with input from Professor Raewyn  
Connell, University of Sydney, Australia



# What is a life history?

- *“A life history is the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible. It is what is remembered of about life experiences and what the teller wants to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another.”*



# Foundations of the life history approach

- Emphasis on “human documents”: accounts of individual experience that reveal the individual’s actions as a human agent.
- Letters, diaries, oral histories, videos, photographs, self-observational documents.
- Telling the story of a life to analyse trends and patterns longitudinally.

# Life history analysis

- Life history methodology requires us to think of the interview as a *whole unit*.
- Not colourful examples, but the story as a whole, how it unfolds.
- Method to approach intersectionality of issues.
- Seeing the collective and the institutional as constructed by practice.

# Why life history analysis?

- Nuances and contextualization lost by standard qualitative thematic coding.
- Sorting through the contradictions within a life and the lived experiences of an individual.
- The need for “grounded, multiple and local studies of lives in all their rich flux and change.”

# Why life history analysis?

- The aim of qualitative, close-focus research is not to get a representative sample but to produce a deeper understanding of a particular situation.
- Wider implications come, not from the diversity of the sample, but from the depth of understanding.
- Given there are multiple masculinities, we want to understand more about masculinities that are counter-hegemonic – those not predicated on superiority, control and domination.

# Interview guides

- Developing a **NARRATIVE** of the person's life.
- Avoid yes/no questions – ask open-ended questions to get stories and experiences from participants.
- Relatively informal, like a conversation.
- Don't need to always ask about gender and masculinities specifically but through the analysis of their stories we learn about this.
- All interviews will be different.
- Your questions will depend on the participant's answers.

# Caring and non-violent men

- **INTERVIEW 1:**

- Explores the participants' life history, starting with “Tell me the story of your life...”
- Then explores “How did you come to be engaged in ...[the activist work, caring work, etc].”
- Uses expansion questions to explore a man's attitudes towards the work or non-traditional practices, what motivates him, his prior experiences of men doing similar work, the circumstances of his childhood and of gender relations in the home across his life history.
- Asks him to think about what it means to be a “good”, “successful” or “valuable” man.

# Caring and non-violent men

- **INTERVIEW 2:**

- Explores a man's gender attitudes generally and other gender practices.
- Explores a man's "current life" – engagement in (other) aspects of caring, engagement with his children (if any) as a father, the division of labour in the home, his relations with women at home and in his family, his use of violence towards women and children, household decision-making and experiences of men and women in the workplace (if working) and peer group relations among men.
- Explores a man's gender attitudes by asking about his views on aspects of gender relations and violence in society.

# Perpetrators of violence

- **INTERVIEW 1:**

- Explores the circumstances of a man's childhood and of gender relations in the home across his life history.
- Asks about engagement in aspects of caring, engagement with children as a father, the division of labour in the home, his relations with women at home and in his family, household decision-making, experiences of men and women in the workplace (if working) and peer group relations among men.



# Perpetrators of violence

- **INTERVIEW 2:**

- Explores gender attitudes by asking about a man's views on aspects of gender relations and violence in society.
- Explores the details of a man's intimate relationship, characteristics of his wife and their relationship.
- Asks about a man's perpetration of violence generally.
- Asks for details of the most recent act of violence – what happened, when, why, how, what were his feelings around this act of violence, etc. (although we don't use the word violence).
- Asks about responses of a man's partner, friends, family and authorities to his violence.
- Asks about a man's coping strategies.

# Conducting life history interviews

- Be patient and use tact with hesitant respondents.
- Do not judge the participant.
- Do not hurry the interview.
- Ask why or for clarifications if you don't understand something said; we want to get as much information as possible.
- Let the participant talk freely, but you may need to bring them back to the topic sometimes.

# Starting an interview

- First explain the research and get informed consent – **look at consent form and practice.**
- Respond to any questions they have.
- Start the tape recorder and make sure it is working.
- Establish some basic demographic information
- Start by saying: “Tell me the story of your life.”
- Many people start but need guidance on the level of detail – we want as much detail as possible.
- “Tell me more about...”

