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# INCLUDING MEN AND BOYS IN PROGRAMMING OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: A CASE STUDY OF THE SAFE SCHOOLS PROGRAM IN GHANA AND STEPPING STONES PROGRAM IN UGANDA

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INCLUDING MEN AND BOYS IN PROGRAMMING OF VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN AND GIRLS: A CASE STUDY OF THE SAFE SCHOOLS PROGRAM IN  
GHANA AND STEPPING STONES PROGRAM IN UGANDA

NANA AKUA AMPOFO

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A MASTER'S RESEARCH PAPER

Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts,

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts in the department of  
International Development, Community, and Environment  
and accepted on the recommendation of:

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Cynthia Caron, Ph.D., Chief Instructor

## ABSTRACT

### INCLUDING MEN AND BOYS IN PROGRAMMING OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: A CASE STUDY OF THE SAFE SCHOOLS PROGRAM IN GHANA AND STEPPING STONES PROGRAM IN UGANDA

NANA AKUA AMPOFO

Violence against women and girls and its potential solutions increasingly garner international attention in the media and find themselves at the center of development agency portfolios. Program interventions aimed at eradicating violence against women and girls must create solutions that examine the socio-cultural values and normative expectations that boys and girls, men, and women place on one another. Many scholars argue that changing social norms or beliefs is an inter-generational process, as they are entrenched in and reproduced through social institutions such as the family, schools and religion (Enloe, 2013). Over the past decade, scholars and practitioners have noted violence against women and girls will not cease unless men and boys are part of the solution (Chant & Guttman, 2000). This qualitative case study assesses how contemporary interventions conceptualize social and cultural norms as constraints, opportunities or both, boys and men's relative role in reproducing normative expectations, and how programs then attempt to address them. I focus on UN Women and USAID programming guidelines reports that detail the hard work that assists efforts to challenge attitudes, norms, and beliefs. I analyze key activities laid out in two specific case studies profiling programs designed to challenge violence against women and girls by incorporating the help of men and boys. These programs include The Safe Schools Program in Ghana and The Stepping Stones Program in Uganda. I examine how implementers design activities that boys and girls, men and women engage in. In so doing, I show advances in bringing men and boys into the dialogue and as such, this paper will be of interest to international development researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this research to the memory of my late husband – Aaron Yaw Ampofo (RIP). I owe all the hard work, resilience and positive attitude that went into my entire two-year graduate program to him. He has been my guardian angel, and Babes! You are forever in my heart. To my two wonderful children – Nigel Cojo Ampofo and Erin Nana Yaa Nhyira Ampofo, they are my rock and always give me strength to do better in life. To my parents, who are simply selfless human beings, my siblings, and the entire family in Ghana and to the many supportive friends who never turn their backs on me – you all know who you are – We did this together! I would finally like to dedicate this research to anyone battling with, caring for someone struggling with or who lost a loved one to cancer. Stay strong and positive always.

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	vii
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	viii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>Patriarchy and the Need to Include Men and Boys to Change Gender Relations</b> .....	2
<b>Strategies of Investigation</b> .....	1
<b>Defining Violence against Women and Girls</b> .....	4
<b>What Including Men and Boys Looks Like</b> .....	9
<b>UN WOMEN</b> .....	10
<b>Working with Men and Boys by UN Women</b> .....	11
<b>USAID</b> .....	12
<b>Working with Men and Boys by USAID</b> .....	13
<b>THE USAID FUNDED SAFE SCHOOLS PROGRAM IN GHANA</b> .....	16
<b>Program Structure and Theory of Change</b> .....	16
<b>Program Activities</b> .....	17
<b>Examples of Activities Engaging Men and Boys</b> .....	19
<b>THE COMIC RELIEF FUNDED STEPPING STONES PROGRAM IN UGANDA</b> .....	21
<b>Program Structure/Theory of Change</b> .....	23
<b>Program Activities</b> .....	24
<b>Examples of Activities Engaging Men and Boys</b> .....	25
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	29
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	1

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Forms of Violence against Women and Girls.....5

Table 2: Donor-Specific Activities in Violence against Women and Girls Programming..15



**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Ecological Model for Understanding Violence against Women and Girls .....8

*“Men have to be a big part of this conversation... [my wife] took me aside a couple of months ago and said “Ok, it’s great that you’re engaged with and modeling to your daughter that you want her empowered, but you need to take as much effort to talk to your sons about how they treat women...”<sup>1</sup>(Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, 2016)*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Gender equality is an increasingly important goal for donors and state governments following the 1995 Beijing Conference. To that end, violence against women and girls and its potential solutions find themselves at the center of international development agenda, as reducing violence against women and girls is also necessary to achieving gender equality (Fergus, 2012; Abramsky et al., 2011; WHO, 2013; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002).

International agencies funding violence against women and girls projects state that they have a better chance of being sustainable and successful when based upon partnerships between governments, the international community and civil society (Fergus, 2012). The burden of success intensifies for national governments. The reason being that violence against women and girls often requires mandatory national laws to promote change across society. For instance, change in schools, the work place, healthcare system, local communities and in the household.

Ending violence against women and girls remains an ongoing challenge at the national and international levels (Fergus, 2012) as it entails changing norms, values, and attitudes towards women along with the social and institutional structures that reproduce them. Scholars and development practitioners recommend including men and boys in

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<sup>1</sup><http://metro.co.uk/2016/01/24/justin-trudeau-just-made-a-really-important-point-about-feminism-5641464/#ixzz3zDYkz6tW> (last accessed on January 28th, 2016).

effective programmatic interventions as a more sustainable way of addressing this challenge (Caron, 2014; Gervais, 2012; Chant, S., 2000).

