

Engaging boys
and men for
gender equality:
improving the
lives of women
and girls

EDUCATION: CHANGING SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS

MenCare+ provides group education that strives to change social and gender norms by engaging men and women in critical reflection and dialogue. For young men and women discussions focus on gender equality, SRHR, intimate partner violence and drug and alcohol abuse. Group education for fathers and their partners has an additional focus on pregnancy and childbirth, family planning, raising children and sharing household responsibilities. Through discussion guides, role-play and hands-on activities, participants are encouraged to challenge gender norms and to practice positive social behaviour in their families and communities.

CAMPAIGNS

Men face great social pressure to behave according to traditional norms. Engaging the community in challenging harmful gender and social norms is fundamental to the fulfilment of women's and men's SRHR. MenCare+ implements community campaigns to increase awareness of men's roles in fatherhood and caregiving and to promote more diverse images of manhood. These campaigns use role models, such as community and religious leaders and local celebrities and share the stories of various men with different perspectives on masculinity.

COUNSELLING MEN ON INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

MenCare+ trains counsellors to work with men who have used violence in their intimate partner relationships. Through both individual- and group-counselling, safe spaces are created for men to share their own life stories and perceptions, including reflecting on insecurity and fear of losing power. Feeling heard may provide an opening to learning about non-violent and more equitable ways of relating to others. Open communication is seen as contributing to healthy relationships, and partners are sometimes invited to participate in individual or group counselling.