# Steering the interview

- People might be unsure about whether the information they are sharing is relevant – reassure them that everything they are saying is interesting and encourage them to continue.
- Establish a rhythm – convey to the participant the level of detail you want by asking expansion questions.
- Map a framework for the participant to tell the story –the framework is given to you by the theoretical or conceptual apparatus.
- Length of the interview (when you begin an interview, you have to know when its going to end) – move the interview along in enough time to get to the end but without losing any of the detail.

# Interview practice 1

- With a partner, practise starting an interview:
  - one person as interviewer and one person as participant
  - ask, “Tell me the story of your life...”
  - establish a rhythm
  - reassure the participant
  - make clear how much detail you want
  - make notes on responses, any difficulties, issues arising
  - **REPORT BACK**

# Steering the interview

- You may find “no-go” areas in a person’s life and you must respect that.
- Changes in tone or changes in the types of stories that they talk about might offer rich places in the analysis for the conceptual thinking.
- Let the interview partner wander – within reason.
- Every interview is going to be a different experience.

# Expansion questions

- Use “expansion” questions to clarify and lead the interview where you want it to go
  - that’s very interesting. Please tell me more about...?
  - would you explain further?
  - would you give me an example of what you mean?
  - would you say more about....?

# Interview practice 2

- With a partner, practice asking expansion questions:
  - Start by asking, “Tell me all about your family when you were growing up...”
  - Interviewer should ask expansion questions, including about how things changed in the family over time.
  - Can use interview guides, but be flexible.
  - Make notes on responses, any difficulties, issues arising.
  - **REPORT BACK**



# Interviewing about violence

- Be very sensitive.
- As an interviewer, you must remain objective.
- You should not be judgemental but cannot condone violence either – find balance.
- Ask questions with confidence, do not be embarrassed.
- If the participant refuses to answer these questions, that must be respected; however, you should assure them that everything they say will be kept confidential.

# Responding to participants who become distressed

- The interview could be the first time people who have experienced violence have disclosed.
- Take time to talk with kindness and sensitivity
- Be patient and composed.
- Use sympathetic comments, such as “I know this is difficult”.
- Remember disclosing can be cathartic and they may want to talk.
- Offer tissue.
- Remember you are a researcher not a counselor.
- Offer to take a break or finish interview later.
- Have list of support services available to share.

# Interview practice 3

- With a partner, practise interviewing about violence:
  - Ask the following questions, with expansion questions to get the fullest possible stories
  - Participants can adopt a persona if they want to
  - Participant to act distressed, interviewer to practise responding to distress
    - “Tell me about a time when you have seen violence done to someone else or when violence was direct at you.”
    - “Tell me about a time in your life when you hit someone or hurt someone”. [If none] “Tell me about a time when you have wanted to hit or hurt someone.”

# Potential difficulties

- Finding appropriate people to participate.
- Finding a convenient time to meet.
- Participants' expectations of payment.
- Handling interruptions.
- What if the participant doesn't agree to the second interview?
- Others?

# Life history interview pretest

- 1–1.5 hours, then report back.
- Male researchers to interview men.
- This is a practice for you; the information will not be analysed or used for the research.
- Build a rapport and make them feel comfortable.
- Ask open-ended questions .
- Take notes on any issues, challenges and observations for reporting back.

# Life history interview pretest

- Using the interview guides, do the first interview – get a narrative of their life
  - “Tell me the story of your life”.
  - Childhood, growing up, education, current life, marriage, children work etc.
  - Remember your conceptual framework is masculinities, gender and violence.
  - Pay attention to stories that give information on gender relations, power relations, violence and masculinities.
  - Lead the interview by asking expansion questions.
  - LISTENING IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT SKILL!

# Life history interview pre-test

- Use 'expansion' questions to clarify and lead the interview where you want it to go
  - That's very interesting. Please tell me more about...
  - Would you explain further?
  - Would you give me an example of what you mean?
  - Would you say more about....?
- **REPORT BACK AND DISCUSSION**

# Thank you!

[www.partners4prevention.org](http://www.partners4prevention.org)