### **Patriarchy and the Need to Include Men and Boys to Change Gender Relations**

Patriarchy is a social system that organizes and divides “all practices and signification in culture in terms of gender and the privileging of one gender over the other, giving males control over female sexuality, fertility and labor” (Ebert, 1988: 19). With respect to domestic violence in particular, Tracy states that patriarchy is “the overarching social construct which ultimately engenders abuse” (2007: 576). Roles for women and men are social constructs that enable men to exercise “power and control over women” (Strebel et al., 2007). Patriarchy favors men over women and is an institutionalized practice that keeps men as a social group with power in power (Smuts, 1995; Gowaty, 1992). Feminist theorists show how patriarchy enables men control over female sexuality, women’s freedom of movement, and their ability to participate in social and public life (Lerner, 1986; MacKinnon, 1987; Ebert, 1988). Finally, patriarchy also creates a sense of male entitlement. A study in Ethiopia (USAID, 2015) found that even though 93% of male-student respondents knew violence against females were illegal, 33% of them believed that male students were entitled to get whatever they want from young women, either by charm or by force.

Such senses of entitlement are expressions of gender socialization, as patriarchal values are reproduced intergenerationally. Boys and girls learn behavior as well as sex-

specific expectations through the process of socialization, internalizing these rules and norms, and in turn behaving in these socially-acceptable ways (Caron and Margolin, 2015; Halder, 2008; Gervais, 2012; Gates, 2014; Enloe, 2013). Many scholars argue that changing social norms or beliefs is an intergenerational process, as they are entrenched in and reproduced through social institutions such as the family, schools and religion (Chant S., 2000; Moser, 1993; Enloe, 2013; Gervais, 2012). Scholars and practitioners have noted that violence against women and girls will not cease unless men and boys are part of the solution (Chant & Gutmann, 2000), as “an undifferentiated and unilateral focus on women is not only conceptually inappropriate, but deprives gender interventions of their transformative potential” (Chant S., 2000: 8).

Therefore, program interventions aimed at ending violence against women and girls, must examine socio-cultural values and normative expectations that boys and girls, men and women place on one another. In this paper, I analyze how two current frameworks: UN Women’s “Preventing Violence against Women and Girls” and USAID’s “Working with Men and Boys to End Violence against Women and Girls” conceptualize social and cultural norms as constraints, opportunities or both. I look at how they consider boys and men’s relative role in reproducing normative expectations, and how the programs that they support include men and boys into programmatic activities.

## Strategies of Investigation

Violence against women and girls is evidently a global issue<sup>2</sup>, and one that has gained the attention of world leaders and other individuals in powerful positions. The former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan states,

*“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development, and peace” (United Nations Global Videoconference, 1999).*

This sense of urgency for action has led to an increase in programming to reduce this global issue. A special focus is on programming initiatives, which engages men and boys in fighting violence against women and girls. My intent for this research is to educate programming experts, feminist activists, policymakers, donor agencies, communities that have fallen victim to this violence prevalence and the like through my findings.

In this research, I adopt a qualitative multi-case study approach (Creswell, 2009; Hennink et al., 2011). I chose to investigate how two donor agencies address this challenge. In order to re-enforce how mainstreamed violence against women programming has become, I chose two agencies across the donor spectrum; The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), a donor backed by one of the largest governments in the world and international agency UN Women. I chose these two agencies after hours of dedicated online research work. I have gained some insight into the study of development theory over the course of my graduate studies. I have also worked in

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<sup>2</sup> <http://16dayscwgj.rutgers.edu/about/strategic-conversation>. The page provides several evidence of violence against women around the world perpetrated by men.

development programming because of my temporary affiliation with UNICEF Headquarters' Child Protection Unit. This mixture of acquired theoretical and practical knowledge is responsible for this curiosity about the success or not of development programming. I am also privy to the fact that other organizations do equally good work in gender-based violence programming. Other policy organizations such as the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) also find equally effective ways to engage men and boys through global campaigns like the MenEngage Alliance of grassroots non-profit organizations, but for the purposes of this paper that will not be extensively discussed though a very laudable effort on their part. Programs like MenEngage evolved because the role of men and boys towards sustainably finding solutions to the problem of violence against women and girls is globally identified as important. This form of violence is due to some socially accepted norms that put women under an inferiority complex as compared to men. The mandate of this alliance is to engage men and boys in ways to reduce gender inequalities and promote the health and well-being of men, women and children.

I used secondary data sources to make arguments and arriving at my findings. I did not interview any program executive or staff from USAID or UN Women or the implementing partners, DevTech System Inc. and ACORD. I also did not visit the Safe Schools Program in Ghana or the Stepping Stones Program in Uganda respectively. I based my arguments on program documents from verifiable online sources. I relied on how these agencies conceptualize and describe violence against women and girls, and on how they get results as stated in program documents. The transnational feminist movement has long

called for violence against women programming to include men and boys. The UN Women and USAID guideline reports used in my study both suggest that the inclusion of men and boys in programming to fight violence against women and girls leads to successful outcomes.

Then I will show how UN Women and USAID appear to support the design of activities that not only focus on women and girls, but also include men and boys into activities such as community discussion that allow men and boys to educate their male counterparts on the essence of gender equality using theater and posters. I will describe the reported progress made so far in bringing men and boys into the dialogue. I use two case studies in this paper - The Safe Schools Program in Ghana and the Stepping Stones Program in Uganda. In addition to the inclusion of men and boys, these programs share other similarities including, creating change through social institutions such as education and health. In a promotional video for the MenEngage Global Symposium (2014), an activist stated that getting men involved in finding solutions for violence against women and girls, “shows how important equality among men and women is and also does not make the quest sound like a feminist rant by women wanting to take power.”<sup>3</sup> Given the analysis of such examples, this paper will also be of interest to international development researchers, policymakers, and gender and development practitioners.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://menengage.org/jodywilliamsvideo/>