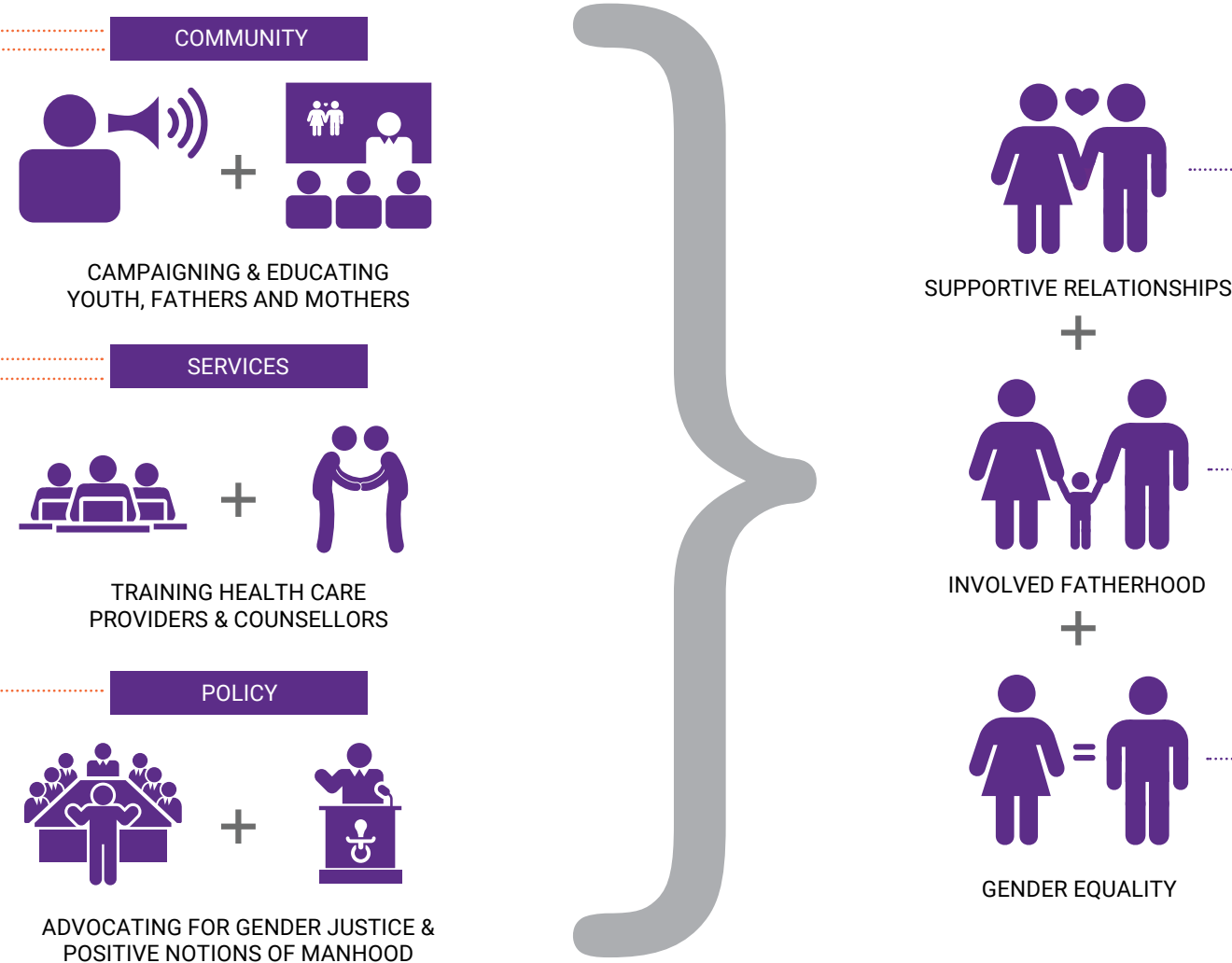
ENGAGING WITH THE HEALTH SECTOR

MenCare+ carries out activities in partnership with government bodies to encourage them to adopt such interventions and to ensure sustainability. The programme develops manuals for training health workers on the importance of engaging men in sexual and reproductive health and MCH services. For these manuals to achieve national coverage, it is essential to have government support. MenCare+ also engages with the health sector by collaborating with ministries of health, training health sector professionals on male engagement, participating in technical working groups on men's health, and advocating for policy reforms, on topics such as parental leave and corporal punishment within families. By doing this, MenCare+ stimulates the debate on fatherhood and caregiving within national health systems and social services.

TARGET GROUPS

The programme targets:

- Young men – to address male behavioural norms that influence SRHR outcomes, such as increasing the use of contraceptives and encouraging health-seeking behaviour among men;
- Fathers and their partners – to improve equitable involvement of men in maternal and child health and in childcare, and to improve relational well-being of women and men, including preventing intimate partner violence;
- Health workers – to stress the importance of engaging men in sexual and reproductive health and maternal and child health (MCH) services;
- Community members – to increase awareness and create an enabling environment for engaging men in SRHR and MCH and for preventing intimate partner violence;
- Policy-makers – to advocate for policies that engage men in SRHR and fatherhood.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

The MenCare+ approach is based on a set of complementary interventions to engage men and boys in gender equality, violence prevention, and in SRHR and MCH in one comprehensive programme. Counselling men who use violence in their intimate partner relationships, for example, is more likely to be effective when embedded in a broader set of interventions, such as community outreach, media mobilization and promotion of an enabling policy environment. Another aspect of this integrated approach is engaging policy-makers in the adaptation of methodologies so that they will be incorporated into public policy, therefore ensuring sustainability and greater reach.

BUILDING EVIDENCE FOR GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMMING

Through conducting research the MenCare+ programme aims to build evidence on gender transformative interventions and how they impact the lives of men and women. At the beginning of the programme, formative research was conducted to assess the needs of the target groups and analyse the context of the implementation areas. Insights from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) also informed programme development. During the course of the programme, surveys were conducted to assess whether participants actually experienced the changes envisioned by the programme. In Rwanda, a randomized control trial is taking place to evaluate the fathers' group component. Qualitative research is also being conducted to assess the underlying mechanisms that lead to intimate partner violence and perceptions of participants regarding gender norms. These various types of research all contribute evidence on how men can be engaged in gender equality.

SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

MenCare+ is effective in encouraging respect and understanding between the sexes. Men who use violence in the home are counselled to deal with their anger and learn to communicate with their partners. Families adopt and sustain what they learn. One couple said, "We have renewed our appreciation for each other". Another reported, "We moved from an abusive relationship to one that is free from violence and where we really respect and communicate with each other". The programme showed that policy-makers, community members and couples, who previously did not want to talk about gender-based violence, would open up when talking about fatherhood and men's involvement in the family.

INVOLVED FATHERHOOD

MenCare+ is effective in supporting men become involved and responsible husbands and fathers. After receiving training, health workers are increasingly encouraging husbands to be involved in prenatal care and delivery, instead of waiting outside the clinic because of embarrassment or fear. Several fathers that have been present during antenatal care and/or delivery describe it as a valuable and emotional experience, enhancing their relationship with their wife and child. According to the men who were present during pregnancy and childbirth, this encouraged them to be closely involved in their children's lives. Fathers who participated in group education express the value of emotional closeness in their relationship with their children, instead of solely focusing on a father's traditional role of discipline and financial provision.

