

BOYHOOD AND CHILD, EARLY, AND FORCED MARRIAGES AND UNIONS

AN EVIDENCE REVIEW



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This report was prepared by Equimundo for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) under the coordination of José Roberto Luna (UNFPA Headquarters) within the framework of the UNFPA's Strategic Plan 2022-25.

This evidence review was conducted in alignment with the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage's priorities for Phase II aimed at advancing a global research agenda on child marriage and embracing gender-transformative approaches.

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1.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to lay out the case for including boys in efforts to promote gender equality and prevent child marriage. It also presents a review of existing interventions, analyzing strengths and gaps, to provide guidance for practitioners who intend to work at the intersection of boyhood programming and child marriage prevention and response.

The issue of child marriage has gained substantive attention at both global and national levels over the past two decades. This has resulted in a large body of evidence around the drivers and harmful consequences of this practice, and more recently, around effective strategies to address it.¹ The toxic combination of patriarchy and poverty place unhealthy requirements and expectations on both boys and girls. And it gives rise to discrimination and harmful practices that disproportionately affect women and girls.

While child marriage predominantly affects adolescent girls, solid evidence has shown that working only with girls is not enough to end the practice. Many boys and young men too face pressures to marry early, or to marry girls who are children, and play a key role in embodying and reproducing harmful gender norms that drive child marriage. Yet boys and men are scarcely mentioned in the literature on child marriage, even in connection with unintended pregnancy.

Rooted in gender inequality and driven by poverty, insecurity, norms around sexuality and family formation, and lack of opportunities for education and alternative roles for women, child marriage is a complex issue influenced and sustained by a wide range of actors, beliefs, and structures. At the same time, the practice also reinforces a number of its own drivers. Evidence shows that child marriage has direct negative consequences on educational attainment, health, and economic and social well-being at both individual and household levels, which can persist across generations, with further consequences at the national level.² Therefore, a comprehensive approach that works at all levels of an ecological framework (i.e., individuals, families, communities, society, institutions, and so on) is needed to both prevent child marriage and mitigate its negative consequences.³

As part of this comprehensive approach, there has been growing recognition of the need to involve men at the family and community levels, especially influential men and family decision-makers, to prevent child marriage. This engagement of men and boys cannot simply involve them in activities but must transform harmful masculinities and promote shifts in power and resources. The broader movement for gender equality has shed light on the need for gender-transformative engagement with

1 Malhotra, A., & Elnakib, S. (2021). [Evolution in the evidence base on child marriage 2000-2019](#), New York: UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage.

2 World Bank and International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), [The economic impacts of child marriage](#), 2018.

3 For more evidence of effective approaches for working with girls, families, communities, and institutions to address child marriage, see Girls Not Brides' [Theory of Change](#) and Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021, op. cit. 20 years of evidence based on what works to prevent child marriage: a systematic review, *Journal of Adolescent Health* 68(5), 847-862.

both men and boys to address the roots of child marriage. This is essential to transform the social norms around gender, sexuality, and family formation that reflect patriarchy and inequality, and harm women, men, and individuals of all gender identities.⁴ Nowhere is this more relevant than with regard to the institution of marriage, which explicitly structures relations between females and males in ways that tend to reinforce patriarchal definitions of gender roles and relations and control over power, resources, and opportunities. Promoting positive masculinities suggests enabling healthy and non-discriminatory individual attitudes and behaviors, collective beliefs, and social systems to emerge and sustain, thereby advancing gender equality and fostering women's and girls' agency.⁵ To enable and sustain this transformation, it is essential to engage individual males from the earliest stage of adolescence and to create a supportive family, community, and institutional environment for boys to adhere to and implement healthy and positive masculinities that embody gender equality.⁶ The best comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) initiatives take this broader framing in their approach to sexuality. To allow these changes to happen, it is also important to better understand the challenges facing child grooms and ensure they are not left out of the movement to end child marriage and promote gender equality.

This evidence review paper focused on boyhood and child, early, and forced marriages and unions (CEFMU, referred to throughout the paper as "child marriage") has been drafted by Equimundo in 2021 with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in alignment with the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage (Global Programme). The purpose of this **action-oriented evidence review paper** is

to support UNFPA's and UNICEF's country teams and partners in implementing the Global Programme under the umbrella of the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme. It also intends to guide the UNFPA country offices that support programs and policies on adolescent boys. Building on a comprehensive review of existing evidence on engaging men and boys to address child marriage,⁷ the Equimundo team developed this paper to support implementers eager to include a gender-transformative approach in their work on child marriage prevention and response. The analysis has a specific focus on boyhood, with an emphasis on early adolescence (10-14), considered a crucial stage of boys' socialization into adulthood and a key time when gender norms take shape and crystalize.

The paper makes a **clear case for including boys in efforts to promote gender equality and prevent child marriage**, and it presents **concrete guidance on best practices, including reference to existing tools and case studies**. Relevant topics include how to discuss sensitive subjects such as sexuality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), as well as concrete guidance on implementing gender-transformative programming on child marriage. Examples of the latter point include, for instance, discussing when it is best to hold sex-segregated group discussions versus mixed-sex group discussions, what gender synchronous programming looks like in the context of programs responding to child marriage, how long implementation should last to achieve sustainable impact, and what profile facilitators should have for the program to be effective.

4 Ruane-McAteer, E., Gillespie, K., Amin, A., Aventin, Á., Robinson, M., Hanratty, J., Khosla, R. & Lohan, M. (2020). [Gender-transformative programming with men and boys to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights: a systematic review of intervention studies](#), *BMJ Global Health*, 5(10), e002997.

5 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Gender-transformative approaches to achieve gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, Technical Note, 2021.

6 Goldfarb, E.S., & Lieberman, L.D. (2020). [Three decades of research: the case for comprehensive sexual education](#), *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 68(1), 13-27.

7 See Greene, Margaret E., Perlson, S., Taylor, A., & Lauro, G. (2015). [Engaging men and boys to address the practice of child marriage](#). Washington, D.C.: GreeneWorks.

2.

METHODOLOGY

This section summarizes the approach Equimundo took to frame the analysis and conduct the program review.

The team's first step was to create a database identifying as many programs as possible working with adolescent boys to address gender inequality via approaches and topics that are relevant to child marriage. This database was assembled through:

- Conducting interviews in which the team solicited help in identifying programs;
- Searching databases;
- Screening the bibliographies of selected papers for their references to other programs;
- Reviewing the programs from the CEFMU and Sexuality and Working Group;⁸
- Reviewing the theories of change of Girls Not Brides⁹ and the Global Programme to End Child Marriage;¹⁰ and
- Reviewing websites of key organizations interested in this topic.

Drawing from this database, the team then selected programs according to key aspects of conceptualization and implementation. Included programs must reflect both of the

following characteristics to feature in the study:

- Works to delay child marriage or supports individuals married as children;¹¹ and
- Engages boys and men.

Given existing reviews of the evidence on masculinities and other outcomes, the authors did not include programs that work to advance gender equality or SRHR but do not explicitly link it with child marriage. While our analysis references programs that aim to transform norms around gender that are not directly linked to child marriage, they are not core to the analysis. They are referenced later in the analysis.

After identifying specific studies and programs for inclusion, the team analyzed the selected programs according to additional themes as follows (each of these themes had detailed sub-questions for further exploration in line with the program inclusion criteria):

- Target group overview
- Program general information
- Gender-transformative and intersectional aspects

8 The Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Unions (CEFMU) Sexuality Working Group – of which Equimundo is a member - aims to develop recommendations for addressing sexuality within the context of CEFMU, including programmatic, research, and advocacy gaps.

9 Girls Not Brides, [Theory of change on child marriage](#), 2014.

10 UNICEF-UNFPA, [Global Programme phase II theory of change](#), 2019.

11 Either by explicitly aiming to address child marriage or by covering child marriage in program curriculum or in possible outcomes of the program.

- Engagement processes
- Ecological model
- Linkages between CEFMU and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
- Program results and key determinants of success

More details about the methodology are included in Annex A.

It is important to note that this is not a systematic review, in that it does not assess the evaluation methodology from a statistical perspective. As there are very few programs that both explicitly address child marriage and work with boys, it did not make sense to further constrain the number of selected programs by emphasizing statistical rigor. Our assessment thus references the quality of program evaluation and the alignment of approaches across various programs, but it also references their intended focus and planned outcomes to map out what we do not know with certainty.

3.

FRAMING

A FRESH LOOK AT CHILD MARRIAGE AND MASCULINITIES

The evidence on child marriage has expanded dramatically over the past 20 years and has evolved in its emphasis on the root causes of child marriage.¹² In an effort to select and organize this extensive evidence, the paper highlights three major themes:

1. The social construction and institutionalization of gender norms
2. The meaning and relevance of sexuality
3. The case of child grooms

Together, these three themes permit the inclusion of most topics and research relevant to CEFMU and masculinities. Gender

norms and sexuality together cover the social, economic, and relationship/psychological dimensions of child marriage and the points where the life trajectories of boys and girls intersect. To be able to understand why and how to effectively and deeply engage boys to address child marriage, it is essential to explore its root causes, which in large part relate to how gender norms, especially those related to sexuality, are constructed, institutionalized, and sustained. Our analysis of these three themes covers formal (institutionalized) and informal (norms, practices) structures. In addition, the focus on boys as early marriers examines the personal experiences of this subset of grooms/husbands.

1. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF GENDER NORMS

While definitions based on various social and gender norms theories vary, social norms can generally be understood as informal rules that are common to a society or group of people and define what behaviors are considered normal and acceptable in that society or group.¹³ They can have a powerful influence on human behavior. For example, an individual may personally disagree with what is expected and accepted on a given topic in society but still have an incentive

to comply with the dominant norm, adopting a behavior that goes against their personal opinion. At the same time, a dominant norm can also shape an individual's personal opinions and behaviors. Some of these norms perpetuate roles and relations that reflect and reinforce power disparities among different groups. For example, the rigid adherence to harmful gender norms and stereotypes, with all things feminine subordinated to all things masculine, can become

¹² Siddiqi, M., & Greene, M.E. (2022). [Mapping the field of child marriage: evidence, gaps and future directions from a large-scale systematic scoping review, 2000-2019](#), *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 70 (3S), S9-S16.

¹³ Cislighi, B., & Heise, L. (2020). [Gender norms and social norms: differences, similarities, and why they matter in prevention science](#), *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 42 (2), 407-422.

more powerful than any behaviors and identities that seek to challenge these norms.¹⁴

While a number of social norms may influence marriage practices (e.g., norms around transition to adulthood, religious norms, norms about fertility, division of labor, etc.), **child marriage is intrinsically linked to gender norms – a type of social norm that reflects socially/culturally constructed gender differences.**¹⁵ Various theories exist for this subset of norms, too. For example, some recent gender theories explore the challenges around the question of individual identities for people who may not consider themselves strictly male or female. Yet this paper focuses on the core literature and looks at how millennia of populations have defined, enacted, and institutionalized specific roles and expectations for females and males around the world, and their influence on how girls, boys, men, and women think, decide, and behave in society today.¹⁶ This is because across all settings where it has been studied, child marriage involves partners enacting traditional feminine or masculine roles, and because **the practice reflects a broad patriarchal system that embodies inequitable power relations between men and women and sustains through socialization and institutions.** The patriarchal structure imposes stereotypes and discrimination on most members of society in ways that impede people's realization of their full potential. Therefore, understanding how gender norms are constructed and reproduced is particularly important for developing strong child-marriage interventions.

Gender norms are socially constructed. From the earliest years of life, boys and girls learn how their sex is associated with a number of roles and expectations. These roles and expectations are transmitted through direct interactions with a range of close actors, such as parents, relatives, teachers, and peers, and are reinforced as children, adolescents, and adults evolve in various structures and institutions of society, such as marriage, religion,

school, workplace, etc.¹⁷ At the core of a global patriarchal system that sustains gender inequality and drives various forms of gender-based violence (GBV) such as child marriage, lie restrictive and rigid definitions of masculinity and femininity. In most cultural contexts, being a man is stereotypically associated with notions of dominance, toughness, control over women and some men, rejection of vulnerability, restrictions around expressing emotions, expectations of providing safety and financial security for a family, and being the main decision-maker.^{18,19} Masculinity and femininity are defined in part through an explicit contrast with the other as a gender dichotomy. Thus, on the other side of the spectrum, femininity has tended to emphasize caregiving, playing a supportive or differential role with regard to decision-making, childbearing, and a focus on unpaid care work in contrast with men's engagement with the public sphere. These stereotypical "recipes" for masculinity and femininity vary by age and other aspects of status and identity even within a single cultural context.

These notions play a tremendous role in driving child marriage. For example, parents generally place more value on boys as future providers and struggle to see the benefits of educating girls and increasing their access to the formal job market, even in contexts where quality education and job opportunities are available for girls. For girls and women, their sexuality, fertility, and unpaid care work, including all aspects of domestic work, are highly valued and cultivated. Indeed, the marriage of a boy or man is expected to bring young female labor into the household and expand the family size through childbearing. In a context where male dominance, toughness, and sometimes violence prevails, some families also turn to child marriage as a way of protecting girls against sexual violence and perceived threats to their honor (see the next section for more information about sexuality). The latter point is especially prevalent in contexts of armed conflict and displacement.^{20,21}

14 Heise, L., Greene, M.E., Opper, N., Stavropoulou, M., Harper, C., Nascimento, M., & Zewdi, D. (2019). [Gender inequality and restrictive gender norms: framing the challenges to health](#), *The Lancet*, 393(10189), 2440-2454.

15 UNICEF-UNFPA, [Technical note on gender norms](#), 2020.

16 Greene, M.E. & Stiefvater, E. (2019). [Social and gender norms and child marriage: a reflection on issues, evidence and areas of inquiry in the field](#). London: ALIGN.

17 Ibid.; UNICEF-UNFPA, 2020, Op. cit.; Cislighi & Heise, 2020, op. cit.

18 Girls Not Brides, [Male engagement in ending child marriage](#), 2018.

19 Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH), Georgetown University, [Understanding the male life course: opportunities for gender transformation](#), 2020.

20 CARE UK, [To protect her honour: child marriage in emergencies, the fatal confusion between protecting girls and sexual violence](#), 2015.

21 El Arab, R., & Sagbakken, M. (2019). [Child marriage of female Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon: a literature review](#), *Global Health Action*, 12(1), 1585709.

Restrictive definitions of masculinity play a role in driving child marriage and also contribute to some of its harmful consequences. Because of their gender and age, married girls are particularly deprived of decision-making power and are exposed to abuse in patriarchal societies and households. Once married, they are often isolated at home, managing heavy housework and childcare alone, and dependent on their husbands for financial resources (including male control of the girls' own earnings or assets). Evidence has also shown that men who endorsed harmful and rigid conceptions of masculinity are likely to use violence against women and girls,^{22,23} and that risks of intimate partner violence (IPV) are high in the context of child marriage.²⁴

More subtle consequences arise in the domain of marital quality as well, with men shamed for undertaking domestic tasks, even when these might contribute to women's marital satisfaction. Communication, respect, and sexual satisfaction – particularly women's – may also be harmed by the exercise of dominant masculinities in the household. Men's notions of ideal sexual behaviors can constrain them and make them less open to listening and negotiating with their wives, even more so when the wives are young and inexperienced and their gendered expectations about sexuality keep them from talking about sex. Within the context of marriage, restrictive gender roles and related power inequalities get reinforced and transmitted to the children of young married couples, creating an intergenerational legacy of gender inequality. Cycles of violence can also be sustained – research shows that children who grow up seeing violence against their mothers within their households are more likely to use violence as adults.²⁵

Gender norms and unequal power dynamics between male and female members of society are also reflected and sustained at a systemic level through institutions and by people who participate in shaping and running them. For example, this may manifest through national laws that allow girls to marry younger than boys or fail to criminalize marital rape; limited government budgets for investment in policies that promote gender equality;

workplace policies that grant higher salaries to men and pose barriers to women's entry into better-paid occupations or workplace dynamics that normalize sexist relations; sexual and reproductive health professionals who are reluctant to provide services to unmarried girls as they consider sex before marriage as inappropriate; unequal digital access, which limits girls' and women's knowledge of their rights, participation in certain aspects of public life, and their ability to seek recourse when their rights are disrespected; religious institutions and the media reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes, and so on. This bears important lessons for interventions that seek to promote gender equality and prevent and respond to child marriage. While **investing in gender-transformative work during boyhood – with boys, families, communities, and institutions – can lay the foundation for transformed power relations**, thereby creating a new generation of male family members and leaders who share power and resources with female counterparts, investing in gender-transformative approaches at a systemic level can provide opportunities to actualize these transformed power relations and ensure their sustainability.

Understanding how early in the socialization process we learn about gender norms and how far-reaching the consequences of harmful masculinities are makes a strong case for using interventions to deconstruct and transform gender roles and unequal power relations as early as possible. As gender norms are collective forces that can impact individual attitudes and behaviors, **it is crucial to act at both the individual/family/community and the systemic levels to promote alternative and healthier gender socialization.** From the early stages of adolescence, boys start facing increased family pressure to earn. At that stage, peer relations become increasingly important, and adolescent boys start being more exposed to notions of violence and perceptions on how masculinity should be expressed in sexuality, which will have important consequences on how they will relate to future partners and children. Investing in gender-transformative interventions during that period can really help promote healthy behaviors among a generation of future husbands, fathers, brothers, leaders, and advocates.²⁶

22 Kato-Wallace, J., Barker, G., Sharafi, L., Mora, L., & Lauro, G. (2016). [Adolescent boys and young men: engaging them as supporters of gender equality and health and understanding their vulnerabilities](#). Washington, D.C.: Promundo-US and New York: UNFPA.