## **Defining Violence against Women and Girls**

How donor frameworks define violence and its causes shapes the design and objectives of the programs that they will fund. The UN Women report, Preventing Violence against Women and Girls considers violence “any act of gender-based violence”, that either leads to or facilitates the process of women and girls suffering any physical, sexual or psychological harm. These acts of violence take place in social institutions like the family, community and in the state. In the family setting for example, it occurs when girls are forced into marriages at an early age. In the community and within the state, some common forms of violence include sexual abuse and forced prostitution. These forms of violence associated with the state results from conflict and war in a nation where women and girls more often become victims. Such violence results in women’s subordination socially, economically and politically. Overtime, society recognizes these forms of violence unequally. I make this inference from the following statement,

*“Women’s experience of such violence is far from uniform as it is shaped not only by patriarchal norms and institutions, but also by other forms of inequality and discrimination linked to factors such as class, ethnicity, age, sexuality and disability. Even women and girls’ exposure to and experience of violence differs and their access to justice, health services, social support in response to that violence are all affected by these multiple and linked forms of inequality that they face” (Alemu, 2015: 9).*



**Table 1: Forms of Violence against Women and Girls**

<b>Forms of Violence</b>	<b>UN WOMEN</b>	<b>USAID</b>
<b>Marital Rape</b>	√	
<b>Sexual Harassment</b>	√	
<b>Intimate Partner Violence</b>		√
<b>Child Marriage</b>	√	
<b>Dowry-related violence</b>	√	
<b>Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting</b>	√	√
<b>Female sexual abuse</b>	√	√
<b>Forced Prostitution</b>	√	
<b>Rape</b>		√
<b>Honor Killings</b>		√
<b>Acid Violence</b>		√
<b>Female infanticide</b>		√
<b>Ritual sexual abuse</b>		√
<b>Virginity testing</b>		√

Making the world a better place for the world's women remains a top priority for donor agencies globally. The recently adopted<sup>4</sup>, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) goal number five aims to achieve gender equality by 2030. Earlier I stated that gender inequality enables violence against women and girls. To increase the participation of men

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<sup>4</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

and boys into gender empowerment programming and ending violence towards women and girls, donor agencies such as USAID and UN Women have created guidelines that conceptualize the causes of violence against women and girls and appropriate solutions.

UN Women's "Prevention of violence against women and girls" report, which highlights preventive programming initiatives and prevention, identifies and addresses "underlying causes of a problem, rather than focusing on its results or symptoms" (Fergus, 2012: 7) including the participation of men and boys. The agency advocates for strategies, which stop violence before they begin. Such preventive strategies promote shifts in the social environment to reduce new occurrences of violence against women and girls ultimately. According to the UN Women report, there is still a focus on addressing existing issues of violence against women and girls. Such interventions are however less impactful in violence reduction efforts.

The USAID report, "Working with Men and Boys to End Violence against Women and Girls: Approaches, Challenges, and Lessons", considers violence against women and girls as "the most widespread form of abuse worldwide", and it takes many forms including "physical, sexual, emotional and economic and is rooted in women's political, economic, and social subordination" (Alemu, 2015: 9). USAID strategies also emphasize the effectiveness of male engagement in programming to end violence against women and girls stating that "social constructions of gender almost always confer a higher social value on men than women, and privilege the masculine over the feminine" (2015: 1). Accordingly, the involvement of men and boys is at the core of USAID's theory of change.

If men and boys serve as advocates for change to their fellows, that is considered a much more effective way of solving the challenge of violence against women and girls. To re-socialize boys from an early age to be advocates, activists and partners for the good cause of believing that girls are on the same human level as they are, means building a future world whereby men are not identified, as perpetrators of violence and women on the other hand are not labeled as victims of violence.

Both UN Women and USAID have the common goal of addressing violence against women and girls. Both advocate for a multi-sectoral<sup>5</sup> form of program implementation, supporting programs that aim at changing the mindset of societies with known statistics of prevalence in violence against women and girls. Currently, the education and health sector have a lot of focus because of the documented evidence on strategies. There is strong focus in the health sector because of existing research by agencies and organizations including the US Congressional Research Service and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. UN Women estimates that 35 % of women around the world have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their lives.<sup>6</sup> The result of such violence influences the emotional and physical health of the women and girls involved. Implementation in the education sector tends to focus on creating safe and gender equitable educational environments, and draws on research and scholarship that shows that

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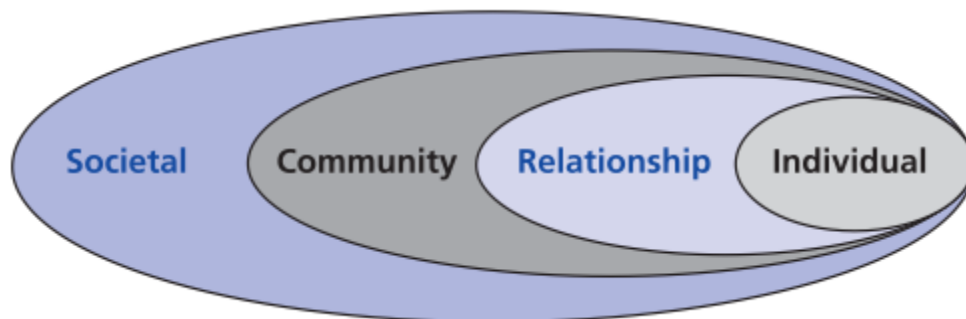
<sup>5</sup> In this paper I consider two sectors, Education and Health.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

educational institutions play a key role in shaping gender identities and practices of girls and boys (Alemu, 2015; Wallace, 2013).