GENDER EQUALITY: CHANGED ROLES AND NORMS

MenCare+ is effective in improving gender equality for individuals, families and communities, and in changing national policies. Programme participants testify that group education allowed them to better understand gender equality, and many young men say that they now share housework with their sisters and mothers. Qualitative research shows that fathers who participated in group education changed their perceptions of gender roles in domestic and care work. "Before, I thought women were supposed to do all the things in the household – fetch water, prepare meals, sweep. After group education, I am now aware that I have to be a part of the household activities – including caring for children, feeding them and preparing their clothes." "I learned how taking more responsibility for housework and childcare has a positive impact for me and my family."

RESULTS

- Over 7750 boys and girls have participated in group education on SRHR and gender equality.
- Over 6200 fathers and their partners have participated in group education on fatherhood, SRHR and gender equality.
- More than 3000 health sector professionals have received training on involving men in prenatal care and delivery, and counselling men on gender-based violence.
- Millions of people worldwide have been reached with campaigns on manhood and involved fatherhood.
- More than 80 public health policies and laws have been analysed at the federal, state and municipal level to inform policy advocacy.



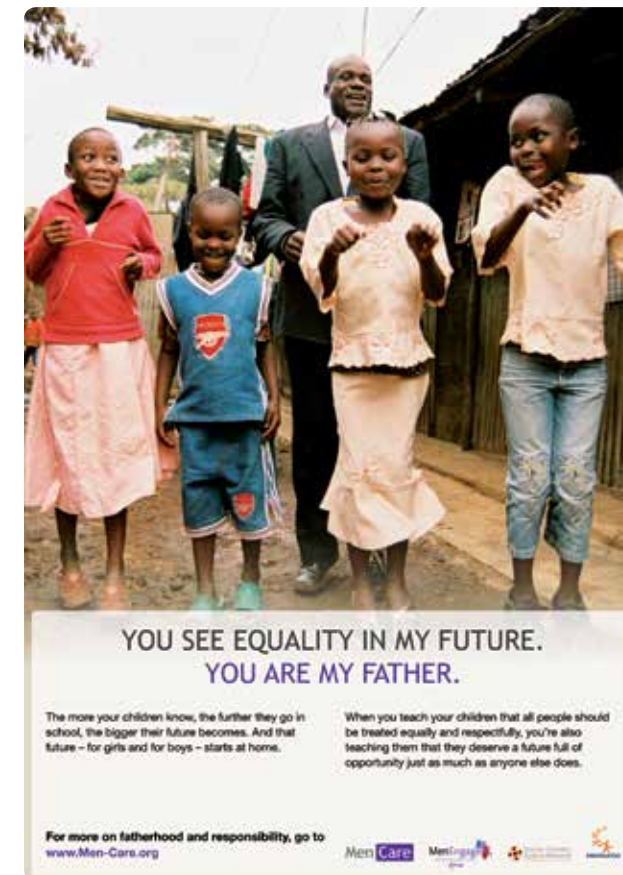
The sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of girls and women are critically hindered by rigid gender and cultural norms. Women often lack decision-making power and are at greater risk of HIV infection and intimate partner violence. Men have a crucial role to play in enhancing the SRHR of women and girls.

Fatherhood offers an opportunity to reach young and adult men with a new perspective on manhood. When men become more involved and supportive as fathers and partners, intimate relationships improve and violence decreases, women's rights advance, and children have better development outcomes. Research shows that men's involvement as caregivers also enhances their own quality of life.

MenCare+

MenCare+ is an innovative, three-year, four-country collaboration between Rutgers and Promundo-US, working with long-term national and regional partners with extensive local knowledge and expertise. In Brazil, Indonesia, Rwanda and South Africa a range of strategies are being implemented to engage boys and men in social change and as caregiving partners in order to improve the health and lives of women, children and men, to prevent intimate partner violence and to build respectful relationships.

The MenCare+ programme is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



MENCARE CAMPAIGN

The MenCare+ programme is engaging men in gender equality in its four implementing countries. This is part of the Global Fatherhood campaign, coordinated by Promundo-US and Sonke Gender Justice. Since the global MenCare campaign launched in 2011, more than 35 countries around the world have made the campaign their own.

The Global MenCare campaign has reached millions of individuals and changed the lives of people around the world. The campaign has successfully leveraged international interest at a time when the issue of men working for gender equality has gained unprecedented prominence. In most countries where it has been established, the MenCare campaign has contributed to national policy debates and/or influenced specific policies related to men, fatherhood and caregiving.

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