23 UNFPA, 2021, op. cit.

24 Kidman, R. (2017). [Child marriage and intimate partner violence: a comparative study of 34 countries](#). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

25 Promundo & Sonke Gender Justice. (2016). [Breaking the cycle of intergenerational violence: the promise of psychosocial interventions to address children's exposure to violence](#). Washington, D.C.: Promundo-US and Cape Town: Sonke Gender Justice; Kato-Wallace et al., 2016, op. cit.

26 See, for example, Promundo & Health Development Initiative, [Adolescent relationships in Rwanda: dating, couple conflict and sexuality: findings from qualitative research in Kigali and Rutsiro](#) (2021), for formative research that can contribute to cultivating healthy relationships.

2. THE MEANING AND RELEVANCE OF SEXUALITY

While gender norms manifest in many aspects of people's lives, **the question of sexuality is particularly central to how, in patriarchal societies, gender norms and stereotypes create unhealthy relationships and unequal power dynamics between men and women, including in the context of marriage and child marriage.**

As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), "sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors." It relates to a range of essential aspects of women's and men's lives, including:²⁷

- How sensuality, intimacy, and pleasure are experienced;
- How people engage in sexual and other intimate relationships;
- How people express their sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity;
- How they ensure their own sexual and reproductive health; and
- How they exercise sexual agency and bodily autonomy more generally.

While the ways in which all these facets of sexuality are expressed vary across places and times, nearly all populations across the world have imposed patriarchal values that promote male control over female bodies and sexuality.²⁸ Following these values, a woman's sole purpose should consist of being a good wife and mother, and a man should aspire to be the head of a household, having authority over his wife and children, and providing economic security for them. In a patriarchal conception of relationships and family formation, ensuring a man's authority and control over the household implies, among other things, guaranteeing his filiation with children and managing sexual

relationships according to his own needs.²⁹ In this "sexual regime," female pleasure is subordinated to male pleasure, with implications for practices that regulate female sexuality, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. These stereotypes directly link to the control of female fertility and sexuality, and over the centuries across the world, the institution of marriage has provided a solid framework for expressing this control and for sustaining patriarchal ideals.³⁰ The physical, psychological and emotional changes that occur during adolescence mean that sexuality becomes an increasingly important aspect of young people's life during that period. Across many settings, adults have perceived this change as a threat to the realization of the patriarchal ideals and have adopted harmful strategies such as child marriage to impose control on young people's sexuality, and especially girls'.

During adolescence, restrictive gender norms shared through childhood socialization become even more strongly shared and enforced. At a time when adolescent girls and boys start developing sexual desire and might engage in intimate relationships, families, and communities tend to emphasize stereotypes and misconceptions about male and female attributes and their approach to sexuality. These can include girls being described as lustful or irresponsible and boys being viewed as unable to manage their sexual desire and untrustworthy in interactions with girls. In many contexts, to be considered a "real man," gender expectations mandate adolescent boys to be sexually active, to engage in numerous sexual experiences or "conquests," to be a risk-taker, and to decide when and how to engage in sexual relationships, leaving limited-to-no say to their female partners. This reinforces adults' unease and anxiety about adolescents' sexuality outside of marriage on the one hand, and about sexual violence and force on the other. This leads them to constrain girls with the goal of protecting them.^{31,32}

27 Child, Early, and Forced Marriages and Unions (CEFMU) & Sexuality Programs Working Group, [Tackling the taboo: sexuality and gender-transformative programmes to end child, early and forced marriage and unions](#), 2019.

28 Greene, M.E., Perlson, S., Hart, J., & Mullinax, M. (2018). [The centrality of sexuality for understanding child, early and forced marriage](#). Washington, D.C.: GreeneWorks and American Jewish World Service.

29 Iyakaremye, I., Mukamana, L., & Umutoni, J. (2020). [Paternity denial and consequences on children in patriarchal society: situation in consensual couples in Rwanda](#), *Children and Youth Services Review*, 118 (105357).

30 Pateman, C. (2000). [The patriarchal welfare state: women and democracy](#), in Pierson, C., Castles, F.G., & Naumann, I.K. (eds), *The Welfare State Reader*, pp. 134-150. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

31 Heilman, B., Barker, G., & Harrison, A. (2017). [The man box: a study on being a young man in the US, UK and Mexico](#). Washington, D.C.: Promundo-US and London: Unilever.

32 USAID, Kiawah Trust, Piramal Foundation, Dasra, [Ladies and gentle men. Boys and men in India need a new meaning for masculine](#), 2015

Adolescent girls are subject to restrictions and management of their sexuality in ways that considerably limit their capacity to make decisions about their own lives and violate their rights. In many places across the world, tremendous importance is given to preserving girls' virginity before marriage and the supposedly sexual "purity" that it represents. It is considered a necessary condition for finding a suitable husband and to safeguard perceived family honor. Girls' virginity is so highly valued that in many places, it has become an object of monetization, ritualization, and sanctions, as visible in various practices such as child marriages solemnized by the exchange of a dowry, ceremonies to show proof of a bride's virginity on her wedding day, or honor killings and gender-based violence in case of perceived or real threats to girls' virginity.³³ All strategies to control female sexuality imply multiple violations of girls' rights and are at the core of gender inequality. In many instances, the significant age disparity between adolescent girls and their adult male husbands reflects a practice designed to maintain the power imbalance between the wife and the husband.³⁴

Harmful conceptions and fears around adolescents' sexuality are not only shared and enforced in a family and community context but are also echoed and reinforced through various institutions and people who shape them. For example, teaching shared in school, places of worship, and health services might emphasize the need for adolescent girls and boys to abstain from any sexual activity before marriage and prevent their access to information and services related to sexuality. These approaches are disconnected from the reality of the human stages of development, which include progressive changes in sexuality throughout adolescence and puberty. This is also observed in some places where lawmakers have raised the legal age of marriage to 18 years old but suggest also raising the legal age of sexual consent to prevent adolescents from engaging in sexual relationships before marriage. This approach risks criminalizing sexual activity among adolescents and further reinforces the barriers they face in accessing information and services to

adopt safe behaviors and informed decisions about their bodies and lives.³⁵

Among adolescents, **taboos and restrictions around adolescent sexuality, in general, mean that both adolescent boys and girls grow up ill-equipped to build healthy and equal sexual and broader relationships.** On the one hand, adolescent girls experience extremely high levels of restrictions directly imposed on their sexuality. On the other hand, harmful masculinities promoted in patriarchal systems likewise impose on adolescent boys certain ways of expressing their sexuality, which affect the way they approach relationships and experience sexuality. Norms around toughness and dominance described in the previous section contribute to shaping adolescent boys' and men's approach to sexuality and can prevent them from getting the intimacy and connection they need for their well-being, to form positive and healthy relationships based on mutual support, or simply to express their sexuality without patriarchy dictating how they should do so.³⁶ As such, **addressing control over female sexuality and harmful masculinities – including those related to sexuality – is critical to preventing child marriage and promoting more equal and mutually beneficial relationships between male and female partners.**

Despite many commonalities, the links between sexuality and child marriage are not always the same depending on the geographical context. This makes the realities and responses look different in different places. In Uganda, a sexual double standard means that boys are expected to be sexually active and yet girls are held responsible for unintended pregnancies that then contribute to pushing them into early marriage.³⁷ With protracted displacement and high rates of child marriage among refugee populations, the Middle East is an illustration of how insecurity and patriarchal conceptions of female sexuality can lead to child marriage. For example, among Syrian communities during the Syrian conflict and as refugees in Lebanon, the notion of honor attached to female sexual purity has been a major concern for families fearing sexual

33 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). (2020). *State of world population 2020: defying the practices that harm women and girls and undermine equality*. New York: UNFPA.

34 Manzanero, J.R.L., & Ramazzini, A.L. (2020). *¿Cuál es el problema? Masculinidades y matrimonios infantiles, uniones tempranas y forzadas en las asimetrías del poder*, *Revista Punto Género*, 13(2020), 79-108.

35 Petroni, S., Das, M., & Sawyer, S. (2019). *Protection versus rights: age of marriage versus age of sexual consent*, *Lancet Child and Adolescent Health*, 3(4), 274-280.

36 Kato-Wallace et al., 2016, op. cit.

37 Ninsiima, A.B., Leye, E., Michielsen, K., Kemigisha, E., Nyakato, V.N., & Coene, G. (2018). *"Girls have more challenges; they need to be locked up": a qualitative study of gender norms and the sexuality of young adolescents in Uganda*, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(2), 193.

violence by the military or harassment on the way to school or work and turning to child marriage in an attempt to protect girls.^{38,39}

Legislative efforts to end child marriage have often included penalizing adolescent sex, as one global review document says.⁴⁰ One analysis of historical/colonial laws in Africa found them to be very punitive and called for the need to move away to create space for consensual adolescent sexual relationships.⁴¹ Work on child marriage has been controversial in Latin America and the Caribbean, where child marriage prohibitions suspected of being the means of regulating adolescent sexuality and preventing adolescents from entering consensual relationships.⁴² In India, laws devised to address harm and extend protection to children can often play into dominant social norms and are mobilized in the service of protectionist and patriarchal control on young

people and their sexuality.⁴³ In the United States of America, laws classifying sex with children as statutory rape versus child marriage are very inconsistent and reflect stereotypes and moralizing about adolescent sexual activity.⁴⁴

In summary, though the specific expression of child marriage varies across different settings, it is driven by patriarchal values and structures and serves as a channel for the implementation and intergenerational transmission of these values. It serves to control girls' and women's sexuality, curtail their capacity to make choices for their life, and formalize the expression of harmful masculinities within intimate and family relationships. Addressing gender norms and power relations around sexuality and how patriarchy affects how adolescent boys and girls experience it – and sustained by adult men and women – should therefore be central to child marriage prevention and mitigation strategies.

38 Women's Refugee Commission, [Child marriage in humanitarian settings in the Arab States region](#), 2020.

39 Terre des Hommes, King's College London, [Understanding child marriage amongst Syrian refugee communities in Jordan and Lebanon](#), 2018.

40 Santelli, J.S., Spindler, E., Moore, E., & McGovern, T. (2019). [Criminalising sexuality or preventing child marriage: legal interventions and girls' empowerment](#), *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 3(4), 206-208.

41 Kangaude, G.D., & Skelton, A. (2018). [\(de\) criminalizing adolescent sex: a rights-based assessment of age of consent laws in eastern and southern Africa](#), *Sage Open*, 8(4), 2158244018806036.

42 Authors' analysis and observation at Girls Not Brides consultation, Mexico City, May 2019.

43 Pitre, A., & Lingam, L. (2021). [Age of consent: challenges and contradictions of sexual violence laws in India](#), *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*, 29(2), 1878656.

44 Van Roost, K., Horn, M., & Koski, A. (2022). [Child marriage or statutory rape? A comparison of law and practice across the United States](#), *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 70(3), S72-S77.

3. THE CASE OF CHILD GROOMS: HONOR, ECONOMICS, AND MORE

The authors have described how harmful masculinities fuel unhealthy and unequal power relationships between men and women and crystallize in the context of marriage. It is also important to highlight how, in some places, patriarchal ideas around sexuality and gender roles directly affect adolescent boys and push them into child marriage. While more data is needed to provide a representative picture of the prevalence of child marriage among boys across all regions, we know that on average, only an estimated 4.5 percent of men aged 20-24 years old were first married before the age of 18.⁴⁵ **Although child grooms account for a relatively small proportion of child marriage, it is important to make a concerted effort to ensure boys who experience this human rights violation are not ignored and are protected.**

Given the much lower global prevalence of child marriage among boys, the number and depth of studies on this topic are limited. Data available shows that while child marriage among girls is a global issue, with much higher rates in some regions than in others, child marriage among boys is more disparate. For example, 17 of the 20 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage among girls can be found in Sub-Saharan Africa, while the five countries with the highest rates of child marriage among boys include Central African Republic, Nicaragua, Madagascar, Nauru, and Honduras.⁴⁶ This variety invites further exploration to understand why and how child marriage affects a higher proportion of boys across these different settings and regions, especially as the studies found in this review focus only on a couple of South Asian countries.

The data available echoes some of the elements highlighted in the previous section as to why and how some boys are affected by the practice of child marriage. The authors have explained that while child marriage among girls is driven by a complex set of factors, such as poverty, insecurity, and a lack of life opportunities, it always stems from patriarchy and restrictive gender norms. These norms seem also to play a

major part in driving child marriage among boys,⁴⁷ an influence that is amplified by poverty.⁴⁸ As evidence of child marriage among boys expands, it will also be important to explore how marginalizing factors, such as socioeconomic status, disability, ethnicity, etc., impact the ways in which boys are affected by child marriage.

In India and Nepal, for example, a combination of poverty and restrictive conceptions of gender roles and expectations related to family responsibilities are key drivers of child marriage among boys. This highlights the labor/economic aspects of child marriage. A 2017 study carried out in rural Uttar Pradesh – a large Indian state where over 30 percent of young men were first married before 18⁴⁹ and where the average age gap between husband and wife was 2-5 years – showed that child marriage was much higher among poorer households. Given the heavy responsibility that patriarchal conceptions of masculinities impose on men to build families and act as the breadwinners, social pressure to marry, start a family, and work to provide for wife and children was, not surprisingly, one of the most commonly cited reasons for child marriage among boys. Young men mentioned feeling afraid of being judged, mocked, and dishonoring their families if they were not able to fulfill the role that patriarchal values prescribe for men. The study also shed light on how families' concerns about their honor and reputation, along with their desire to marry girls early, might drive child marriage among boys. Participants in the study explained that families who marry sons after teenage years risk being considered as "having bad blood or history," which puts them in a difficult position to marry their daughters. This suggests that the families' primary concern is to marry girls early, but boys also face some of the consequences.

In India, for example, though broader socioeconomic changes have contributed to progress, the research also highlights that neither girls nor boys were allowed to play a major role in decisions on when and whom to marry. This, beyond gender,

45 Gastón, C.M., Misunas, C., & Cappa, C. (2019). [Child marriage among boys: a global overview of available data](#), *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 14(3), 219-228.

46 Ibid.

47 Edmeades, J., MacQuarrie, K.L.D., & Acharya, K. (2022). [Child grooms: understanding the drivers of child marriage for boys](#), *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 70 (3S), S54-S56.

48 In Latin America and the Caribbean, boy grooms come from the poorest households: <https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/8256/file/Profile%20of%20Child%20Marriage%20in%20LAC.pdf>.

49 Mukherjee, A., & Sekher, T.V. (2017) ["Do only girls suffer? We too!" Early marriage repercussions on boys in rural India](#), *Economic and Political Weekly*, 52(1).

also suggests the impact of norms around intergenerational relations between family members, which prevent youth from exercising their agency. In Nepal, similar gender-related expectations are driving child marriage among boys.⁵⁰ Various researches have also emphasized parents' strong concern about adolescent girls and boys interacting with each other both in person and through mobile phones, reflecting a fear of sexual relationships outside of marriage – especially for girls – and perceived risks to family honor.⁵¹ This makes it very difficult for young people to cultivate friendships and romantic relationships, which are a big part of personality development during adolescence. In this context, girls and boys who develop romantic feelings for each other often feel the pressure to marry as soon as possible to prevent any risk of stigma, gossip, and violence within their communities.⁵²

While the consequences of child marriage are far more oppressive for girls due to embedded gender inequality, risk of IPV, and direct consequences of sexual and reproductive health and motherhood, child grooms also experience some harmful effects of child marriage. More research is needed to explore the links between education, employment, and child marriage among boys. Yet available evidence suggests the pressure to act as a breadwinner pushes both unmarried and married boys to drop out of school and start working early, which often means less-stable and worse-paid jobs, which traps them in a cycle of poverty.⁵³ In the study in Uttar Pradesh cited earlier, 23 percent of young men who went to school for at least 11 years

got married before the legal age of marriage. The proportion was twice of that for young men who completed less than six years of education.⁵⁴ In addition, most research participants reported that, at the time of their wedding, they had very limited or no knowledge of the responsibilities that come with marriage, including around sexual and reproductive health. Fifty-four out of the 72 men and boys interviewed said they used physical violence with their wives to manage conflict or deal with their stress, responsibilities, and frustrations of a married life that was imposed on them. A senior health practitioner recently interviewed in Nepal also pointed out high rates of depression, loneliness, and even suicide among child grooms in his area.⁵⁵ Broader studies have also shown that harmful masculinity and discriminatory gender norms can be linked to poor mental and physical health in boys and men.⁵⁶

Adolescent boys who marry as children have to take on the marital responsibilities associated with patriarchal male-gender roles, which violates their rights and is detrimental to their development and that of their spouse. They are forced to put an end to their education and start working to assume responsibilities they are unequipped for, including work and fatherhood. In this context, child marriage of boys also contributes to sustaining other dimensions of gender-related harm. Preventing and responding to child marriage for boys and involving boys who are already married into the broader movement for gender equality is important to achieving global development goals.⁵⁷

50 Chhabra, E. (2016). [The hidden world of child grooms](#), *Takepart's Big Issues*, Vol. 12, *Hidden Connections*.

51 CARE Tipping Point, [Understanding the roots of child marriage: baseline findings from the Tipping Point evaluation in Nepal and Bangladesh](#), Phase 2, Baseline Executive Summary, 2020.