Both the UN Women and USAID frameworks use an ecological model for understanding violence against women and girls (Figure 1 below). UN Women proposes prevention strategies, which work towards changing the social norms known to be fueling violence against women and girls, while USAID's approach is pushing for male engagement to achieve this same end goal. An analysis of this ecological model will lead us into a further discussion on how both agencies expect their partners to implement programs in order to achieve set goals and provide a better understanding on the various interventions

**Figure 1: Ecological Model**



**Source: Heise et al. 1999; Krug et al. 2002**

Social practices and cultural values form the bases of the issue of violence against women and girls (Fergus, 2012). The ecological model breaks down the various factors that cause violence at a number of different levels of social interactions between males and females. The model relies on four inter-related factors: societal, community, relationships and individual factors. These factors contribute towards violence against women and girls. *Societal factors* include government policies and laws, cultural practices or norms, and socio-economic and political structures, which produce and reproduce violence against women and girls (Krug et al., 2002). Since *social / community institutions* are primary agents of gender socialization, activities must take place in schools, places of work and people's neighborhoods. Thirdly, inter-personal relationships are a crucial focus of concern as in the context of close-knit relationship between peers, family and intimate partner attitudes, and value and norms influence behaviors, possibly leading to intimidation or control of the females by their male counterparts (Heise et al., 1999). Finally, some individuals may witness and condone violence as a normative in their family. For that reason, the individual factor concerns an individual's history and family life.

### **What Including Men and Boys Looks Like**

Patriarchy naturalizes gender socialization, perpetuating the subordination of women in society (Ebert, 1988). A donor agency's conceptualization of a problem influences the actions that they take to address that problem. With gender inequality a result of patriarchal norms and privileges, (Alemu, 2015; Ebert, 1988), development experts and policymakers identify men and boys as key partners in preventing violence

against women and girls (Jewkes et al., 2015). UN Women and USAID frameworks recognize the issue of male privileges as a causal effect for violence against women and girls. The main agenda of both guidelines is to change this unfair distribution of privileges between men and women, suggesting the inclusion of men and boys in the following ways.

## **UN WOMEN**

The UN Women programming guidelines for the prevention of violence against women and girls contains 1) developing school-based programs, 2) awareness raising campaigns and 3) empowerment initiatives. The intent for school-based activities is to promote respectful relationships between boys and girls, as the crucial and formative years of boys and girls in primary, secondary and tertiary schools complements the work towards gender equality (Foshee et al., 1998). The reported activities that will alter the bias for the existing gender construction favoring masculinity are as follows: The donor assumes that teacher training exercises (curriculum and attitude) provides the best approach in teaching children on gender equality and engaging student leadership through workshops on creating supportive school environments towards gender equality. Under the former activity, programs train teachers to envision a school environment that intends to support gender equality, develop skills and capacity for achieving the vision and finally working at the vision school. The recommended activities under awareness raising campaigns also aim at causing a positive change in attitudes about gender, equity and violence in society. Programs create awareness on violence through audio-visual presentations on radios and

televisions, community durbars under the leadership of community heads and partnerships with church leaders who infuse messages on gender equality in their sermons. Donors assume that awareness-raising campaigns will lead to attitudinal change in society if they are inclusive of all participants in society. One UN Women endorsed program focuses on illiterate youth 9 to 20 years old creating awareness on rights of women and men, and issues related to violence against women and girls. Other awareness raising activities include visual presentations such as posters that are supposed to spread messages on reproductive healthcare and HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Finally, the UN Women framework promotes women empowerment initiatives such as microfinance services to reportedly create economic opportunities for women and participatory training on dealing with abusive relationships. The case study on The Stepping Stones Program in Uganda will cover other specific activities endorsed by the UN Women.

### **Working with Men and Boys by UN Women**

When men and boys are included in UN Women funded activities, they attend theater productions that the donor considers as training exercises for boys to become advocates to end violence. They also enter poster contests, which the program logic assumes will display their understanding of gender equality. As part of awareness raising campaigns, men and boys lead community workshops and peer-group discussions to with an intent to reflect on issues on gender violence among male participants. Men and boys participate in drama and training exercises, which portray women and girls as independent

individuals. For instance, in a family setting mothers and daughters do make decisions affecting the family. The donor agency assumes that the portrayal of such activities creates a sense of equality among men and women.

## **USAID**

USAID's approach is similar to that of UN Women. USAID programming activities fall under three categories - school-based programs, awareness raising campaigns, and women empowerment initiatives with a focus on multi-sectoral programming (i.e., economic growth, trade and agriculture; education; governance, law enforcement and justice systems; conflict, post-conflict and humanitarian assistance; and social development) (USAID, 2015). The USAID guidelines emphasizes gender-based group education and reflection work under school-based programming. For example, schools adapt an interactive discussion-based curriculum. According to USAID, the aim of such classroom discussions is to allow either same-sex student groups or mixed-gender student groups to reflect on existing societal gender norms, and further promote gender equitable attitudes. USAID promotes 'Code of Conduct' manuals that presumably guides student behavior – boys especially become accommodating to women as co-equals and not subordinates. The project logic assumes that this will serve as benchmark for gender sensitive behavior among boys and girls in school.

USAID endorses activities such as community durbars (addressing a large gathering), community evangelism (group of people moving around the community with a



message) and theater production under the awareness raising campaign. The donor's intent is to create an opportunity for community leaders and community members to dialogue on detrimental attitudes and practices that foster violence with the various forms of campaign formats. The interactive nature of these activities assumedly allows community members to share personal experiences of violence in some cases. Performance Theater supposedly allows participants re-enact situations of power often within the family. For instance, participants will act out family scenes where mothers and daughters have no decision-making rights even on issues concerning their own welfare such as obtaining an education or assessing health care services. The assumption is that, allowing boys and girls to script out and enact relationships of power and gender inequality that is context specific provides a better understanding of the extent of its importance. This leads to achieving a better impact of changing people's mind about their role or support in the perpetration of violence against women and girls in the society (Alemu, 2015).