52 Human Rights Watch, ["Our time to sing and play": child marriage in Nepal](#), 2016.

53 Edmeades et al., 2022, op. cit.

54 Mukherjee & Sekher, 2017, op. cit.

55 Sinclair, S. (2022). [Child grooms are often overlooked in the fight to stop child marriage](#), *NPR*, 22 January.

56 UNFPA, 2021, op. cit.

57 Kato-Wallace et al., 2016, op. cit.

4.

PROGRAM REVIEW

An earlier review by Equimundo and GreeneWorks scanned interventions with boys and men across diverse settings.⁵⁸ The report emphasized specific populations rather than approaches: working with boys and brothers; working with young men and future husbands; working with fathers; working with husbands of young brides; mobilizing men as community members; and engaging traditional and religious leaders. Examples of each of these efforts are provided in the full report, [Engaging Men and Boys to End the Practice of Child Marriage](#).

This report is quite different in that it focuses more precisely on the approaches the interventions took. This section presents a program review that focuses on key themes that emerged from our analysis. Going beyond Equimundo's pre-2015 program review,⁵⁹ the authors searched for post-2015 publications in English and French that referred to interventions working with adolescent boys or married boys or young men to address gender inequality via approaches and topics that are relevant to child marriage. The authors then selected 26 interventions (or sets of interventions) that fulfil at least one of the following conditions:

- Show positive or promising results in addressing harmful gender norms and/or in delaying marriage
- Include a well-documented analysis of potential reasons for program failure or of challenges
- Use at least some key elements of a gender-transformative approach^{60,61,62}
- Work or have taken steps to work across more than one level of the social-ecological framework – either directly or through partnerships

Table 1 lists selected programs and provides an overview of how they spread across the social-ecological model, whether they include an explicit goal to address child marriage, and whether the strategies used can contribute to preventing and/or responding to child marriage. Further details about the programs are available in **Annex B**. The remainder of this section provides an analysis of different themes identified across the selected programs.

58 Greene et al, 2015, op. cit.

59 Ibid.

60 UNICEF, UNFPA, & UN Women, [Technical note on gender-transformative approaches in the Global Programme to End Child Marriage Phase II: a summary for practitioners](#), Global Programme, January 2020.

61 Definition of “gender-transformative” programs: Programs that “seek to transform gender relations to promote equality and achieve program objectives [...] by: 1) fostering critical examination of inequalities and gender roles, norms, and dynamics; 2) recognizing and strengthening positive norms that support equality and an enabling environment; 3) promoting the relative position of women, girls, and marginalized groups; and 4) transforming the underlying social structures, policies, and broadly held social norms that perpetuate gender inequalities.” (Interagency Gender Working Group, [The gender integration continuum](#)).

62 Gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) encourage critical awareness of gender roles and norms; promote equitable positions of girls and women in society; challenge the distribution of resources and allocation of duties between men and women; and/or address the unequal power relationships between girls/women and others in the community, such as service providers or traditional leaders. The ultimate aim of GTAs is to achieve gender equality, empower women, girls, and gender nonconforming young people, promote health, and eliminate violence. (CEFMU & Sexuality Programs Working Group, [Tackling the taboo](#), 2019, op. cit.).

TABLE 1.**ADDRESSING HARMFUL MASCULINITIES & PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS THE SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL, WITH EXPECTED IMPACT ON CEFMU**

Program	Ind	Fam	Cpl	Com	Inst ⁶³	CEFMU as a key objective ⁶⁴	Strategies contributing to CEFMU prevention ⁶⁵	Strategies contributing to CEFMU response ⁶⁶
Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore	X			X			X	X
Tipping Point	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Nisikilize Tujengane (NISITU)	X			X			X	
CHOICES	X					X	X	
Action for Equality (AFE)	X	X		X	X		X	
Mera Samman Mera Swabhiman	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Club des maris et des futurs maris	X	X	X	X			X	X
Hajara Usman Girls' Leadership Training Program	X	X		X			X	
Champions of Change - Youth Promoting Gender Equality	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
PRACHAR	X			X		X	X	X
GREAT (Gender Roles, Equality, and Transformation)	X		X	X			X	X
Discover	X	X					X	
GEMS (Gender Equity Movement in School)	X				X		X	
Our Bodies Our Choices	X				X	X	X	X
REAL (Responsible, Engaged, and Loving Fathers)	X	X	X					X
A More Equal Future	X	X				X	X	
Masculinité, Famille et Foi			X	X				X
Blue Veins	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SASA Together!	X		X	X	X			X
UMANG	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Gender Lab Boys Program	X			X			X	
Act With Her Ethiopia (AWH-E)	X	X		X		X	X	
Taaron Ki Toli	X				X		X	
Kishor Varta (Centre for Health and Social Justice - CHSJ)	X			X	X	X	X	
Men as Caring Partners and Fathers (CHSJ)		X	X	X		X	X	X
Vikalp	X	X		X	X	X	X	X

63 "Ind" stands for "individual level"; "fam" stands for "family level"; "Cpl" stands for "couple level"; "Com" stands for "Community level"; "Inst" stands for "institutional level".

64 The program includes addressing child marriage as one of its key objectives.

65 The program does not necessarily include CEFMU as one of its key objectives, but its activities include strategies that can contribute to preventing child marriage.

66 The program does not necessarily include CEFMU as one of its key objectives, but its activities include strategies that can contribute to addressing the harmful consequences of child marriage.

1. ANALYSIS

1.1 EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES AND PROMISING GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE WORK WITH BOYS AND YOUNG MEN EXIST

As child marriage disproportionately affects girls, a very large number of initiatives to address it still primarily work with girls. Comparatively, outside of sexual health programs, few adolescent interventions in low- and middle-income countries offer components targeted at boys with strong gender-equality elements. While CSE represents an important entry point to start a conversation around positive masculinities, on its own it is not sufficient to achieve holistic change around what it means to be a boy and a man. As for child rights awareness programs, such interventions usually do not have a strong gendered-lens. Additionally, engagement and retention of adolescent boys in such programs is notoriously difficult, but in neglecting their needs, we miss a vital opportunity to support boys in the development of alternative, healthy and positive masculinities and the promotion of gender equality.

All programs selected for this review include strategies that can contribute to preventing child marriage and/or addressing its harmful consequences (see **Table 1**). It is worth noting that all the selected programs are concentrated in South Asia (especially in India) and, to a lesser extent, in Sub-Saharan Africa, which aligns with a history of long-standing work to address child marriage in these parts of the world and reflects our methodology, which was limited to publications in English and French. Initiatives from other regions and contexts – such as South-East Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and areas affected by conflict and displacement – might shed light on other contextual approaches to working with boys and men. Post-displacement contexts especially create an opportunity to disrupt the status quo in terms of traditional gender roles while allowing longer term interventions to address social norms compared to emergency contexts.

A larger review of gender equality, education, sexual and reproductive health, and youth programs that have not made an explicit connection with child marriage but challenge restrictive definitions of masculinities among adolescent boys could generate a greater wealth of learning for child marriage programming.

1.2 MOST PROGRAMS IN THIS REVIEW FOCUS PRIMARILY ON THE INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY AND/OR COMMUNITY LEVEL

Not surprisingly, **no program that works to prevent child marriage among boys and support child grooms came out of this review**, which is a clear gap in the landscape of programs working with boys toward gender equality and a world without child marriage. Although it is likely that very few programs focus on grooms, this review might have also missed programs documented in Spanish.⁶⁷

While this review was not restricted to programs that were rigorously evaluated, it includes a number of examples of good and promising practices or interventions working with adolescent boys, young married men, and/or fathers from which child marriage program designers can learn. Some of these are highlighted in **Box 1**. Although only a minority of programs selected for this review were designed for the sole purpose of addressing child marriage, about half of them explicitly highlight addressing child marriage as one of their objectives. Those that do not aim to end child marriage generally have broader goals of promoting gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors.

Looking at selected programs across the social-ecological model, the majority primarily work at the individual level using a curriculum delivered over regular sessions with groups of unmarried boys and/or young married men and fathers and facilitate discussion over a range of topics aimed at changing individual gender-related attitudes and behaviors. Most also have a family and/or community outreach component where complementary activities are carried out by participants and/or the implementing organization's staff or volunteers to provide a supportive environment for more gender-equitable behaviors. Programs that work at the institutional level mainly do so by partnering with local or state governments to incorporate their curriculum through schools in order to reach the largest number of adolescents possible. While all these approaches form part of the comprehensive approach needed to address the root causes of child marriage, the program review points

⁶⁷ Gastón et al., 2019, op. cit.

BOX 1.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES TO ENGAGE BOYS IN THE MOVEMENT FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Promoting gender-equitable attitudes among girls and boys at scale: Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) and Taaron Ki Toli (TKT).

Both school programs implemented in collaboration with the government, GEMS and TKT are delivered to young adolescent girls and boys aged around 11-14 and aim to promote gender equality. Five hundred thousand students in India have engaged in TKT and hundreds of thousands have been reached by GEMS across India, Vietnam, and Bangladesh. Facilitated by teachers trained⁶⁸ to question their own perceptions of gender roles, GEMS uses a cognitive-affective approach and provides students with life skills, extracurricular activities, role-playing, and games. TKT consists of a series of interactive, safe, and open discussions held over two and a half years to help adolescents transform the way they understand gender and act upon it. The GEMS evaluation by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) showed significant changes in GEMS students' attitudes around gender and violence, including increased support for a higher age of marriage for girls, greater male involvement in household work, and increased opposition to gender discrimination.⁶⁹ After two years of implementation in the state of Haryana (India), both boys and girls who took part in TKT showed clear changes in gender attitudes and behaviors, with greater behavior change observed among boys.⁷⁰

Designing gender equality interventions tailored to adolescent boys: Action for Equality, Kishor Varta, and Nisikilize Tujengane (NISITU).

Respectively developed by Equal Community Foundation (ECF), Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ), both in India, and Population Council in Kenya, these three programs are evidence-based interventions that were designed specifically to engage boys and men to address gender inequality, discrimination, and violence against women and girls. Equal Community Foundation and the Population Council developed curricula that adapt to the needs of adolescent boys who meet weekly for 6-12 months to cover topics such as healthy relationships, gender norms and power, and sexual and reproductive health. As part of Kishor Varta, boys and young men can use a mobile phone-based platform to engage with short stories with information on gender and SRHR, which are aimed at leading to personal reflection and as a tool for group discussions on these issues in schools and community youth clubs. While NISITU's first evaluation has not been published yet, ECF's Action for Equality program showed greater support for equal opportunities and rights for women and girls, active engagement in household work, and broader action taken to challenge gender norms.⁷¹ An impact study of Kishor Varta found promising signs such as stories of boys speaking out at home to support their sisters' education, challenging child marriage, and sharing domestic work. Overall, the program has shown a greater impact on individual knowledge and attitudes around gender, sexuality, and violence rather than on behaviors.

Addressing common consequences of child marriage through the empowerment of husbands and partners: REAL (Responsible, Engaged, and Loving Fathers), Men as Caring Fathers and Partners, and Clubs des maris et des futurs maris.

While engaging boys and men in the gender equality movement is important to prevent child marriage, supporting married girls and their partners in addressing common harmful issues such as intimate partner violence, poor couple communication, early pregnancy, and parenting challenges is also a key strategy. This is what programs like REAL in Uganda, Men as Caring Fathers and Partners in India, and Club des maris et des futurs maris in the Sahel do by promoting gender-equitable attitudes and practices among single adolescent boys, married young men, and fathers. While the Clubs des maris et des futurs maris – a new gender-transformative approach modeled after the family planning intervention, École des maris, and an adaptation of Equimundo's Program H and Program P – has not been evaluated yet,⁷² REAL and Men as Caring Fathers and Partners have shown positive results. Pilot results from the REAL program showed a reduction in the use of psychological and verbal violence and a significant and sustainable improvement in couple communications in young fathers who participated the program.⁷³ Based on discussions with women's self-help groups and Panchayat Raj Institution representatives, an internal evaluation by CHSJ highlighted changes in individual and family perceptions of norms related to prioritizing girls' education and ending child marriage.⁷⁴

68 GEMS training manual of facilitators, 2008.

69 ICRW, *Changing course: implementation and evaluation of the Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) program in specific sites – Vietnam, India and Bangladesh*, 2017.

70 Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), *The impact of a school-based gender attitude change program in India*, 2021.

71 Equal Community Foundation, *Annual evaluation report, Action for Equality Programme*, 2017-2018.

72 However, Promundo's Program H and Program P have been strongly evaluated (see Annex A).

73 Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University, REAL Fathers pilot results, 2017.

74 Murthy, R.K., (2018). *New frontiers in working towards gender equality and child rights? Evaluation of the project 'Responsible Fathers and Caring Partners'*.

to a gap in well-documented initiatives that work at the institutional level. That is, interventions that seek to reach other institutions that spread and sustain patriarchal values and related harmful gender norms at a societal level, as described in the first section of this paper. A broader review of gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, and youth policies and programs might identify more initiatives that address harmful masculinities at the institutional level.

While action at all levels of the social-ecological model is required, a recent review of evidence on child marriage interventions suggests the limited effectiveness of a number of multicomponent interventions that embrace a comprehensive approach working across many different areas.⁷⁵ This evidence suggests that, to ensure a comprehensive approach, **greater collaboration across complementary initiatives delivered by and to different types of actors** is needed. In a context of limited resources and opportunities provided by organizations' various expertise, funding and coordination bodies have a key role to play in making this collaboration happen.

1.3 MOST SELECTED PROGRAMS HAVE ADOPTED AN APPROACH THAT PROMOTES INTROSPECTION, WHICH IS KEY TO GENDER TRANSFORMATION AT THE INDIVIDUAL, INTERPERSONAL, AND COMMUNITY LEVELS

Gender-transformative approaches have been defined as acting at all levels of the social-ecological model,⁷⁶ and ultimately, a collaborative approach where complementary individuals, institutions and interventions act at all these levels has the greatest potential to make gender transformation a reality. To ensure that all parts of the collaborative system of interventions are truly gender-transformative, it is important to assess how individual initiatives that operate at only one or two levels are working toward transforming gender relations to promote equality.

It is very encouraging to see that **the programs identified in this review mainly focus on addressing issues that were highlighted in the first section of this paper as essential to progress toward more equitable attitudes and behaviors**

at the individual and community levels. A good number of selected programs seek to bring awareness, facilitate discussion, and instigate reflection around issues that are essential for the prevention of and response to child marriage. These include:

- Patriarchy, gender, and power
- Masculinities, socialization, and transitions from boyhood to manhood
- Impact on the gendered distribution of family responsibilities, parenting, and interpersonal relationship, including in sexuality
- Impact on violent behaviors and the expression of emotions
- SRHR for unmarried and married adolescents

It is worth noting that programs covering sexuality tend to focus on topics such as family planning, sexually transmitted infections and contraception, sexual violence, bodily changes, differences between sex and gender, the sexualization of women in the media, sexual attraction and pleasure, and sexual identity. Yet only the A More Equal Future program manual⁷⁷ included reference to notions of sexual purity, virginity, and personal and family honor, which are the central notions driving the practice of child marriage. Greater access to and a detailed review of all programmatic materials for selected programs might have found a greater emphasis on these aspects. However, the fact that A More Equal Future was a child marriage program points to the complementarity of approaches between child marriage and broader gender-equality programming. Programs that have a clear focus on ending child marriage can learn from programs addressing gender inequality by integrating elements that question harmful masculinities overall. And at the same time, their deeper focus on the issue can ensure they integrate elements that address all contextually relevant gender norms that are directly related to the practice of child marriage.

A number of programs empower boys and young men with not only the knowledge and reflection but also the skills

75 Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021, op. cit.

76 Interagency Gender Working Group, [The gender integration continuum](#); CEFMU & Sexuality Programs Working Group, Tackling the taboo, 2019, op. cit.

77 Promundo, World Vision, & MenCare, [A more equal future: a MenCare manual to engage fathers to prevent child marriage in India](#), 2013.

needed to put them into practice at various levels of their lives. These skills include:

- Life skills
- Financial education
- Negotiation skills
- Leadership skills
- Campaigning
- Communication skills
- Conflict resolution

As gender-transformative programs seek to spark and sustain a deep reflection process, it is important to have participatory methodologies that encourage participants to be active and provide them opportunities to bring their own experiences to the process. Through both program design and facilitation techniques, a number of programs have tried to invest in this.

BOX 2.

CONSULTATION AND CO-CREATION IN GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Although patriarchal values and structures are in place in most countries in the world, the nature and expression of gender norms and unequal power relations can vary across contexts. Broader socioeconomic factors that shape the daily lives of women, men, girls, and boys also have an impact on where, when, how, and how long a program should be delivered to maximize program acceptance and participants' active participation and retention. This is why formative research is so important prior to designing a gender-transformative program. Consulting future program participants and important people in their lives can also guide decisions on the best ways to adapt methodologies to maximize the long reflection process that individuals and communities go through when taking part in gender-transformative programming.

Out of the initiatives listed in Table 1, for example, Tipping Point and NISITU both carried out extensive formative research to inform the development of their programs. As part of Discover Learning, program designers also carried out consultations with a group of community and government actors, and a community advisory board continued to provide feedback on the program after its inception. For the founders of Gender Lab Boys and Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health (TICAH), it has also been very important to provide direct opportunities for boys to lead in certain aspects of the program. Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health stressed that allowing participants to carry out their own research and provide information to the group during sessions with the support of a facilitator has been essential to building their self-esteem

and communication skills. The founders of the Gender Lab Boys highlighted a similar approach where boys design and implement projects that they take to their communities, which included surveys on sexism, interviews with the local police about domestic violence, and research on access to education and child marriage. These approaches can create opportunities for youth participation in decision-making, which is a critical element in gender-transformative programming.

While it is possible that some similarities in terms of relevant topics covered through group education sessions could be identified, the practicalities of program delivery were more varied across programs. While most programs delivered weekly sessions, the variety of age groups, program lengths, structures of the sessions, and methodologies used to facilitate those sessions varied, and the documentation mostly did not provide the rationale for decision-making around program design in these aspects.

1.4 PROVIDING GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE TRAINING TO PROGRAM FACILITATORS SEEMS TO BE A GOOD PRACTICE THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO PROGRAM SUCCESS

Training facilitators and staff is essential for ensuring the quality and consistency of any program addressing the complex set of issues relating to gender equality and child marriage. Research has demonstrated the importance of having activities delivered by trained facilitators for enough time that the content is fully absorbed, **ideally, longer than three months.**⁷⁸ What works for young people works for adults.

Several programs featured in this review have invested in this need for strong training for facilitators in avoiding reinforcing harmful gender norms by questioning their own personal attitudes and adherence to collective beliefs and behaviors. For example, for their Tipping Point program, CARE developed a comprehensive training package to support staff in embarking on a journey of self-reflection around topics such as sexuality, gender, caste, and various group identities and how these relate to power. The training also supports staff in developing skill sets that are essential to good facilitation of gender-transformative programming, such as critical thinking, self-awareness, interpersonal communication, and respect for diversity and equality.⁷⁹

The International Centre for Reproductive Health and Sexual Rights (INCREASE) works in Nigeria with adolescents aged 11-19 years, about a quarter of whom are boys and young men, to reflect on and change harmful norms and masculinities in

boys and to prepare girls to interact with boys with confidence. INCREASE reported conducting a one-year training for their facilitators. Interviews with the Population Council about the NISITU program, likewise, indicated that at least a year of training is required for facilitators and that anything less is too short. Funding and time constraints make this degree of preparation a rare luxury, and a more typical level of training is about 3-5 days. CHSJ's Men as Caring Partners required their animators and facilitators to undergo an intensive and participatory training comprising seven workshops spread over 25 days covering the features of the project, concepts of patriarchy, gender, masculinities and child rights, care from the perspective of gender equality and child rights, skills in leadership, facilitation and participatory rural appraisal, reproductive rights, and social accountability in health and nutrition.

The Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore program found that many of the people identified to be peer mentors initially held traditional views of gender roles and the acceptability of violence against girls and women.⁸⁰ Their training and refresher training led these mentors to observe improvements in their own lives and their ability to take leadership, communicate better, and more effectively convince others, and gave them greater self-awareness regarding their own discriminatory attitudes. The training caused them to reduce their use of sexist or profane language and increased their ability to connect the lessons they were learning with their own lives.

Training is fundamental for sustaining the quality of facilitation, particularly when we move from a Non-governmental Organization (NGO)-led model to an institution-based one. It is also a key area for future implementation research. In an interview, the director of Gender Lab Boys indicated that they plan to develop an initiative named How We Raise Our Boys, which aims to strengthen the support system and impact more children by focusing on educators, teachers, counselors, and social workers and building their collective knowledge on gender and masculinity. The GEMS training – one of the programs that were scaled up in schools and worked with teachers – pursued two strands of content in their gender training of teacher-facilitators: first, teachers

78 Ruane-McAteer, 2020, op. cit.

79 CARE, [Leading change by being the change: staff transformation in Tipping Point Phase 1](#), 2019.

80 Marcus, R., Stavropoulou, M., & Archer-Gupta, N. (2018). [Programming to promote gender-equitable masculinities among adolescent boys: key findings from a rigorous review](#). London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence.

needed to examine their own inherent biases and the ways in which they reinforce stereotypes in obvious and subtle ways; and second, to reinforce their roles as guides and role models in the lives of children.

1.5 A NUMBER OF PROGRAMS HAVE INVESTED IN ANALYZING WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED FROM PROGRAM SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, AND FAILURES

Gender-transformative work requires sustained efforts across different levels of the social-ecological model

While the evaluation of the PRACHAR program in India has demonstrated a range of positive sexual and reproductive health impacts (e.g., significantly greater knowledge of participants about family planning, risk and consequences of early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and the legal minimum age at marriage; more gender-equitable attitudes; and higher use of contraception among young married couples), it has failed to translate into behavior change on child marriage and gender-based violence. There was negligible difference between the intervention and control sites. Post-program reflections emphasized that a short adolescent-focused program of three days in a conservative setting like Bihar could not hope to address complex issues such as child marriage and that more sustained interventions were needed. Similar observations were made in the mid-term reflections for the Gender Lab Boys program and the evaluations of CHOICES and Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore programs, even though the latter was an 18-month curriculum.⁸¹

The same is true when a program adapts to include several outcomes. For example, the Transforming Masculinities program was adapted to become Masculinit , Famille et Foi in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and added expected outcomes on IPV and family planning, but the program’s length was reduced from 24 to 18 months. Post-implementation reflections suggested that even longer-

term efforts were required. Implementation of over 2.5 years may have showed some level of change in IPV outcomes. In addition to the **need for longer interventions**, reflections from ECF’s work with boys in India also emphasize the **need for more opportunities to translate the new conceptions of gender roles and relations into practice** and to use the newly acquired skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving, to do so. While some reflections, such as those from the Gender Lab Boys implementation, have led program designers to suggest that six-month- to three-year-long interventions with the same cohort of boys would be preferable,⁸² it is still hard to identify any consensus among practitioners about a minimum or ideal duration for group-education gender-transformative curricula with boys, regardless of contextual factors. To help participants connect concepts to real life, a program like the Discover Learning programme has adopted an innovative approach – it focuses on social-emotional learning where adolescents in mixed groups use tablets to practice social-emotional mindsets and skills, such as positive peer communication, kindness, gratitude, collaboration, prosocial reasoning and positive risk-taking, and curiosity to explore heartfelt goals.⁸³

Reflections from the Gender Lab Boys and CHSJ’s Men as Caring Partners and Fathers, as well as the evaluations of PRACHAR, Gender Roles, Equality, and Transformation (GREAT), and Act With Her programs also called for **greater and better engagement with communities and institutions**.⁸⁴ For example, the evaluations of the CHOICES program also reviewed other components of the original intervention, which included family engagement (Voices) and community engagement (Promises). The study⁸⁵ showed that the family and community components (which included video sensitization with follow-up discussions, display of posters, and community discussions about the posters’ messages) were unsuccessful in sparking change in gender norms at these levels. This is in line with the existing evidence on child marriage intervention, which has shown that this type of short-term community awareness and communication initiatives was not enough to tackle deeply entrenched

81 Ibid.

82 Blue Ribbon Movement, Redefining masculinity: notes and plans for 2021-22 and forward. Unpublished.

83 Cherewick, M., Lebu, S., Su, C., Richards, L., Njau, P.F., & Dahl, R.E. (2021). [Adolescent, caregiver and community experiences with a gender-transformative, social emotional learning intervention](#). *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 20, 55.

84 Pandey, N., Jejeebhoy, S.J., Acharya, R., Singh, S.K., & Srinivas, M. (2016). [Effects of the Prachar project’s reproductive health training programme for adolescents: findings from a longitudinal study](#). New Delhi: Population Council and Pathfinder International.

85 Lundgren, R., Gibbs, S., and Kerner, B. (2018). [Does it take a village? Fostering gender equity among early adolescents in Nepal](#), *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 32(4), 20170164.

beliefs and practices around gendered power relations.⁸⁶ Yet the study also showed that the youth component of the program was more impactful in communities that also had a family and community component than in those that did not, which shows that **initiatives working at the individual level cannot work in isolation**. Building on the lessons from these programs as well as years of evidence from sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender programming with adolescents, Save the Children developed a design guide⁸⁷ that includes many programmatic principles, tips, and examples that resonate with issues highlighted in this paper. This is an example of how to gather, synthesize, and share programmatic learning to equip practitioners, service providers, and policymakers in developing effective approaches to working with young boys and girls around issues of SRH and gender.

As for the GREAT program (which managed to achieve some change at the individual level as well), post-program reflection highlighted the need to increase the number and profile of people reached in the community as well as the depth of engagement, while recognizing the challenge in identifying effective approaches to do so. Other organizations, such as Blue Veins in Pakistan, have proved how years of careful sustained engagement can participate in great changes at the institutional level. With the support of UN agencies, this local organization, which has been working to address gender inequality and child marriage for decades, has used patience, information, and strategic engagement with carefully selected religious leaders to advocate for the Council of Islamic Ideology to support the movement to end child marriage. After years of extensive engagement with religious leaders, Blue Veins has now signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Council of Islamic Ideology to mobilize religious bodies toward ending child marriage in the country.

Programs working with boys have to make the strategic decision about whether to adopt a single-sex or mixed-sex model

The inventory that forms the basis of our paper includes examples of both mixed-sex and single-sex groups, and this distinction is extended to the decision about whether to work with a single facilitator of the same sex as participants versus a pair of facilitators, one of whom is male and the other is female. Several programs, such as Discover and Champions for Change, made clear arguments that mixed-sex groups were appreciated by participants. Others found that mixed-sex groups had to be handled very carefully, e.g., NISITU's observation that girls might be shy and not participate fully when they participated in mixed-sex groups.

The clear headline that ultimately emerges from our analysis, however, is that **a model where single-sex groups with boys and with girls have the opportunity to meet separately and then together is the most favored and seems the most successful**. As Save the Children's SRH/gender design guide for very young adolescents states, "given evidence that girls may participate less in co-educational activities if programs do not take steps to ensure their full and equal position, boys and girls could be engaged separately as well as together."⁸⁸ Examples of this approach include Champions of Change and Act With Her, which developed separate curricula for boys and girls, who come together several times during their journeys to discuss their changing views on gender and social transformation and to work together on outreach activities. Masculinit , Famille et Foi adopted two approaches to adapt to rural or urban settings, with five weeks single sex plus one week combined in rural areas, and five weeks single sex plus four weeks combined in urban areas. MAMTA's Mera Samman Mera Swabhiman program worked with boys and girls together throughout the program.

86 Girls Not Brides, [Resources centre](#), consulted in September 2021.

87 Save the Children, [Very young adolescent sexual and reproductive health and gender program](#), 2019.

88 Save the Children. 2019. Very Young Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Gender Program Design Guide. Washington, DC: Save the Children. Available at <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/very-young-adolescent-sexual-reproductive-health-and-gender-program-design-guide/>

BOX 3.

LEARNING FROM CHALLENGES AND FAILURES

A five-year life-skills program aimed at transforming gender norms in rural Ethiopia, the Act With Her program has used strong gender-transformative design principles such as gender-synchronized engagement with adolescents, targeted sessions for specific age groups, and programming for parents, community leaders, and other community members to support an enabling environment for adolescents to express new perspectives on gender. The program is relatively large scale, expected to reach 50,000 adolescents by 2022. It also builds on existing girl-empowerment initiatives, thereby avoiding starting an intervention from scratch. Yet results from a midline evaluation in the Oromia region found negative short-term impacts of the program in gender relations among both adolescents and communities of implementation sites.⁸⁹

For example, community leaders engaged in the program still supported child

marriage, and boys were *less* likely to disagree with various statements related to gender inequality (e.g., about boys being biologically smarter than girls or about boys behaving like girls being considered weak). Some boys reported forgetting the content of the education sessions as soon as they met with other boys, and many others said they would not start taking on more domestic chores at home despite understanding the session contents on the gendered division of labor. The evaluation also compared the Act With Her intervention with a girls-only intervention (HerSpaces) and found no improvement in girls' knowledge in either participating community. The evaluation highlights that gender norms take time to change, so it will be interesting to explore results from the endline evaluation. However, early signs of reinforcement of harmful norms are a concern and efforts have been made to inform adaptations of the program. The evaluators arrived at the following inferences:

- The near-peer facilitators (aged 18-24 years) did not always come to facilitate the sessions as planned or arrive on time, which resulted in a lack of consistency in session delivery.
- Adolescents' participation in the sessions was not consistent.
- Parents faced many pressures and obstacles in taking part in the program.
- Mothers mostly did not assign domestic responsibilities to their sons, which could have led to knowledge not translating into behavior change among boys. Even when supporting girls' education, mothers expected girls to manage both domestic duties in addition to education.

These points represent areas of programmatic learning and strengthening.

⁸⁹ Baird, S., Dutton, R., Hamory, J., Iyasu, A., Jones, N., Presler-Marshall, E., & Yadete, W. (2021). [Transforming gender norms through life-skills programming in rural Ethiopia: short-term impacts and emerging lessons for adaptive programming. Oromia case study. Report](#). London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence.

Practical aspects of implementation such as program acceptance, participation, and retention remain key considerations for success

A number of program analyses and evaluations have highlighted how important it is to secure community buy-in and invest in participant retention strategies, especially with gender-transformative programming, which always requires longer-term engagement and touches upon sensitive issues. Learning from PRACHAR, which initially faced strong resistance from adults in the community worried about adolescents discussing sexuality, pointed to the importance of investing time and effort in recruiting and training trusted local NGO partners, community leaders, and selected adolescents to carry out a series of meetings with the community. A key reflection from Blue Veins includes the need for gender-transformative programming with adolescents to not only focus on gender relations but also to be mindful of the intergenerational power relations that exist in a given context.

The actual regular participation of adolescents and family or community members has also been highlighted as a key challenge. For example, with Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore in India, regular attendance to sessions had a clear differential impact on attitude and behavior change. Reasons cited for irregular participation included time constraints due to work and education. Similar reasons were cited with NISITU in Kenya. With programs that did not lead to short-term changes in boys' attitudes regarding gender power relations, such as Act With Her in Ethiopia, post-program reflections suggested a need to provide more regular sessions and increase the involvement of influential male members of the community to support program messages. In Kenya, early reflections suggested designing more adaptive programs to acknowledge people's constraints and often uncertain life routines. Programs like Kishor Varta have highlighted co-creating programs with potential participants and ensuring strong feedback loops as good practices to remain rooted in local reality.

A couple of programs have also highlighted how acknowledging existing gender roles when starting a program can be important in recruiting participants and anchoring the program in the local reality. For example, recognizing the pressure that boys and men face in providing financially for the family, NISITU chose to include its gender-transformative component into a broader

offer covering economic empowerment and life skills for boys. Insights from the program staff of the Club des maris et des futurs maris echoed this approach, which also helps tackle poverty, which is a key factor sustaining child marriage. Such efforts should of course consider how to avoid reinforcing existing unequal power relations between young women and men or incentivizing child labor.

Program evaluations are inconsistent in outcomes measured, quality, and availability, posing challenges in comparing program effectiveness

In order to include a range of interesting and promising intervention examples in this comparatively new area of work, this review did not screen studies by evaluation methodology. The authors have responded to this challenge by avoiding presenting results unless a rigorous evaluation was featured in the program documentation.

Many if not most of the programs lack rigorous evaluations, which is not surprising given the comparative newness of work at the intersection of boyhood and child marriage. Yet evaluation has also been a big issue for programs focused on girls, with questions regarding the definition of success, the identification of indicators, and so on remaining unresolved. Several programs reviewed for this analysis included only limited information about the contexts in which they work, the profile of the individuals they seek to reach, or the scale of their reach. For example, documentation on TICAH and INCREASE includes some reflections but no readily accessible data. UMANG and NISITU have not yet been evaluated. Given that the youngest participants in CHOICES were 10 at the time of implementation, an evaluation would require a longitudinal study over 8-10 years, which has not been conducted (or been made available) to date.

The first key dimension of evaluation is the selection of outcomes and indicators a program is trying to achieve or measure. Yet **for most of the interventions included here, information about the indicators used to monitor impact is not readily available.** For those we do have, indicators are not consistent across programs.

Several programs seem to focus on the relevant things, i.e., changes in attitudes and behaviors around gender and direct marriage-related measures. Evaluations of Mera Samman Mera

Swabhiman, PRACHAR, Men as Caring Partners and Fathers, GEMS, Kishor Varta, and CHOICES examine the impact on child marriage-related attitudes and behaviors. Tipping Point explicitly focused on social norms directly related to child marriage, while CHOICES examined equity in the division of chores at home, education, resource sharing, attitudes toward GBV and delaying marriage for girls, and gender roles and responsibilities. MAMTA examines the impact of Mera Samman Mera Swabhiman on decisions related to marriage, contraceptive use and childbearing, and educational aspirations.