### **Working with Men and Boys by USAID**

Men and boys participating in school-based programming serve as role models, advocating for ending violence. Boys lead interactive discussions at informational sessions, school assemblies and workshops. These discussions focus on common gender violence in schools such as sexual abuse and dating violence. An awareness raising activity includes developing public lectures, advocating on radio and television shows to assumedly effect change in society. The men and boys in society lead discussions with an

intent to shape gender identities and practices of both sexes in the community (Alemu, 2015). For example, there is a focus on male-only organized occupational groups. Male facilitators lead discussions on the essence of gender equality. In some instances, male celebrities such as movie stars publicly speak against female subordination, domestic violence, and intimate partner violence. Finally, men and boys are included in “Male Peer Role Models on Positive Masculinities” (Alemu, 2015: 20) to serve as allies or partners in women’s economic empowerment initiatives that end violence against women and girls. Under this specific activity, the donor identifies men and boys, trains and supports them to be positive role models in society for other men. Male engagement is very essential because

*“the use of men as role models helped to demonstrate and celebrate men’s positive use of male power to the community, as well as helped to create solidarity between men by reminding individuals that they are not alone in challenging traditional norms of violence or controlling behavior” (ibid: 21)*

However, other males develop a stereotype towards the men who receive training and assume role model roles in society.

The matrix below shows the specific activities that both donor agencies endorse in the education and health sectors. The UN Women seeks to facilitate eradication of violence against women and girls through preventive programming. USAID on the other hand seeks to achieve a reduction in the upsurge of violence against women and girls.

**Table 2: Donor-specific activities in violence against women and girls programming.**

<b>Programming Intervention Sectors</b>	<b>UN Women</b>	<b>USAID</b>
Education and Social Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom-based programming</li> <li>• Promoting gender equality</li> <li>• Teacher training and engagement of school leaderships.</li> <li>• Community mobilization and</li> <li>• Advocacy-based initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating safe and gender equitable educational environments</li> <li>• Curriculum focused approaches</li> <li>• Teacher training and ending corporal punishments in schools.</li> <li>• Working with adolescents in community youth groups and through boys sports programs.</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design and strategies to prevent HIV/AIDS.</li> <li>• Efforts to incorporate national prevention strategies, institutional capacity building, policy and programming in the health sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social mobilization approach towards having men change attitudes and practices into allowing women and girls to make their own reproductive health decisions.</li> </ul>

In the section that follows, I present two case studies that show how DevTech Systems, Inc. and Agency for Co-operation and Research Development (ACORD) implement elements of the frameworks presented above in Ghana and Uganda respectively. These two cases, the Safe Schools Program in Ghana and the Stepping Stones Program in Uganda, reflect of donor agencies’ strategies for male engagement in programming. The inclusion of men and boys allows for a further assessment of existing patriarchal norms in the societies of focus. For each program, I provide background information, describe the program structure, demonstrate how the organizations implement specific activities and I discuss the reported success of the intervention.

## **THE USAID FUNDED SAFE SCHOOLS PROGRAM IN GHANA**

The first case I examine is The Safe Schools Program in Ghana implemented by DevTech System, Inc. The program seeks to create a safe and welcoming environment in the school systems. A welcoming environment encourages boys and girls to stay in school. The priority for the program is to achieve universal access, retention and completion of education especially at the basic level. Safe Schools are defined as, “schools where there is zero tolerance for violence related to bullying, sexual abuse and corporal punishment among others” (UNICEF, 2015: 1). Below, I focus on gender-based violence in the school system in Ghana and describe the activities that men and boys participate in as part of the Safe Schools Program.

### **Program Structure and Theory of Change**

In Ghana, the government began addressing violence among children in the mid-1990s following the adoption of the Convention of the Rights of a Child (UNICEF, 2009). A National Child-Friendly School Standards serves as a guide for the school system stating that schools should be free from all forms of violence - physical, psychological or emotional. According to statistics provided in a study conducted by Plan Ghana (2009), 14% of children in the school experience sexual abuse or harassment perpetrated by a peer. However, perpetrators also could be teachers, students or neighbors, who could also be either male or female. Violence in school includes verbal harassment, sexual harassment and abuse; rape based on gender stereotypes and corporal punishment

USAID, through its Office of Women in Development funded the Safe Schools Program in Ghana from 2003 to 2008. The target group included boys and girls in upper primary and lower secondary school in the 10 and 14-year-olds cohort. DevTech Systems Inc., an international consulting firm dedicated to development, implemented this program in 40 communities in Ghana. Alongside reducing gender-based violence in schools, the program also hoped to increase education outcomes and improve health (Swanson, 2016).

DevTech followed a multi-sectoral approach in implementing program, bringing together stakeholders from institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, Teachers, Head teachers, and International and local aid organizations. For instance, the program collaborated with the Ghana National Association of Teachers and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports on the national level; on the community level there was collaboration with a local non-governmental organization called Ark Foundation; and finally UNICEF and World Bank served as international donors.

### **Program Activities**

Specific program activities under the social mobilization<sup>7</sup> approach promote dialogue among all stakeholders involved. USAID intends that this dialogue will allow students (boys and girls) in the educational system address prevention, reporting and response to violence. The program strategy is to implement activities categorized under

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<sup>7</sup> Social mobilizations includes “involving planned actions and processes to reach, influence and involve all relevant segments of society across all sectors from the national to the community level in order to create an enabling environment and effect positive behavior and social change.”

<http://www.devtechsys.com/practices/education-youth-development/43-safe-schools-program>

four levels of partnerships. The program adopts the ecological model approach under the following specific levels: individual, community, institutional and national. At the individual level, the program intends to engage students through a participatory way to condemn all forms of gender-based violence. The students assumedly build relationships based on mutual respect through group discussions, school debates, poetry recitals and theater. The Safe Schools Program endorses all these activities, and advocates that discussion themes center around gender equality.