The methods chosen for the evaluation of program impact also vary greatly. Some monitored their programs but did not attempt to evaluate their impact. Some evaluations tested pre-and post-interventions, while others did not. Some divided participants by “arms” that received different aspects of a program (i.e., evaluating impact for each “arm” or group of participants). And the evaluation/impact reports/reflection are often high level, i.e., they may report having seen more gender-equitable attitudes, for example, without detailing what that means. Even when they are looking at the relevant elements to be able to show gender-related changes, they may not include an appropriate timeframe across which to measure changes in attitudes and behaviors.

The few programs with stronger evidence and more detailed indicators can enable us to make some recommendations. Tipping Point has been a very strong program implemented over an appropriately long period (10 years) and has emergent data that indicate their work has impacted community norms and has improved the lives of girls. The GEMS program in Indian schools worked with a carefully developed attitudinal scale and has been replicated in other places. PRACHAR too offers solid examples of indicators used to measure gender-equitable attitudes, including percentages of young women and young men agreeing with statements about gender equality.

While many programs remain small scale, some have been exploring and testing strategies to reach the greatest number

As people working in the gender equality field have observed for years, many interesting interventions to transform harmful gender norms are implemented as “boutique” programs, i.e., at

a very small scale. Yet the recognition that change in social and gender norms must by definition happen at scale has prompted important discussions about scale.

The GREAT program was designed for scaling from the beginning; it deliberately planned activities that were scalable and documented their program model and implementation processes to support replication and scaling up. While the GREAT program was associated with positive changes among participants, these changes were not diffused in young people who had *not* participated. One explanation for this is that a critical mass of adolescents may not have been reached with reflection activities to trigger this sustainable change (just 13 percent of older adolescents and newly married or parenting adolescents had participated). But 40 percent of 10-14-year-olds reported having used GREAT’s toolkit; these young adolescents were in schools, which may be the right platform to reach large numbers of adolescents.

The GEMS program, adapted in 25,000 public schools (reaching 2.4 million students) in India⁹⁰ and many others in Brazil,⁹¹ was quite successful and is working on reaching the national level (though in both countries, parts of the population saw the program as a channel to spread a “gender ideology,” a term that anti-gender-equality activists have used to caricature this work, and were therefore opposed to its implementation).⁹² Other examples out of school include the SASA! methodology, which was scaled; the implementing organization, Raising Voices, has developed materials to make replicating the program easy. The PRACHAR program tested its model in Phase 1 and scaled it up in Phases 2 and 3.

Many findings of this review echo existing studies from the SRHR field

Many overarching lessons can be drawn from these programs – ones that focus on SRHR, care work, fatherhood, violence, and so on – since there is a longer history of working with men and boys in pursuit of those outcomes, but the focus of this analysis is necessarily on child marriage. More specifically, there is much to learn from other research that assess the impact of gender-transformative male engagement in relation

90 ICRCW, [Flagship program: Gender Equity Movement in Schools \(GEMS\)](#).

91 Promundo, [Portal for Gender Equality in Schools \(PEGE\)](#).

92 Gallo, M. (2017). [“Gender ideology” is a fiction that could do real harm](#). Washington, D.C.: Open Society Foundations.

to SRHR. Three reviews in particular were useful for informing the framing of this paper.

First, the systematic review by Ruane-McAteer and colleagues examined the impact of gender-transformative work with boys and men on SRHR outcomes.⁹³ Their findings highlight the widespread use of community mobilization and education as preferred strategies for gender-transformative programming. They found that few gender-transformative interventions addressed unequal power relations at the structural level, an important programmatic aspect for the present study to review. They also identified several program elements that appeared across effective interventions: multicomponent activities, multilevel programming, “gender-synchronized” work with both women and men, and trained facilitation of interventions for at least three months. These findings influenced how we framed our analysis. As this is not a systematic review, our analysis cannot definitively assess the impact of the studies; however, the distribution of their approaches and findings are mostly similar to those in Ruane-McAteer et al.

The second study of note was a review by Marcus and colleagues of 34 programs focused exclusively on adolescent boys in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).⁹⁴ They assessed interventions that influenced a variety of outcomes and identified seven programs that assessed changes in boys’ attitudes or behaviors toward child marriage (Choices Egypt, Choices Nepal, Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore, GEMS Mumbai, Kids’ League, Reproductive Health for Married Adolescent Couples Project (RHMACP), PRACHAR). They found that nearly

all were mixed-sex programs that addressed gender equality and included content on child marriage in their materials. They achieved success overall in changing attitudes, and just a few had an impact on behavioral outcomes: two programs suggested that brothers who advocate on behalf of their sisters to delay marriage or choose their own partners had an impact, and two assessed changes in the age at marriage, of which one actually delayed marriage.

A third, important review for this paper, by Levy and colleagues,⁹⁵ looked at gender-transformative programs designed to improve a range of health outcomes in children and young people. Programs aiming to end child marriage were included only if they measured an associated health outcome. Regardless of the health outcome of interest, the programs tended to emphasize mechanisms that address gender norms, social and intrafamilial support, and attitudes toward restrictive gender norms. Most of these gender-transformative programs did not focus on systemic inequities but rather focused on improving individual power and agency, including measures of self-efficacy and age at marriage.

It is encouraging to see analyses of the common and specific considerations that broader programs should bear in mind when working to address child marriage. These three reviews of gender-transformative interventions to improve SRHR for young people/boys and men hold promise and suggest that investing in reviews of broader interventions with a stronger focus on child marriage might help gather even more lessons for child-marriage program designers.

93 Ruane-McAteer, 2020, op. cit.

94 Marcus et al., 2018, op. cit.

95 Levy, J.K., Darmstadt, G.L., Ashby, C., Quandt, M., Halsey, E., Nagar, A., & Greene, M.E. (2020). [Characteristics of successful programmes targeting gender inequality and restrictive gender norms for the health and wellbeing of children, adolescents, and young adults: a systematic review](#), *The Lancet Global Health*, 8(2), e225-e236.

5.

EIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR SUPPORTING THE DESIGN, FUNDING, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS WORKING WITH BOYS TO ADDRESS CHILD MARRIAGE

The review of selected programs in the previous section of this paper provided an insight into the current efforts to engage boys and young men to advance gender equality and address child marriage. It sought to draw out any existing trends in program strategies and focus and identify strengths and gaps based on their approach to male engagement when it comes to addressing complex sets of harmful gender norms that spread across institutions and generations.

This section seeks to translate this rich content into short actionable guidance for designers and implementers of programs that aim to address the root causes of child marriage.

The recommendations and conclusions provided in this section can also aid other programs that have broader objectives to promote gender equality.

As highlighted in the methodology section, it is worth reminding that this is not a systematic review. It includes programs that were evaluated following various methods and levels of rigor. Given the small number of interventions that explicitly link child marriage and boyhood, it also includes programs that have not been evaluated but show promising results. Therefore, recommendations arise not only from evaluations but also from a trend analysis of approaches used in the programs included.

1. ESTABLISH GENDER-SYNCHRONIZED ENGAGEMENT OF BOYS AS A CORE COMPONENT OF PROGRAMS

Solid evidence has showed that engaging families and communities, including boys and men, is a key part of the set of solutions needed to address child marriage.⁹⁶ Yet, often in a context of limited resources, child-marriage program designers prioritize girls' empowerment interventions and

consider male engagement as an afterthought or only as a way to ensure male decision-makers allow girls' participation in the program. These approaches fail to recognize that sustainable girls' empowerment requires transforming harmful masculinities and shifting the unequal distribution

⁹⁶ Girls Not Brides, [Theory of change on child marriage](#), 2014; UNICEF-UNFPA, [Global Programme Phase II theory of change](#).

of power and resources between women and men, girls and boys. These shifts cannot happen without programs that are thoroughly designed to support boys early on to become actors in that transformation. This is why program designers should dedicate the same level of attention and efforts (as they do with girl-centered efforts) to boys' engagement right from the start and approach it as a core component of their programs. This can be done either by dedicating a whole branch of a program to boys and implementing it directly and at the same time as activities with girls (and allowing opportunities for interaction), or by establishing strong partnerships with other organizations working with boys in the same area and designing initiatives together.

- **This review provides examples that can inspire program designers looking to develop a whole new component dedicated to boys. For example, Champions of Change and NISITU have developed full curricula for boys on**

the one hand and for girls on the other; and Action for Equality, Kishor Varta, and the Gender Lab Boys are programs that are fully targeted at adolescent boys only (see Annex B).

Program staff should ensure to synchronize engagement between male and female participants not only in efforts to prevent child marriage but also in interventions to mitigate its consequences.

- **Good examples of this approach include programs engaging young husbands, fathers, and couples such as GREAT, Club des maris et des futurs maris, REAL, and Men as Caring Partners and Fathers (see Annex B).**

This first recommendation overarches the following seven, each of which provides insights into how to realize the potential of this core component that is the establishment of gender-synchronized engagement of boys.

2. SET UP PARTNERSHIPS TO WORK AT ALL LEVELS OF THE SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL, WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

We know from decades of evidence that for girls to be able to live healthier, safer, and more empowered lives free of child marriage, a whole set of actors need to be involved at different levels to create an enabling environment allowing girls to seize newly created life opportunities. The same is true with boys. It is important to engage individual boys in educational activities and provide them with opportunities to practice new behaviors and support them in becoming actors of change for gender equality. However, to make this happen, it is essential to link these activities with efforts to tackle structural drivers of gender inequality and child marriage across the family, community, and institutional spheres across local, national, regional, and international levels. Building the feminist future of manhood – by engaging fathers, brothers, grooms and future grooms, partners, male religious and traditional leaders, community members, and government officials, and reaching schools, public services, laws, the media, employers, etc. to challenge gender power dynamics and harmful gender norms – can amplify the impact

of current prevention and response efforts and represents an important investment in securing their sustainability.

This review found very few well-documented initiatives tackling the key institutions that spread and sustain patriarchal values and norms at a societal level.

- **Program staff can look at programs like GEMS and TKT (see Annex B) for examples of programs working with schools on a large scale.**

More resources, which were not included in this review as they do not have a strong focus on working with boys, can, however, still be useful for learning from institutional-level work to address child marriage (see Box 4). Program staff could build upon guidance from the resources in Box 4 and add perspectives provided in this paper to help design effective interventions to foster gender-transformative change in various institutions and the people who run them.

BOX 4.**RESOURCES TO SUPPORT WORK AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL**

WORKING WITH MULTIPLE ENTITIES AT THE SYSTEMS LEVEL	Technical note on the promotion of gender-equitable systems
WORKING WITH GOVERNMENTS	Advocating to hold governments accountable for budget allocation to ensure effective implementation of child marriage national policies and programs across sectors and levels <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lessons learned report- Case studies
	Seven steps to strengthening legislation, policy, and public financing to end child marriage
	Implementing multi-sectoral policies and programs at the national and sub-national levels: lessons from work on issues: summary paper
WORKING WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS	Guidance for civil society organizations on how to collaborate with parliamentarians to ensure legal frameworks supports efforts to end child marriage
	SADC model law for parliamentarians, civil society organizations, and youth advocates and accompanying video on how the model law can help advocates
	Technical note to support the Global Programme and partners in navigating issues around child marriage and the law
WORKING WITH THE MEDIA	Lessons learned and programmatic tips to use entertainment education to address child marriage
WORKING WITH RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND LEADERS	Programmatic brief with lessons learned from working constructively with religious leaders, including resistant leaders, to address child marriage

In a context of limited resources and limited variety of expertise, program staff should remember that greater collaboration is key to working effectively across all levels of the social-ecological model. This review also pointed out mixed evidence about the effectiveness of multicomponent interventions in

SRHR and child marriage programs (see section 1.2. and 1.5). Building strong partnerships to jointly design and implement complementary initiatives could improve outcomes and help practitioners move away from small-scale interventions to reach scale more easily.

3. DEVELOP AND SECURE SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS THAT PRIVILEGE DEEP, LONG-TERM, AND MULTILEVEL WORK

To ensure intervention partnerships working across the social-ecological model are effective, each partner must work to the same standards and principles. One of the key principles that emerged from this review is the need to invest in the deep and sustained engagement of actors involved in each level of intervention.

Many programs selected for this review identified the timeframe of interventions as a challenge when it comes to changing harmful gender norms and transforming masculinities. Gender-transformative initiatives are indeed about unlearning ways of thinking and acting that have been transmitted for generations and are constantly reflected in everyday life, institutions, and distribution of power and resources. When it comes to working with young people, norms around age, family relationships, and power also play a key role in how program participants approach topics such as sexuality, decision-making, and freedom. For these reasons, it is essential to plan for long-term interventions

and allow enough efforts to secure buy-in from influential community members to support participation and retention. Time also provides the right context to go deep into personal and collective introspection needed to challenge sticky gender norms and to put learning into practice. Interactive facilitation methods provide space and time for reflection and practice. For example, as reflected in lessons from the Choices, Voices, and Promises programs, family and community engagement approaches that only used short video sensitization and display of posters with short follow discussions were too shallow to provoke change at a normative level. Leveraging additional resources from various traditional and non-traditional funding sources is essential to ensure the actual implementation of and learning from these long-term strategies.

- **The ongoing 10-year program, Tipping Point, includes a wealth of resources that can provide program staff with solid examples of how to approach deep and sustained transformative work (see Annex B).**

4. BUILD A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF ADOLESCENT BOYS' PROFILES AND TAILOR PROGRAMS TO THEM

Any solid program should be based on a deep understanding of its participants and their environment, and on evidence about the issue it is trying to address. Gender-transformative programs that engage young adolescent boys to address child marriage are no exception. As part of your usual situation analysis, make sure to include a robust gender analysis to understand how patriarchal values and harmful gender norms manifest in your program area.

- **The *Girls Not Brides end child marriage design guide* includes a useful tool on page 48 that can serve as a starting point. The formative research reports from the Tipping Point project also illustrate what solid investigation-guiding program design can look like (see Annex B).**
- **The *gender-transformative accelerator tool* developed by the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme is a useful tool to carry out rapid gender analysis, action planning, and adaptation of programs.**
- **The *Gender-Equitable Men (GEM) Scale* developed by Equipundo and Horizons can be used to assess male attitudes toward gender-equitable norms in a given community and inform program design.**

As few child marriage programs include a strong male-engagement component, program staff should also develop specific research questions to understand adolescent boys fully in all their diversity – how they understand and experience masculinity and how it impacts their lives, aspirations, needs, beliefs, and behaviors, and those of the girls and women around them. Your analysis should help you design programs that acknowledge and start from the current reality while identifying context-specific conceptions of harmful gender norms and avenues to

challenge them. Using this approach, the NISITU program acknowledged an existing context of poverty, a value and responsibility assigned to men as providing financially for the family, and a lack of interest in advancing gender equality to develop a financial education program for boys (and girls) as a vector to incorporate gender-transformative programming and challenge the status quo (see Annex B). Child marriage programs that are truly gender transformative should indeed seek to expand the aspirations, life choices, and opportunities of boys to avoid trapping them in the patriarchal “man box” that was defined for them.

Program staff should also ensure to understand the key stages of adolescence (especially early adolescence) and the best practices for working with young adolescents on topics related to SRHR in order to implement adolescent-friendly methodologies and age-appropriate content.

- **Save the Children's *very young adolescent SRH and gender programming design guide* includes many tips and tools to support program designers.**

Formative research and consultation to anchor program strategies into local realities will help tailor programs appropriately as well as anticipate any potential barriers to participation and retention and design strategies to mitigate them.

While context-specific tailoring of programs is needed, trends emerged from programs selected for this review and have helped identify a number of topics that are essential to cover with boys and their families and communities to progress toward greater gender equality, as well as a number of skills to empower boys and young men to practice new knowledge and reflections (see box 5).

BOX 5.

TOPICS AND SKILLS TO EMPOWER BOYS AND YOUNG MEN TO PRACTICE NEW KNOWLEDGE AND REFLECTIONS

ESSENTIAL TOPICS TO CHALLENGE INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES AND COLLECTIVE BELIEFS

Patriarchy, gender, and power

Masculinity, socialization, and transitions from boyhood to manhood

Impact on the gendered distribution of family responsibilities, parenting, and interpersonal relationship

Impact on the experience of sexuality

Impact on the expression of emotions and violent behaviors

Sexual and reproductive health and rights of unmarried and married adolescents

Relationships, sexual consent and family formation

ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE NEW BEHAVIORS

Life skills

Self-examination and reflection

Critical thinking

Financial education

Negotiation skills

Leadership skills

Campaigning

Communication skills

Conflict resolution

Community engagement and advocacy

Processing and managing emotions

5. ADDRESS TABOOS AROUND SEXUALITY

This paper has showed how central the topic of sexuality is when it comes to harmful gender norms related to child marriage. As program designers aiming to prevent child marriage and/or mitigate its harmful consequences, you must talk about sexuality in your interventions. To do so, this review has highlighted a number of important points:

- Talking about sexuality with adolescents should go beyond bodily changes, family planning, sexually transmitted infections, and contraception. It should also include topics such as sexual attraction and pleasure, sexual identity, difference between sex and gender (including gender identity), sexuality and intimacy in a relationship, sexual orientation, sexual agency, and how feminine and masculine sexualities are defined and perceived. Addressing how to promote healthy relationships is particularly important when working with young couples (although it should also be covered with unmarried boys and girls).
 - Talking about sexuality should include deconstructing harmful gender norms related to sexuality and child marriage. These include notions of sexual purity and virginity and how they link to perceived personal and family honor and collective fears of sex outside of marriage.
 - Like with other programmatic aspects, addressing taboos and harmful norms around sexuality should not only happen with adolescents but also at all levels of the social-ecological framework. Working with families to challenge and deconstruct beliefs around female sexuality is especially essential to prevent caregivers from turning to harmful strategies to “protect” girls. Working with schools to develop effective high-quality CSE curricula is especially important to ensure taboos around sexuality and underlying harmful gender norms can be tackled at the institutional level (other institutions cited earlier such as the media, religious institutions, etc. are also key). It is also important to develop quality non-formal CSE programs reaching children who are out of school.
- Like with other programmatic aspects, addressing taboos and harmful norms around sexuality should be based on evidence and formative research to cover the most common misconceptions across countries, as well as a context-specific understanding of the sexuality of adolescent girls and boys, women and men. Some of the most common misconceptions found in this research include girls being lustful and irresponsible, and boys being untrustworthy to interact with girls and expected to engage in many sexual experiences, be risk-takers, be tough and dominant, and take all decisions when it comes to engaging in sexual relationships. Notions of consent, decision-making, and bodily autonomy are essential to cover for both girls and boys.
- **Module 3 of Plan International's Champions of Change curriculum provides an example of sessions to talk about sexuality with adolescent boys.**
 - **TICAH's website includes several creative resources to help talk about sexuality with adolescents (not freely accessible).**
 - **More examples of programs addressing taboos around sexuality are available in [this report](#) by the CEFMU and Sexuality Programs Working Group.**
 - **These international technical guidance on sexuality education [in school](#) and [out of school](#) outline the essential elements of effective sexuality education programs.**

6. CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO THROUGH GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE STAFF TRAINING AND PROGRAM DESIGN

To equip program teams to address taboos around sexuality with young people and become advocates and actors of the movement toward gender equality, it is essential to invest time and resources in training them. Like any person living in a given society, program facilitators would have internalized a number of norms, including harmful gender norms, which left unaddressed could risk influencing how they approach program facilitation. To prevent this from happening, staff training should be designed with the same care as sessions for program participants. Gender-transformative staff training should provide a safe and participatory platform for staff to go through a journey to question their own personal attitudes and adherence to collective patriarchal beliefs and behaviors, e.g., through values clarification exercises. It should align with the principles cited earlier of long-term, deep, reflective work, and should ideally be longer than three months. Echoing an earlier point about the importance of working at the institutional level to ensure gender transformation is comprehensive and sustainable, the same principles can be applied when training other actors such as teachers, educators, social workers, service providers, etc.

- See [Tipping Point's report](#) for an overview of their staff gender-transformative training.

At the strategic and implementation levels, program designers should carefully plan for as many opportunities as possible to show and practice new gender-equitable models. For example, ensuring program sessions with boys are facilitated by a pair of female–male facilitators is a great opportunity to showcase what equality can look like in practice.

When working at the individual level with unmarried or married young people, prioritizing a mixture of single and mixed-sex groups over only single-sex groups also fosters more equitable attitudes and behaviors by promoting constructive female–male engagement. Such engagement should however be designed carefully: before offering opportunities to practice, deconstruct, and create new dynamics together, enough time should be allocated for discussion in single-sex groups to establish a safe space to explore harmful gender norms. A careful design could help prevent risks, such as the reproduction of existing gender dynamics with girls not used to speaking in front of boys, thereby limiting their participation in mixed-sex groups. Participatory methodologies are crucial to creating the conditions for every participant – boys and girls – to take part in practicing new behaviors.

7. HELP BUILD THE EVIDENCE ON BOYS' ENGAGEMENT

Few gender-transformative programs are working with young adolescent boys to advance gender equality and address child marriage. Among those that do, it is hard to identify a consensus on strategic and practical programmatic decisions in areas such as minimum or ideal program duration; grouping by age when working at the individual level; best practices for working in partnership across all levels of the social-ecological model, etc.

Therefore, program designers developing new programs in this area should make sure monitoring and evaluation is fully integrated from the start. Particular attention should be given to detailing what success looks like in precise terms. For example, it is not enough to report that a program has led to more gender-

equitable attitudes. Indicators should detail what is considered “more gender-equitable attitudes.”

- Many useful [evaluation tools](#) have been developed for CARE's Tipping Point project.
- More systematic data collection on men's relationship histories would shed light on the age at which they enter marriages or unions and the characteristics of their partners. The International Men and Gender Equality Surveys ([IMAGES](#)) are a leading data-collection effort through which to make this happen.

8. ADVOCATE FOR DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT TO HELP FILL THE BIGGEST GAPS

This review has identified a number of gaps that need further investment to support the emergence of a greater number of complementary and effective gender-transformative programs with boys. National governments, through public financing, as well as all donors funding the type of initiative described in this report, play a key role in filling those gaps. In addition to investment supporting the implementation of the seven recommendations given above, the biggest needs identified in this review are:

- **Better geographical distribution of efforts.** All the programs selected for this review are concentrated in South Asia (especially in India) and, to a lesser extent, in Sub-Saharan Africa. There is a need for better geographical coverage to try out models of gender-transformative programming in other regions and contexts.
- **Consistent and rigorous evaluation of interventions.** Donors have a major role to play in supporting the definition and use of strong and precise indicators for progress and success in gender-transformative programming with boys (as they do for programs working with girls and other actors). Supporting the use of consistent indicators and methods to measure success in gender transformation with the right time scale (i.e., long term) will help better measure, compare, and build an accurate picture of best practices in this area in future reviews.
- **More funding for gender-transformative staff training.** The best-designed projects can fail if facilitated by untrained staff. This is especially true for gender-transformative programs. Donors should invest in robust, long-term gender-transformative training for facilitators to support program designers in maximizing opportunities to create impact.
- **More evidence on effective approaches to working at the institutional level.** This is one of the biggest knowledge gaps, and it urgently needs to be filled. When it comes to changing harmful gender norms, the best efforts at the individual and community levels will be in vain without systemic change. The role of governments is particularly crucial.
- **Programs supporting child grooms.** Adolescent boys who marry as children have to take on the marital responsibilities associated with patriarchal male-gender roles, which violates their rights and is detrimental to their and their spouses' development. Yet no program was identified in this review that supports the prevention of and response to the child marriage of boys.

6.

CONCLUSION

The evidence presented in this paper highlights the central role of patriarchy in driving and sustaining child marriage. It argues that addressing child marriage requires tackling restrictive definitions of masculinity and femininity and unequal power relations that are transmitted through gender socialization and crystallized in institutions such as marriage, especially in the realm of sexuality, family formation, and gender roles within the household. It demonstrates that supporting adolescent boys to embody gender equality is an essential complement to girl-centered interventions.

In all of our work to end child marriage and improve the lives of girls and boys married as children, we must continue to bear in mind girls' broader empowerment and life aspirations and not just whether they are marrying after the age of 18.⁹⁷ Boys and young men, the current and future partners of girls, play a central role in determining the conditions of girls' lives within marriage, their mobility, their time use, their health, their access to services, and their contact with friends. Work on child marriage must therefore not stop with delaying the age at marriage but must take into account the need to support girls' broader well-being and their hopes for their lives, now and in the future.

Even though little data exist on boys' preferences and plans for marriage and family life, it is likely that the interventions described here can enrich their lives as well. Boys face considerable pressures regarding their economic role and other

aspects of manhood, and interventions that build their empathy for and solidarity with girls and women can only enrich their relationships with peers and partners.

Gender-transformative, gender-synchronized, and social-ecological approaches are central to preventing child marriage and addressing its consequences. These concepts have intuitive appeal: that the transformation of deeply held gender norms requires the participation of all those who uphold or participate in that set of interlinked values and expectations. Working with boys and girls, women and men, and people in positions of power across key institutions is an intentional way to challenge gender norms and power relations, catalyze the achievement of gender equality, and improve health, well-being, and development outcomes.

This report identified strengths and gaps in the current efforts to engage boys and young men to advance gender equality and address child marriage and provided a set of recommendations for practitioners wanting to reinforce their programs in this area. The recommendations include the need to put gender-synchronized engagement of boys at the core of initiatives working with groups of individuals and to build a deep understanding of adolescent boys' profiles, including how they understand and experience masculinity and how it impacts them and the girls and women around them. The latter will help tailoring programs to them. These initiatives should invest

⁹⁷ Aguilera, A., & Green, S. (2021). [Letter to the editor: multidimensional measures are key to understanding child, early, and forced marriages and unions](#). *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 70(2022), 345-346.

in challenging the status quo through gender-transformative staff training and program design and ensuring program facilitators are equipped to cover topics such as patriarchy, masculinity, impacts of patriarchy on expressing sexuality, managing emotions, etc. In addition, this review revealed that initiatives working with groups of individuals should be part of a comprehensive set of interventions implemented in partnership across all levels of the social-ecological model, with particular attention to institutional change. All complementary parts of this system of interventions should be adequately resourced to enable the deep and long-term work required by gender-transformative initiatives. This includes both financial

and technical resources needed to address complex issues such as deconstructing taboos around sexuality, which is paramount when it comes to addressing harmful gender norms related to child marriage. Finally, acknowledging existing gaps around male engagement in this area, it is essential for domestic and international investment to support the design and implementation of initiatives that prevent and respond to child marriage among boys; to ensure gender-transformative interventions reach all geographical areas affected by child marriage; and to support increased documentation of all initiatives, especially at the institutional level, to help build the evidence on boys' engagement in positive masculinities.



STEP 1: IDENTIFYING AS MANY AS POSSIBLE PROGRAMS THAT WORK WITH ADOLESCENT BOYS TO ADDRESS GENDER INEQUALITY VIA APPROACHES AND TOPICS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO CHILD MARRIAGE.

- Conducting interviews, in which interviewers are soliciting help to identify the programs;
- Searching databases (Documentation in English and French published between 2015-2021);
- Screening the bibliographies of selected papers for references to other programs;
- Reviewing the programs from CEFMU and Sexuality Working Group; and
- Reviewing websites of key organizations interested in this topic.

Combination of keywords for online search:

- Boys / “adolescent boys” / “young adolescent boys” / male / “men and boys” / masculinity / “child groom” / “men as champions”
- Gender / “gender equality” / “gender inequality” / “gender equitable” / “gender synchronization” / “gender-transformative” / “gender norms” / “social norms” / “gender roles
- “Child marriage” / “early marriage” / “child, early and forced marriage” / “early unions”
- “Violence prevention” / education / socialization
- Program / intervention / initiative / activities / evaluation

STEP 2: ASSESSING AVAILABLE DOCUMENTATION FOR THESE PROGRAMS AND EXCLUDING THOSE WITHOUT ENOUGH MATERIALS.

- Considered “enough documentation”: at least one document with information on the challenges, mitigation, and impact of the intervention, either by the organization itself or by an external party.
- Follow-up by email or call with practitioners asking for available documentation if the program sounds very promising but lacks materials (e.g., program materials, donor reports, internal evaluations, or case studies).

STEP 3: DRAWING ON THE DATABASE THUS GENERATED, THE TEAM WILL THEN SELECT PROGRAMS ACCORDING TO KEY ASPECTS OF CONCEPTUALIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION:

- Target/beneficiary group overview
- Program general information
- Gender-transformative and intersectional aspects
- Engagement processes
- Ecological model
- Linkages between CEFMU and SRHR
- Program results and key determinants of success

ANNEX B.

SELECTED PROGRAMS DESCRIPTIONS AND RESOURCES

Program	DO KADAM BARABARI KI ORE
Organization	Population Council; Centre for Catalysing Change; the Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan
Country	India
Program description	<p>The Do Kadam intervention included gender-transformative life-skills education combined with cricket coaching. It aimed to promote egalitarian gender attitudes and the rejection of violence against women (VAW) among boys and young men. It aimed to change the traditional notions of masculinity, prevent boys and young men from perpetrating violence themselves, and encourage them to act to stop incidents of violence in their environment.</p> <p>Reported results included positive changes in boys’ attitudes around gender roles (e.g., less likely to support controlling wives’ or sisters’ behaviors, more supportive of better division of household chores, etc.) and acceptability of VAW, and some increase in boy-led action to stop VAW perpetrated by others in their environment. However, weak or no positive change was reported in verbal violence (e.g., bullying, stalking), physical violence, and sexual violence perpetrated by boys, and no significant decline in boys’ support for controlling girlfriends’ behaviors.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Program description and results: https://www.alignplatform.org/resources/do-kadam-barabari-ki-ore-do-kadam-two-steps-towards-equality</p> <p>Program evaluation: https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1538&context=departments_sbsr-pgy</p>

Program	TIPPING POINT
Organization	CARE
Country	Nepal, Bangladesh
Program description	<p>Tipping Point focuses on addressing the root causes of CEFM (gender inequality, repressive social norms, and a desire to control adolescent girls’ sexuality) by promoting the rights of adolescent girls through community-level programming and evidence generation in Nepal and Bangladesh, and multilevel advocacy and cross-learning efforts across the globe. Tipping Point’s approach uses synchronized engagement with different participant groups around key programmatic topics and creates public spaces for all community members to be part of the dialog. Patriarchy, masculinity, and power are all addressed through participatory and reflective sessions with adolescent girls, adolescent boys, mothers, fathers, and opinion leaders.</p> <p>The results of Tipping Point’s Phase 1 explored which norms were driving child marriage and were used to develop the implementation package used in Phase 2. Results reported for Phase 1 found some positive changes in adolescent boys’ attitudes and behaviors, including behaviors that challenged traditional norms of masculinity and demonstrated a growing understanding of reciprocity within marital relationships. Examples from Nepal included increased household work taken up by boys, advocacy to encourage parents to support their sisters better, and joining girls in advocacy activities about child marriage and other issues in communities.</p>

Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	<p>External evaluation completed for Phase 1</p> <p>Evaluation upcoming for Phase 2</p>
Resources	<p>Program evaluation (Phase 1): https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Phase-1-NP-Full.pdf https://caringpoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/TP-Bangladesh-Evaluation-Report_Phase-1.pdf</p> <p>Evaluation design (Phase 1, Nepal): https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/11/7/e042032.full.pdf</p> <p>Program description (Phase 2): https://caringpoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/TP-Phase-2-Program-Summary.pdf</p> <p>Overview of program sessions: https://caringpoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/TP-Phase-2-Program-Implementation.pdf</p> <p>Program implementation manuals: https://caringpoint.org/implementation-manuals/</p> <p>Staff transformation training: https://caringpoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/TP_Staff-transformation-brief_Phase-1.pdf</p> <p>Evaluation tools: https://www.care.org/our-work/health/fighting-gender-based-violence/tipping-point/tipping-point-meal-resources/ https://caringpoint.org/monitoring-evaluation-and-learning-resources/</p> <p>Learning hub on men and boys' engagement: https://bit.ly/3yAEzur</p> <p>Learning hub on social norms change: https://bit.ly/3yA1OF6</p>
Program	NISITU (Nisikilize Tujengane)
Organization	Population Council
Country	Kenya
Program description	<p>NISITU is an evidence-based intervention that engages boys and men in a way that addresses and centers the needs of girls in relation to sexual exploitation and violence. As part of NISITU, girls and boys in the same community meet in safe spaces to discuss sexual and reproductive health, gender norms and power, and economic strengthening – both in separate groups and in mixed-gender pairs. The curriculum covers concepts of gender roles, masculinity and femininity, and violence and power in relationships. For boys and young men, there is a focus on understanding their roles in the power imbalance and violence cycles in relationships.</p> <p>Impact results were not yet published at the time of this program review.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	Evaluation upcoming
Resources	<p>Program description: https://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2018PGY_NISITU-Overview.pdf</p> <p>NISITU Health and Life Skills curriculum:</p> <p>Boys: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GkvsYQ6TNb6TmilO9XZ-ekLkCE3M_PbD/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Girls: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ddliTO_oB44lvehh_2UjLvWFR7X04q4C/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>NISITU Financial Education curriculum:</p> <p>Boys: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VHXyvzHO3We9oGasEtiowDa9IkvyAlde/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Girls: https://drive.google.com/file/d/14HbeTxdwatBJRcjugVNxyAXtDcPQS1GE/view?usp=sharing</p>