Programs establish partnerships at the community level. Many stakeholders including Parent Teacher Associations, parents of the students and other school management committees serve the school community in Ghana. The interventions under community level are such that teachers and parents develop a Code of Conduct document. There also needs to be an establishment of a disciplinary committee, to objectively deal with inappropriate behavior based on the set guidelines. Community level activities also tend to advocate and with an intent to create awareness about the importance of gender equality. The program supports this activity because it assists parents and teachers to identify and change existing attitudes regarding gender-based violence in the schools.

Institutional level of partnership programming involves building capacity within existing systems. The Stepping Stones program develops new content for teacher training exercise regularly. The “Doorway” series training manuals are highly recommended training manuals<sup>8</sup>, which address how three main stakeholders can effectively work to

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.devtechsys.com/practices/education-youth-development/43-safe-schools-program> - quoted as being used by International agencies including Plan International and Save the Children.

reduce this challenge in the school system - the students, teachers and community counselors. Finally, at the national level program activities take the form of policy and law implementation. The program endorses activities including promoting national laws, which prosecute those who break such laws. For instance, the parliament of Ghana passed into law the Domestic Violence Bill on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2007.<sup>9</sup> Other interventions designed are in the form of radio and television programs, theater for development, and public service announcements. The various levels of activities support the concept of the ecological model discussed earlier.

### **Examples of Activities Engaging Men and Boys**

The Doorways Students Training Manual teaches boys about appropriate gender relations. DevTech System's program emphasizes gender equality between boys and girls especially to the understanding and acceptance of boys, making them advocates for change. The program also emphasizes this approach at the individual level, and the Safe Schools Program recorded some successes with increasing student's knowledge of gender equality. The program also recorded significant change in attitudes especially among boys regarding gender-based violence in schools. The training manuals reportedly yielded good results for the fight against the gender-based violence challenge in Ghana. For instance, in Ghana there was a percentage increase from 50% to 75% of students who agreed with the fact that, "one has the right not to be hurt or mistreated."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.pdaghana.com/index.php/f/feature-articles/765-violence-against-women-in-ghana->

<sup>10</sup> [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pdacp103.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacp103.pdf)

At community level, the Doorways Community Counselors Training also identified gaps among community leaders in identifying cases of school-related gender-based violence. More male community leaders received this training as part of a strategy to train more male advocates for change. The program addresses the lack of proper training through group training sessions. The open discussions presumably reveal the right process in identifying such violence and devising appropriate ways to preventing further occurrences of any form of violence. For instance, teachers were more confident on how to report violations on school-related gender-based violence after program implementation according to program results. Prior to training, only 45% of teachers reported properly and after training over 75% know the reporting procedure.<sup>11</sup>

A specific example of an activity under the Institutional level is a capacity building initiative undertaken by the Ghana Education Service. It involves training male teachers to adapt child-centered approaches rather than gender biased approaches. Male teachers are trained on how to engage girls equally as boys are in the classroom. The program intends that overtime, a male teacher with this training can succeed in changing attitudes of male and female students he teaches.

The inclusion of men and boys under the national level involves the introduction of policy or national law serving gender equality with the aid of male advocates and activists. For example, the Safe Schools program through an institutional partner conducted advocacy to push for the passing of the Domestic Violence Bill. According to the reported

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.childreninadversity.gov/news-information/stories-from-the-field/safe-schools>



program results, men have since gotten involved in enforcing the bill in support for ending violence against women and girls.

The interventions of the USAID Safe Schools program reportedly work at the individual, community, institutional and national levels in order to achieve sustainable and transformative change in attitudes in schools and communities towards gender-based violence. The Safe Schools Program in Ghana has positively changed attitudes in the school system within the 40 communities of focus. Teachers are able to easily identify and report various forms of gender-based violence. Effective training methods have made boys more accommodating of girls as co-equals, and girls take on leadership roles in school. This evidence shows in the percentage increases in various indicators<sup>12</sup> under study. For instance, implementation of program resulted in a percentage increase in the number of students accepting the right not to be mistreated from 50% to 70% (US Government International Assistance for Children in Adversity, 2016).

### **THE COMIC RELIEF<sup>13</sup> FUNDED STEPPING STONES PROGRAM IN UGANDA**

This program adopts a preventive approach as described in the UN Women guidelines report. The main aim is “to join hands in addressing the immediate needs of those already infected and in building the capacity to prevent the further spread of the virus” (Hadjipateras et al., 2006: 5) especially among women and girls. Uganda gained

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<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> Comic Relief is a major charity based in the UK, with a vision of a just world, free from poverty. The organization funded the Stepping Stones project in Uganda together with partners such as Oxfam Novib, SIDA and Cordaid. <http://www.comicrelief.com/how-we-help/the-difference-we-have-made>

independence in 1962, after years of civil war. The country spiraled into a state of instability and abject poverty. Northern Uganda has a HIV prevalence rate (Hadjipateras et al., 2006). As characteristic of war and conflict areas, many women and girls in these camps live in fear that the war rebels will rape and abuse them sexually. It was estimated at a point in time that the camps for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) have an HIV prevalence rate of about 37%, while the national average rate recorded was 7% (Hadjipateras et al., 2006). Women also engage in commercial sex work or other business ventures that expose them to situations in which men take advantage of them, such as selling alcohol. The Agency for Co-operation and Research Development (ACORD), an African-led international alliance, implemented the Stepping Stones program in Uganda between April 2004 and June 2006 to with the intent to address HIV/AIDS vulnerability among women and girls.