Program	CHOICES
Organization	Save the Children and Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH)
Country	Nepal
Program description	<p>CHOICES is a curriculum-based program aimed at very young adolescent (VYA) boys and girls and includes participatory activities designed to enable VYAs to recognize and reflect on gender inequities, explore their feelings about gender bias, practice gender-equitable behavior, and engage in discussions about gender norms in all-boy, all-girl, and mixed groups. CHOICES was implemented in areas that have a high prevalence of practices that perpetuate gender inequity such as early marriage, early childbearing, and dowry.</p> <p>Reported impact results included more equitable gender attitudes and behavior among boys and girls and suggested that participation in the programs broadened children's perception of gender roles (e.g., attitudes toward breadwinner versus nurturer, the value of education and work outside of the home for girls, and boys helping sisters and mothers at home and advocating for sisters' education). The evaluation also found that the intervention may have helped participants recognize that sexual harassment and teasing boys who step out of the "gender box" was inappropriate. Parents reported wanting their daughters to marry later (desired age increased from 19 years and five months to 20 and four months).</p> <p>The evaluation compared outcomes that occur when VYAs engage in the individual-level Choices intervention alone with outcomes when parents and communities participate in Voices and Promises. Positive changes in attitudes and behaviors reported by VYAs were generally greater where family and community interventions were in place. Yet, parent-reported measures did not demonstrate the positive impact of the family and community interventions.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Program curriculum (2008): https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/9378/pdf/2009_savethechildren_choices.pdf</p> <p>Evaluation summary: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/15365/pdf/choices_8.5x11_web_0.pdf</p> <p>Full evaluation: https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/ijamh-2017-0164/html</p>
Program	Action for Equality (AfE)
Organization	Equal Community Foundation (ECF)
Country	India
Program description	<p>Action for Equality (AfE) is an action research program created to develop a scalable model for engaging men and boys to prevent violence and discrimination against women and girls in India and train them as activists for gender equality. The program primarily focuses on adolescent boys from low-income communities and was being implemented in 20 low-income communities in Pune at the time of the review. It highlights the importance of being human rights based to provide a strong framework for gender-transformative work. (ECF has also created Project Raise, a national collaborative to support and connect actors working to engage boys in gender equality).</p> <p>ECF's reflections on the impact of AfE indicate that the program was successful in creating positive changes in skills, gender attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors of participants who completed the program (e.g., participants supporting equal opportunities/rights for women and girls, actively engaging in household chores, and engaging in planning and executing actions to challenge gender norms). Yet they also found that more opportunities are required for participants to practice skills such as critical thinking and problem solving and that a longer-term intervention is required to tackle attitudes that support traditional notions of gender roles and relations.</p>

Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	Internal evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Program curriculum: https://projectraise.org/resources/equal-community-foundation-ecfaction-for-equality-foundation-programme-curriculum/</p> <p>Impact report (2019): https://ecf.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ECF_CTB_WEB_Spreads.pdf</p> <p>Evaluation (2017-18): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1di9F8Fxl6a0tetM7lFjg1BHcTcTdYwN_/view</p> <p>Project Raise platform: https://projectraise.org/</p>
Program	Mera Samman Mera Swabhiman (My Honor Is My Respect)
Organization	MAMTA
Country	India
Program description	<p>Initiated in 2015, Mera Samman Mera Swabhiman is a three-year community-based program targeting highly vulnerable groups of youth. It includes safe spaces and uses a gender-transformative approach, with long-term activities to equip and empower adolescent boys and girls with self-efficacy and decision-making skills to support their capacity to make choices regarding education, age of marriage, and reproductive choices. The specific goals of the program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing school retention, especially for female youths, by at least one or two academic sessions or years. • Increasing the age at marriage among female and male youths (adolescents) in communities by 8-12 months. • Increasing the age of first pregnancy by six months among married female youths in communities. • Positively influencing gender and community norms and practices toward delaying child marriage, the age at first pregnancy, and number of years of schooling and education. <p>Reported results highlight a visible normative change in decision-making related to educational aspirations, use of contraceptives, and delaying the age at marriage. Female and male youths were significantly more involved in making decisions with their parents related to their education, the timing of marriage, and the choice of marriage partner. The endline results show a slight increase in age at marriage as well as age at the consummation of marriage. While the increase was high among girls saying their parents asked their opinion about the timing of marriage, there was little to no shift in the response of the male youths, which is an area for further exploration. A full list of indicators is included on page 15 of the evaluation.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Evaluation (2018): https://ajws.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/AJWS-Endline-Report-2018-FINAL-ke18-April-2019-1.pdf</p>

Program	Club des maris et des futurs maris
Organization	Project SWEDD: Various implementing partners
Country	West and Central Africa (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Benin, Guinea, Cameroon)
Program description	<p>Modeled after the École des maris (EdM) – a project implemented in Niger since 2008 – the Club des maris et des futurs maris (CdM) is part of the SWEDD project which includes several sub-projects. It is implemented across several countries in West and Central Africa and ultimately aims to increase women and adolescent girls' empowerment and their access to quality reproductive, child, and maternal health services, and it involves men to achieve this outcome. While EdM was successful in encouraging husbands to support their wives in accessing reproductive health services, it did not challenge the gendered distribution of power. CdM was developed to bring a gender-transformative aspect to this approach. CdM supports both married men with young children and single adolescent boys and young men (14-24) to challenge harmful gender norms.</p> <p>While the program was not yet evaluated at the time of this review, it builds on learnings from EdM and consists of adapted versions of externally evaluated Program H and Program P developed by Equimundo.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	<p>No evaluation yet</p> <p>Building on externally evaluated Program H and Program P</p>
Resources	<p>Manual and minimum standards for implementing Club des maris et des futurs maris (upcoming)</p> <p>Club des maris et des futurs maris: facilitators manual (FR) (2018)</p> <p>Equimundo Program H: working with young men: https://promundoglobal.org/resources/program-h-working-with-young-men/</p> <p>Equimundo Program P: engaging men in fatherhood, caregiving, and maternal and child health: https://promundoglobal.org/resources/program-p-a-manual-for-engaging-men-in-fatherhood-caregiving-and-maternal-and-child-health/</p> <p>Equimundo Manhood 2.0: engaging adolescent boys and young men in the United States: https://promundoglobal.org/programs/manhood-2-0/</p> <p>École des maris Impact report, Niger 2019 (FR): https://irh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Niger-Rapport-EdM-Genre_FR_Final.pdf</p>
Program	Hajara Usman Girls' Leadership Training Program
Organization	International Centre for Reproductive Health and Sexual Rights (INCREASE)
Country	Nigeria
Program description	<p>The main objective of INCREASE's work is to increase girls' self-esteem and give them a greater voice and agency to decide their future. INCREASE works primarily with adolescents, approximately 25 percent of whom are boys and young men, to reflect on and change harmful norms and masculinities in boys, foster a strong sense of responsibility among boys, and prepare girls to interact confidently with them. INCREASE promotes an understanding of sexual rights that is both protective (the right to say no to unwanted sex) and affirmative (the right to sexual expression) and challenges the culture of silence around sexuality in a highly conservative environment.</p> <p>No evaluation of INCREASE's work could be accessed at the time of this review. Records of impact in a case study (link in the last column) have highlighted the strength of INCREASE's work in responding to cases of abuse and its positive impact on girls, although nothing was said about boys. Key factors of success (rather focused on girls) highlighted in INCREASE's approach included: a robust curriculum; a feminist framework; clear values; mobilizing parents, teachers, and in-school and out-of-school youth; providing support for transport and refreshment; and using alumni as mentors.</p>

Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	No evaluation available/accessible
Resources	Case study (p.28): https://www.ungei.org/publication/tackling-taboo#:~:text=Tackling%20the%20Taboo%20focuses%20on,marriage%20and%20unions%20(CEFMU).
Program	Champions of Change - Youth Promoting Gender Equality
Organization	Plan International
Country	41 countries
Program description	<p>Champions of Change aims to empower girls and engage boys to identify and challenge harmful, negative masculinities that perpetuate discrimination and inequality. A journey of change for boys has been identified which includes preparing to embark on a process of self-reflection. They are encouraged to perceive themselves as a part of gender inequality and to recognize their own privileges and costs of gender inequality. The program has developed separate but interrelated journeys of change for both boys and girls. As part of the Champions of Change program, girls and boys come together to discuss their changing views on gender and social transformation and work together to find solutions for their communities. The boys' curriculum includes a whole chapter on sexuality, with "being committed to having a responsible sexual life" highlighted as a fundamental part of being a champion of change.</p> <p>No evaluation was available at the time of this review.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	No evaluation available/accessible
Resources	<p>Program materials: https://www.alignplatform.org/resources/champions-change-youth-promoting-gender-equality</p> <p>Evaluation (in one district of Malawi): https://www.kit.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/YESIDO_Malawi_CoC_Evaluation.pdf</p>
Program	PRACHAR
Organization	Pathfinder, Packard Foundation, UNFPA, Government of India, and local partners
Country	India
Program description	<p>PRACHAR (2011-2012) was designed to address barriers to SRH of young people aged 12-24 in Bihar, India, with an objective to delay the age of marriage until age 18 for women and 21 for men, delay the age at first birth until the mother is 21 years old, and space the second and subsequent births by at least three years. PRACHAR implemented a range of gender-transformative activities to generate reflection and dialog around the value society placed on girls and boys, and on the importance of female empowerment and male involvement in ensuring the health of young people and their families. Phase I trained unmarried adolescents using developmentally appropriate SRH and gender-related curricula, with each sub-group trained separately (young girls aged 12-14 years, adolescent girls aged 15-19 years, and adolescent boys aged 15-19 years). PRACHAR included three phases.</p>

Program description	Phase 3 was evaluated by the Population Council. While the evaluation of the PRACHAR program in India has demonstrated a range of positive sexual and reproductive health impacts (e.g., significantly greater knowledge of participants around family planning, risks of early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and legal minimum age at marriage; greater gender-equitable attitudes; and greater use of contraception among young married couples), it has failed to translate into behavior change pertaining to child marriage and gender-based violence. There was a negligible difference between the intervention and control sites. Post-program reflections emphasized that a short adolescent-focused program of 3 days in a conservative setting like Bihar could not hope to address complex issues such as child marriage and that more sustained interventions were needed.
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Longitudinal impact study (2016): https://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2016PGY_PracharReport.pdf</p> <p>Program report: https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthPower/files/resources/Prachar%20report.pdf</p> <p>Evaluation: https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S2214109X19304954?token=07B33321428B02D3906460D1499A297DB0390DDC8CB5378F221AC641C88A2E36487B71697C9FFDBBEDEDDBC69F1015A96&originRegion=eu-west-1&originCreation=20210715124213</p>

Program	GREAT (Gender Roles, Equality, and Transformation)
Organization	Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University
Country	Uganda
Program description	<p>GREAT is a gender-transformative intervention implemented in both community groups and school-based clubs. It includes a set of participatory activities to engage adolescents and adults in discussion and reflection about how to help girls and boys grow into healthy adults who live in communities free of violence and gender inequality. The project was developed with the goal of reducing GBV and improving family planning and reproductive health among adolescents and their communities in the post-conflict region of the Northern region, Uganda. The GREAT package consisted of four complementary components: 1) Community Action Cycle: simple steps to bring communities together to take action to improve adolescent well-being; 2) Radio Drama: a serial radio play with stories and songs about young people and their families living in Northern Uganda; 3) Village Health Team (VHT) Service Linkages: orientation to help VHTs offer adolescent-friendly services; and 4) Toolkit for community groups and school-based clubs: engaging stories and lively activities and games (although few participants were reached by components 1 and 4).</p> <p>The evaluation of GREAT found significant improvements in attitudes and behaviors among exposed individuals compared to the control group. Adolescents and adults who heard the radio program or participated in reflection activities reported positive changes in gender equity, partner communication, use of family planning, and attitudes toward GBV.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Program materials: https://irh.org/great-project-how-to-guide/</p> <p>Project description: https://irh.org/projects/great_project/</p> <p>Project results: https://irh.org/resource-library/brief-great-project-results/</p>

Program	Discover
Organization	Range of partners, including Health For A Prosperous Nation (HPON), Centre for the Developing Adolescent, Various ministries of Government of Tanzania
Country	Tanzania
Program description	<p>Discover is an after-school intervention for 10- and 11-year-olds and emphasizes social-emotional learning to foster gender equity, growth mindset, identity development, curiosity, and effective social and individual learning. It includes 12 two-hour sessions and uses team building, collaborative group work, laptop-based learning activities, opportunities to discover the value of learning in shaping one's future, and time for reflection. The youth work in small mixed-gender groups of five. Four main themes are covered in the sessions: 1) Transformation of gender norms, beliefs, and behaviors; (2) Novelty, motivational learning, and mastery of technology; (3) Extending learning, practice, and reflection outside the classroom; and (4) Demonstrating social-emotional mindsets and skills.</p> <p>The impact study of the pilot phase highlighted the positive experience of both boys and girls of working in mixed-gender groups to learn how to solve day-to-day real-life challenges. Participants also talked about mixed-gender groups as a good way to practice social-emotional mindsets and skills and reflect on gender norms, beliefs, and behaviors. The study also indicated changes in participant and parent/caregiver gender norms, beliefs, and behaviors.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	Impact study of the pilot phase completed
Resources	<p>Pilot impact study: https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1186/s12939-021-01395-5.pdf</p> <p>Project description: https://camara.or.tz/discover-learning-project-2/#</p>

Program	GEMS (Gender Equity Movement in School)
Organization	International Research Center for Women (ICRW), Committee of Resource Organizations for Literacy (CORO), Tata Institute for Social Sciences (TISS)
Country	India, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Philippines
Program description	<p>GEMS is a 2-year school program aiming at promoting gender equality and stopping GBV so that girls can complete their education and realize their full potential. The program has been successfully implemented in many schools in Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan for the boys and girls of classes 6 to 8. To create sustainable transformative changes regarding violence prevention, the program is delivered in institutional settings, and provides extracurricular activities, using various methodologies, which include role-playing and games and a combination of the cognitive-affective approach and life skills. All sessions, except those on bodily changes, were conducted in mixed-group settings.</p> <p>Reported results highlighted the greatest changes in relation to which roles were considered appropriate for women, men, girls, and boys. Other key attitudinal and behavioral changes included increased support for a higher age at marriage for girls, greater male involvement in household work, increased opposition to gender discrimination, and improved reactions to violence. The evaluation of this program found a positive and significant shift in attitudes around gender and violence among students in GEMS schools, with the proportion of students believing that girls should be at least 18 years old at marriage increasing over time in all groups, reaching nearly 100 percent.</p> <p>Indicators used to build an attitudinal scale around gender are available on pages 52-59 of the evaluation report (link in last column).</p>

Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	Impact study of the pilot phase completed
Resources	<p>Facilitators' manual: https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Gender-Equality-Movement-in-Schools-Training-Manual.pdf</p> <p>Evaluation (India, Vietnam, Bangladesh): https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/GEMS-Evaluation-Report-18-06-2018-UPDATED.pdf</p>
Program	Our Bodies Our Choices
Organization	TICAH (Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health)
Country	Kenya
Program description	<p>TICAH is a feminist organization that aims to promote health, wellness, equitable relationships, healthy households, and community action, and is a national leader in advocacy to improve laws and policies on sexual health and rights nationally and internationally. It works to break the culture of silence around sexuality and challenge stigma and discrimination and provides CSE to people of all ages, safe birth and safe abortion services, and contraception. Their Our Bodies, Our Choices program covers all of TICAH's work around sexuality and is mainly focused on education, counseling, and advocacy. The organization operates a reproductive health hotline called Aunty Jane Hotline and works with a network of 133 service providers who provide stigma-free, rights-based information and counseling to married and unmarried women.</p> <p>While no evaluation report was available to access at the time of this review, TICAH has reported monitoring and evaluating its work through longitudinal case-control or cross-sectional studies with control groups, stories of change, and observation. TICAH reports having rolled out its curriculum to 300 primary school students, 300 secondary school students, 100 out-of-school girls, 60 young mothers, and 2,000 university students to date. Eight schools where they have worked to impart their sexuality program have incorporated their sessions as part of the school curriculum. Reflective insights from the program staff point to the importance of allowing participants to conduct their own research and give information in the sessions with the facilitator's support in boosting the participants' self-esteem and communication skills.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	No evaluation available/accessible
Resources	<p>Case study (p.26): https://www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/Tackling-the-Taboo-full-report-eng-2019.pdf</p> <p>Program presentation: https://www.ticahealth.org/programs/sexual-reproductive-health-and-rights</p> <p>TICAH program materials https://www.ticahealth.org/resources/ticah-publications</p>

Program	REAL (Responsible, Engaged, and Loving Fathers)
Organization	Save the Children and Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University
Country	Uganda
Program description	<p>REAL is a community-based mentoring program started in 2013 in post-conflict Uganda. It capitalizes on the period of transition when young men become fathers and are experimenting with new ideas, attitudes, and behaviors. REAL supports them to transform these ideas, attitudes and behaviors into safe and gender-equitable practices. Working with fathers aged 16-25 years parenting a child 1-3 years old, REAL Fathers aims to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV) and harsh discipline of young children; improve fathers' use of positive parenting and nonviolent discipline; increase positive couple communication; increase voluntary family planning use; and foster acceptance of gender-equitable roles in parenting in fathers.</p> <p>Evaluation results showed significant reductions in IPV at the end line and over longer-term follow-up and significant reductions in physical punishment of children at long-term follow-up. Results from the pilot phase also pointed to improved couple communication skills, which sustained over time for young fathers participating in REAL (e.g., listening to their partner and telling their partner that they appreciated them). Impacts reported on psychological and verbal violence were more positive than on physical violence, which also decreased among young fathers but not with a statistically significant effect</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Implementation and training materials: https://irh.org/resource-library/real-fathers-implementation-guidelines/</p> <p>Pilot results: https://irh.org/resource-library/real-fathers-brief-pilot-results-2/</p> <p>Program description: https://irh.org/projects/real-fathers-initiative/</p> <p>Case study (page 94): https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/BLS19063_PRO_SOWF_REPORT_015.pdf</p> <p>Evaluation brief on scaling up REAL: https://irh.org/resource-library/real-scale-up-eval-uganda/</p>
Program	A More Equal Future
Organization	Equimundo and World Vision under the auspices of MenCare
Country	India
Program description	<p>A More Equal Future is a gender-transformative curriculum developed by Equimundo and World Vision within the context of the MenCare initiative to work with fathers to end child marriage. With a skilled facilitator, the curriculum allows the provision of a safe and constructive space for men to reflect on and redefine what it means to be men and fathers in their communities. Many of the activities in the "A More Equal Future" manual were adapted from Program P, which is an evidence-based manual first developed by Equimundo and its partners in Latin America to provide concrete strategies and activities to engage men in active fatherhood.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	Pilot evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Program manual: https://www.worldvision.org/wp-content/uploads/MenCare-Manual-India-Prevent-Child-Marriage.pdf</p>

Program	Masculinité, Famille et Foi
Organization	TearFund, Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH), Association de Santé Familiale (ASF)/Population Services International (PSI)
Country	Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
Program description	<p>Adapted from the Transforming Masculinities approach, the Masculinité, Famille et Foi project works with religious communities to transform masculinities, prevent couple-based violence, and improve voluntary family planning. It works with couples, faith actors, faith leaders, and community centers to receive family planning services (e.g., referrals cards for young couples to access services and hotlines). It focuses on first-time parents and newly married couples to educate them about family planning, reduce IPV, improve maternal health, improve gender relations, and address norms that prevent the use of modern methods of family planning. It also trains "gender champions" to facilitate community dialogs with young couples and helps couples link to services.</p> <p>While looking at healthy communication between couples and attitudes toward gender norms would have also been relevant for this review, reported results focused only on IPV and family planning.</p> <p>The What Works evaluation of Transforming Masculinities found that among men and women who had been in a relationship in the previous year, there was a 57 percent decline in women's experience of IPV and a 66 percent decline in men's perpetration of IPV. Looking at the intervention and control-group villages at baseline and endline, the evaluation of the Masculinité, Famille, et Foi found that among men and women who participated in Community Dialog groups, there was a 33 percent increase in voluntary use of modern contraception in intervention congregations but no significant changes in men's use or women's experience of IPV. Since the evaluation of the intervention and its adaptation were not designed to measure the same components of the intervention, and the study design and methodologies differed significantly, this analysis does not present an exploration of differences in evaluation findings between the two projects.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Transforming masculinities training manual: https://learn.tearfund.org/-/media/learn/resources/reports/2017-tearfund-transforming-masculinities-en.pdf</p> <p>Learning from adaptation into a different context (2021): https://irh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Passages_Comparative-Analysis.pdf</p>

Program	Organizational work (i.e., not project based)
Organization	Blue Veins
Country	Pakistan
Program description	<p>Blue Veins works to empower communities; improve the quality of life of women, children, and transgender people; respond to the immediate needs of those who are vulnerable; establish a people-centered framework for empowerment, sustainable health, and social development; build a culture of cooperation and partnership; and to respond to the immediate needs of those who are vulnerable. For many years, Blue Veins has worked on men's engagement in women's empowerment, sensitizing imams, and activities for attitudinal change among young boys. Both addressing child marriage and engaging men and boys have been an integral part of their work. Their work includes community-level campaigns, engaging the media, working with schools, and building the capacity of various actors to support creating new roles for men and boys. They work on both prevention and response.</p> <p>No evaluation was accessible/available at the time of this review. However, the organization reported many examples of positive impact at the community level and has successfully engaged the Council of Islamic Ideology to support the movement to end child marriage.</p>

Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	No evaluation available/accessible
Resources	<p>Latest program description: https://www.britishcouncil.pk/awaaz-ii</p> <p>Example of formative research: http://blueveins.org/assets/pdf/publications/12.%20A%20QUALITATIVE%20STUDY%20OF%20THE%20IDENTIFICATION%20OF%20THE%20(1).pdf</p>
Program	SASA Together!
Organization	Raising Voices and partners
Country	Several countries
Program description	<p>SASA! is a community mobilization program that aims to prevent various forms of violence against women and girls, and HIV by training community volunteers to become activists and conduct community discussions, door-to-door conversations, training, and other public events and activities. It was first implemented in Uganda by the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP); its methodology has since been adapted and implemented in many countries. SASA Together! is a revised version created by Raising Voices and based on learning from implementation in several countries. It focuses on addressing intimate partner violence (IPV). For example, while community mobilization remained the core strategy in SASA Together!, implementing partners noticed that while conversations around power and gender norms were beginning to shift in the community, women and men lacked the support to address imbalances of power in intimate aspects of their relationships. Therefore, they recommended that the revised program should better support couples in building practical skills to increase intimacy and communication. SASA Together! elevates sexual decision-making as a core theme, replacing the previous content on HIV. While the focus on reallocating household gender roles was often met with resistance and surface-level change in SASA!, SASA Together! encourages couples to reflect and prioritize three relationship values: to feel valued, cared for, and respected.</p> <p>The randomized controlled trial carried out to evaluate SASA! before the global uptake of the program (2008-2012) found a 52 percent decrease in intimate partner violence in SASA! communities and an improved gender-equitable attitude, including in relationships. Learnings from SASA! supplied several key elements to the design of SASA Together!:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not shortening the program to keep a sustained people-to-people engagement that is essential for critical reflection and action • Allowing time between training sessions for participants to digest and test new ideas • Meeting community members where they are and considering them experts/not imposing anything externally
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	Based on externally evaluated SASA! No evaluation available/accessible
Resources	<p>SASA Together!: program materials: https://raisingvoices.org/sasatogether/</p> <p>From SASA! to SASA Together!: https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0149718921000136?token=67EAE91BF3E01C295ED3A87A45A1500C4EF95236F11155804FCB0E0D3250BB496461A2104F3BE2E89C459338B6C57EB7&originRegion=eu-west-1&originCreation=20210822173603</p> <p>Scaling up – SASA Together! – tips and tools brief for program designers: http://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/Brief-No-8-Interactive.pdf</p> <p>SASA Faith manual: https://www.trocaire.org/sites/default/files/resources/policy/sasa-faith-training-manual.pdf</p> <p>SASA! activism kit: http://strive.lshmt.ac.uk/resources/sasa-activist-kit-preventing-violence-against-women</p>

Program	UMANG
Organization	International Research Center for Women (ICRW), in partnership with SATHEE, Badlao Foundation, and Project Concern International, and in close association with the Government of Jharkhand
Country	India
Program description	<p>UMANG is a four-year multilayered girls' empowerment program that aims to reduce the prevalence of child marriage. It operates at the individual (adolescent girls), family (parents, brothers/husbands), and community levels (men and boys, women, and other community members) and aims to reach around 200,000 individuals. It involves male participants in youth-led discussions on gender, patriarchy, and masculinity uses formal and informal structures and platforms, (e.g., local governance, sports clubs, cultural groups, and other congregation points). It includes activities such as initiating dialog, and developing calls for action, thereby creating an enabling environment for girls to speak out and make decisions in areas that relate to their lives and well-being.</p> <p>A two-arm quasi-experimental evaluation with baseline and endline data collection was planned but not yet completed at the time of this review.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	No evaluation available
Resources	<p>Baseline: https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Raising-Her-Voice-Agency-and-Aspirations-of-Adolescent-Girls-on-Marriage-UMANG-Report.pdf</p> <p>Program update (UMANG newsletter - also available in Hindi): https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/umang-vani_2021_English-resized.pdf</p>

Program	The Gender Lab Boys Program
Organization	The Blue Ribbon Movement
Country	India
Program description	<p>Through the Gender Lab Boys program, the Blue Ribbon Movement works to change attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors by engaging adolescent boys in conversations and advocacy projects to increase their awareness, "break fixed notions of masculinity," and encourage action. The curriculum (mainly taught in school but also out of school) encourages critical thinking. The projects are designed and implemented by boys and taken into their communities (e.g., surveys on everyday sexism and gendered division of labor, interviews with local police about domestic violence, posters and social media campaigns to address bullying, and studies on challenges facing women, including education and child marriage). At the time of this review, the Blue Ribbon Movement was also planning to develop How We Raise Our Boys, an initiative to strengthen support systems and impact more children by focusing on educators, teachers, counselors, and social workers, and build their collective knowledge on gender and masculinity.</p> <p>The program was not yet evaluated at the time of this review.</p>

Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	No evaluation available
Resources	<p>Program description: https://asiafoundation.org/2019/09/11/the-gender-lab-boys-program/ https://brmworld.org/programs/</p> <p>Program staff and participants insights (video): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uc-268PE9Mw</p> <p>Interview of the Gender Lab founder: https://www.smsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Interview-of-the-Month-Akshat-Singhal.pdf</p>
Program	Act With Her Ethiopia (AWH-E)
Organization	Pathfinder International, Government of Ethiopia with support from CARE International
Country	Ethiopia
Program description	<p>AWH-E was designed to contribute to the health, educational, and social foundations that adolescent girls and boys need to thrive and navigate healthy transitions to adulthood. In addition to adolescent girls' safe spaces curriculum-based group program, AWH-E delivers gender-synchronous programming with adolescent boys. Supplementary system-strengthening initiatives and programming targeting parents and community stakeholders address the underlying discriminatory social norms that undermine adolescent girls' educational aspirations and rights to bodily integrity and reinforce harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C). In Phase 1, young adolescent girls take part in a safe spaces curriculum-based group program.</p> <p>Looking only at the short-term impact of Phase 1, the evaluation found mixed to negative results of the intervention. Quantitative data found no effect on girls' education and on knowledge on the age of marriage for girls and boys (girls in AWH-E communities have a much lower ideal age at marriage compared to other communities). The results also found worsening gender attitudes among boys, with boys in AWH-E communities being much less likely to disagree with the statements "boys who behave like girls are weak" or "boys are not biologically smarter" compared to boys in control communities. As for behaviors, some interesting findings reported that boys understood the messaging around gender division of labor but did not have the opportunity to practice new behaviors as their mothers would not assign them any housework. A minority of adolescents in the qualitative data discussed that the program was improving their knowledge about how to forge better peer relationships. Positive spillover effects were also noted in girls taking part in the program having conversations with brothers at home and with male classmates at school. Some insights into the mixed to negative effects in East Haraghe suggest that it may partly reflect patchy delivery of life skills lessons in some communities because of relatively high turnover of mentors and supervisors and some facilitators not showing up at scheduled times, combined with uneven attendance by adolescents.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed (Phase 1 only)
Resources	<p>Evaluation: https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Transforming-gender-norms-through-life-skills-programming-in-rural-Ethiopia_Oromia.pdf</p>

Program	Taaron Ki Toli
Organization	Breakthrough
Country	India
Program description	<p>Taaron Ki Toli is a five-year gender equality curriculum delivered to students between the ages of 11 and 14. The curriculum consists of a series of interactive, safe, and open discussions held over two and a half years. It was designed to change boys' and girls' attitudes toward gender roles, their aspirations, and in turn, their behaviors, by enhancing their psychological, interpersonal, and social skills. It also aimed to increase their self-awareness and confidence by enlightening them about their rights through games, songs, drawing, and other activities to discuss topics such as gender stereotypes, gender roles at home, girls' education, women's employment outside the home, and harassment. Outside of the classroom, students completed homework assignments, such as writing stories or discussing gender with family members, in addition to activities like optional Breakthrough clubs. Breakthrough has been working in collaboration with various state governments to implement this program through schools.</p> <p>Reported results in Haryana showed that both boys and girls had significantly improved gender attitudes and behavior after two years of the program, with a greater change among boys as compared to girls</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Program description: https://www.globalinnovation.fund/breaking-through-discriminatory-gender-attitudes-of-adolescents-in-india-taaron-ki-toli/</p> <p>Evaluation (Haryana): https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/impact-school-based-gender-attitude-change-program-india</p> <p>Impact monitoring (Uttar Pradesh): https://inbreakthrough.org/taaron-ki-toli-seed-change/</p>

Program	Kishor Varta
Organization	Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ)
Country	India
Program description	<p>Kishor Varta is an interactive, mobile phone-based platform using short audio stories to provide boys and young men with information on gender, health, and sexual and reproductive health in order to change gender norms and reduce gender discrimination against girls and women in rural India (implemented in areas with a high prevalence of child marriage). Adolescent girls and boys can also call the program's toll-free number and engage with the stories. The stories are designed to encourage personal reflection and as a tool for group discussions in schools and other places in the community facilitated by designated facilitators. After some time, the program goes offline and focuses on community meetings, campaigns, etc. Youth are also expected to lead community engagement on top of regular meetings organized by facilitators. The program was well received by education officials; a government order authorized the introduction of Kishor Varta into all higher secondary schools in one district of Rajasthan, as well as among parents.</p> <p>An impact evaluation study carried out in 2018 reported significant changes in knowledge and attitudes regarding gender, sexuality, and violence among participants at the individual and community levels, and moderate behavioral changes. (Seven focus group discussions with participants, six in-depth interviews with intervention group leaders, and 137 pre- and 70 post-intervention surveys to assess participant and community knowledge, and attitudes and behaviors surrounding gender, violence, and sexuality were held).</p>

Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Case study: http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Kishor-Varta-case-study.pdf</p> <p>Program description: https://www.mitraindia.org/kishor-varta-adolescent-srhr-education-through-ict/</p> <p>Evaluation: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QdNUC_OundOX13jTqRGJLQ8xiYU_SZuY/view</p>
Program	Men as Caring Partners and Fathers
Organization	Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ)
Country	India
Program description	<p>The Men as Caring Partners project aimed to facilitate changes in attitudes and behaviors among young fathers and other men on child rights and gender equality at the personal and community levels through awareness building, creation of peer support groups, and capacity building. To build facilitators' and animators' capacity to deliver the sessions with fathers' groups and kishore groups (adolescent boys), trained staff members partnered with fathers – who would then facilitate sessions - and went through an intensive and participatory training session on topics that would be covered in the sessions. These included concepts of patriarchy, gender, masculinities and child rights, care from the perspective of gender equality and child rights, skills in leadership, facilitation and participatory rural appraisal, reproductive rights, and social accountability in health and nutrition.</p> <p>Reported outcomes of the program included a reduction of: violence against women and girls, gender differences in burden of care work, disparities in education, policing by brothers, and children's corporal punishment. It also included preventing the early marriage of girls, supporting girls' education, and more affectionate interactions with children. Group members encourage their partners to join women's self-help groups and engage in paid work and higher education.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	External evaluation completed
Resources	<p>Animators training materials: https://www.mitraindia.org/men-as-caring-partners-and-fathers-training-material/</p> <p>Evaluation: https://www.mitraindia.org/evaluation-of-the-field-intervention-in-jharkhand-by-ranjani-k-murthy/</p> <p>More resources available in Hindi</p>

Program	Various programs: Youth for Equality, Project Raise, GEMS, Ek Sath Campaign
Organization	Vikalp Sansthan
Country	India
Program description	<p>Vikalp believes in a society where girls and boys are treated equally, where the rights of both men and women are fully recognized and appreciated, and where practices like child marriage are no longer a reality. In addition to their main interventions (working with girls, families, and other stakeholders like schools, governments, and marriage service providers), Vikalp engages young boys and men as partners to change discriminatory gender norms, including in partnership with other organizations like ECF through Project Raise. Their Youth for Equality initiative includes small-group discussions with boys and young men aged 14-25 to challenge harmful gender norms and address issues ranging from child marriage to sexuality. Their Ek Saath Campaign, in partnership with CHSJ, builds the capacity of young changemakers and mentors to mobilize young men in their villages. Using posters, stories, and stickers, mentors sparked discussions around issues like gender discrimination, child marriage, masculinity, sexuality, and violence against girls and women with young men and boys in their communities. Vikalp has also been an implementing organization for the GEMS program, providing capacity building for teachers to take boys through a journey of critical self-reflection.</p> <p>Vikalp's latest annual report (2020) highlighted that boys taking part in Youth for Equality were increasingly helping their mothers, sisters, and wives in household work and encouraging them to continue their education and take part in workshops, meetings, and sports activities. In Project Raise areas, Vikalp reported a change in male behaviors (fathers, sons, male teachers, and boys in general), with boys and men supporting daughters, sisters, and girls in general, to participate in decision-making processes, sports activities, workshops, meetings, and training.</p>
Evaluation status (at the time this research was completed)	Annual internal M&E available
Resources	<p>Project Raise program description: https://vikalpindia.org/project-raise-program-for-engaging-boys-and-men/</p> <p>GEMS program description: https://vikalpindia.org/gems-gender-equality-movement-in-school-for-boys/</p> <p>Youth for Equality program description: https://vikalpindia.org/youth-for-equality/</p> <p>Ek Sath campaign description: https://vikalpindia.org/ek-sath-engage-men-and-boys-as-partners-for-gender-justice/</p> <p>Vikalp annual reports: https://vikalpindia.org/annual-reports/</p>