HIV/AIDS still infects a higher proportion of women in society. Health stereotyping occurs because of the stigmatization experienced by women and girls overtime. The upsurge of such inequalities between men and women that results from HIV/AIDS is one of the reasons why this program seeks to contribute towards reducing the vulnerability associated with this infection. In sub-Saharan Africa, 59% of adults living with HIV are women. The women in this region constitute about 75% of all HIV-positive women in the world today.<sup>14</sup> This vulnerability makes it easy for violence to take place - the cultural, social and economic repercussions faced by women and girls especially is a

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<sup>14</sup> Speech by UNFPA Executive Director at UN Conference on HIV/AIDS in New York, June 2006

major challenge that needs to be addressed by initiatives such as The Stepping Stones Program. Dr Alice Welbourn developed the Stepping Stones program approach<sup>15</sup> in the Ugandan village, Buwenda. The program's intent is to emphasize the need to effect change through continuous effort in changing attitudes. Below I discuss how the program reportedly addresses HIV/AIDS among women and girls as a way to challenge gender inequalities in the country.

### **Program Structure/Theory of Change**

Stepping Stones seeks to reduce violence against women and girls with respect to HIV/AIDS disease by engaging both men and women in age-based peer group trainings. Changing already formed negative attitudes or accepted social and cultural norms is very difficult and therefore this training is considered a process which takes time, sometimes over a period of three to four months. The considered higher value placed on men over women in society makes this program's strategy of including men and boys as participants together with women and girls in this program supposedly effective. The social transformation goal of this program shows in the attempt in leading men and women participants to rethink existing negative social and cultural norms supporting that women with HIV/AIDSs should suffer abuse or violence of any nature. The intention of the program

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<sup>15</sup> *Stepping Stones is defined as, "the name given to a participatory process that involves bringing men and women in the community together to engage in a shared discussion and analysis of factors affecting their views and behaviors, both positively and negatively, and builds the capacities of people, as individuals and community members to conceive of and implement positive changes in their lives that contribute to reducing HIV/AIDS vulnerability" (Hadjipateras et al., 2006).*

is to push for an elimination of stigmatization or abuse. The training process intends to allow men and women “to learn how to negotiate and cope with HIV and AIDS, through self-realization, learning, sharing and caring for those most affected” (Wallace, 2006: 6).

### **Program Activities**

ACORD and their local partners in Uganda implemented interventions, which consciously included men and boys. The end goal was to achieve transformative results while addressing HIV/AIDS vulnerability and gender inequalities in Uganda. The program emphasized awareness creation and prevention through drama, songs, community dialog in the form of debates and distribution of condoms.

The need for capacity building is what pushes for local partnership formation with Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). Capacity building involves skills training, mentoring and assistance with fundraising and most importantly the need for constant research and advocacy in the area of inculcating into the society, the essence of gender equality with men and boys as leading advocates. For instance, one partner, Community AIDS Resource Persons of Pabbo (CARPP), has 22 members who received training in Stepping Stones and now counsel and advise community members on sexual promiscuity and the use of condoms during consensual sex. The program joins men and women together to lead this crusade against gender inequality and HIV/AIDS vulnerability in the camp of Pabbo and its surrounding areas.

The program also brings men and women together in open dialogue intended to create a space for them to reflect on gender issues especially regarding HIV/AIDS, community durbars, public service announcements on television and radio. The Stepping Stones program developed a criteria used in selecting communities of focus for implementation. Each selected community required the willingness of camp residents to implement program, the availability and capability of project partners, a confirmation of community readiness to participate in implementation and the absence of major constraints in the external community. The total population size of these camps served as a basis for the selection of specific internally displaced person's camps for implementation, where population size acts as a proxy for risk (Hadjipateras et al., 2006).

### **Examples of Activities Engaging Men and Boys**

The Stepping Stones program included men and boys based on the logic that reversing feminine vulnerability associated with HIV/AIDS would require the use of their masculine privileges. Additionally, the program recognizes that changing habits happens overtime and not by just giving people information. The male participants, be they designated trainers or community activists, are trained on issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and how to cope with HIV/AIDS vulnerability. Men and boys participate in stage drama and singing groups. They join in the effort with an intent to create awareness on the vulnerability of people living with HIV/AIDS, especially for women and girls.

The program translated the training program manual on Gender communication and HIV into the local language<sup>16</sup> and reports that it was widely used. A 1997 survey showed that 22,400 adults had successfully completed the Stepping Stones training program.<sup>17</sup> Similar to the Safe Schools program for Ghana, Uganda reportedly experienced some transformative changes in the communities of focus. Based on some key findings such as inadequate knowledge about the mode of transmission of the disease and about means of protection against infection. These findings were common among women and girls especially. For example, reports show only 49% of women as against 80% of men as having seen a condom before (Hadjipateras et al., 2006). The program had the intent for men and boys to led initiatives to reduce HIV/AIDS infection – increase use of condoms, increase respect for women who refused sex, less domestic violence recorded and co-operation around household chores. According to program results, the training program also improved communication among spouses and their children on issues surrounding sexual health. Spouses now discuss the use of condoms as a preventive measure from contracting HIV/AIDS. The program also provides male participants with important life skills such as respect for women and better communication skills within the family setting. Men and boys are more mindful of patriarchal privileges and make a conscious effort to be accommodating of women and girls as co-equals.

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<sup>16</sup>[http://www.steppingstonesfeedback.org/resources/7/SS\\_ActionAid\\_EvaluatingSteppingStones\\_TWallace\\_2006.pdf](http://www.steppingstonesfeedback.org/resources/7/SS_ActionAid_EvaluatingSteppingStones_TWallace_2006.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

The program categorizes implementing results under some key indicators. The impact of involving men and boys in programming is made evident in the following areas; knowledge of HIV/AIDS, attitudes and behavior towards people living with HIV/AIDS, risky sexual/cultural practices, gender relations and communication with family. Prior to program implementation, about 96% of people reportedly knew about the disease in the communities of focus. However, knowledge about mode of transmitting the disease was very poor among men and women in these communities. Men and boys-led initiatives such as community durbars and one-on-one counselling were intended to improve the level of knowledge about disease transmission. For instance, less than 3 in 10 (Hadjipateras et al., 2006) women knew about the possibility of mothers with HIV/AIDS transmitting disease to an unborn child. Through effective communication and advocacy initiatives ratios appeared to have increased overtime.

The Stepping Stones program continues to address the challenge of stigmatization associated with HIV/AIDS. The change in perceptions of people regarding the disease has not yet been successful. The program engages men and boys to undertake community awareness drives with the intention of erasing some stigmas. For instance, communities of focus receive education on the fact that not all women with HIV/AIDS have sexually promiscuous lifestyles. One program participant stated, "*The community previously feared HIV; now they are better informed and there are fewer stigmas*" (Hadjipateras et al., 2006). The qualitative data also indicates reported changes in risky sexual/cultural practices. For instance, young women reported that they have stopped sharing men as they

used to and most importantly, the young men reported to have ceased the sexual initiation practice of having several sexual partners before marriage. The program reportedly has slowly decreased the patriarchal privileges in the communities of focus. In a focus group discussion in the Pabbo Camp, “...*Before I was to be feared – you couldn’t play around with me. Stepping Stones has taught me to be respectful at home.*” and “*Before I was trained, I forced my wife into sex. Now I ask her when I want to and, if she has a problem, I wait*” (Hadjipateras et al., 2006: 31) After the implementation of Stepping Stones, there was a vast improvement in communication. About 85% of community members discussed sex with their children as compared to an earlier 27% and 30% recording for women and men respectively. Additionally more couples discussed sex between themselves as per program results.

In conclusion, I note that most donor agencies conduct their own due diligence on prospective implementing partners. I base this assertion on my experience working with UNICEF in its New York Headquarters. However, I would like to note that readers should approach self-reported results and findings from third party evaluations with caution for a few reasons. One, program partners and evaluators sign contracts to work with and on behalf of donor agencies in various communities. Donor agencies usually renew such contracts conditionally (Wallace et al., 2013). The implementing organizations in both case studies discussed in this paper also operate under contract. Therefore, out of human nature the tension between honest self-evaluations and fear of losing a contract is real. Program evaluations should follow and objective assessment of strategy, program activities and a



resulting change in social relations. Therefore, while self-evaluation reports of program by DevTech Systems Inc. and ACORD informs my analysis of the successful program results for Safe Schools in Ghana and Stepping Stones in Uganda, I take the politics of evaluation into consideration. Furthermore, ActionAid International conducted an external review of the Safe Schools Program in Uganda, however the review itself stated that the Safe Schools Program was not participatory enough (Wallace, 2006) regardless of what the donor purports is the value of these activities.

## **CONCLUSION**

Violence against women and girls requires a combined effort of civil society organizations, individuals and the state. In this paper, I have shown how two donors are guiding efforts and how two non-governmental organizations are implementing programs to end violence against women and girls. The inclusion of men and boys in programming efforts to either prevent or reduce violence against women and girls is very important. The ideal situation is to have a world in which violence ceases to exist but to achieve this, transforming existing negative social norms and accepted attitudes that propagate violence is essential. The quest for such transformative programming in this case calls for the engagement of men and boys interested in changing negative attitudes and social practices. Society must challenge patriarchal norms to achieve gender equality. Gender-based violence programming initiatives have increasingly accepted that including men and boys in programming as advocates and activists is the way to go.

I am however aware that the endorsement of male engagement in resolving the issue of violence against women and girls is not without criticism. Critics emphasize an on-going temptation by programming initiatives to put men and boys in the driver seats making them the center of attention. Some program evaluation analysts consider this new direction of programming as acutely updating patriarchy – making men and boys lead initiatives rather than including them.

The inclusion of men and boys must occur at all levels of society starting with the social institution of the family up to and including gender equitable laws and policies. The inclusion of male engagement programming with broader social movements working in favor of gender equality to reduce violence against women and girls may lead to more sustainable results. In the case of men and boys involvement on the relationship and individual levels, programs target change at attitudes and cultures. Working with young males at a point when they are now forming their attitudes toward gender relations, is a key part of male engagement programming. This is because the chances of being successful with these males understanding the need for gender equality are high.

This challenge of ending violence against women and girls is an inter-generational problem, as change in attitudes and norms does not happen overnight (Chant, 2000). The process requires dedication and persistence. In circumstances where men and boys become advocates and activists against gender inequality, some do face personal and societal challenges in some cases from father figures. Many people still practice the stereotype about men being more powerful than women are. For instance, a qualitative study

conducted in Bolivia on male engagement in gender equality gives an account of some male participants' experiences as follows; *“My father was always macho...when I cried he would tell me that men do not cry. (Aged 16)”* and another person states, *“My father is very macho and that is why he bothers me a lot when I help my mother in the kitchen (Aged 17)”* (Gervais, 2012).

Programming engaging men and boys that seeks to transform deeply internalized patriarchal norms is not simple. However, in outlining positive steps that donor agencies, civil society and individuals are taking, I hope to show that effective programming can yield positive results. These unique initiatives reflect how deeply concerned donor agencies are about gender inequality. Development practitioners are still trying to determine the best way to end violence against women and girls. The current strategy of male engagement, given the role that patriarchal norms play, is a suitable point of departure and one worth support. Telling men and boys the dire consequences of gender inequality for women and girls is not enough. Instead, men and boys should be engaged in program interventions and understand why their inclusion is essential to positive outcomes for their sisters, mothers and wives. Interventions that seek to change mentalities and gradually build the understanding and acceptance that men and women should be treated equally, brings about sustainable change eventually (Gervais, 2012; Chant S., 2000; Jewkes et al., 2015).

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