



## WAYS OF WORKING WITH MEN: CASE STUDIES

### Introduction

This section of the report comprises an exploration into some initiatives and programmes working with men as partners and allies to end gender-based violence. These initiatives have been implemented by some local and international organisations as part of the search for solutions to end violence against women. This is not an exhaustive collection of case studies, but rather a sample of different formats being utilised in the struggle to end gender-based violence and to change patriarchal attitudes and behaviour.

This section of the report documents information gathered from organisations working with men to end violence against women.

### Methodology

The research was of a qualitative and exploratory nature and employed the following data collection methods:

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with individual staff members working in the South African programmes and projects during 2002. In the case of international organisations, e-mail correspondence and telephonic discussions were used to gather information. Case studies were then compiled from the information gathered.

Quantitative research methodology was employed where organisations submitted relevant documentation. Random sampling of identified organisations was done in terms of their availability.

### Objectives

The focus of the case study process was to:

- Identify organisations working in the field, nationally and internationally
- Explore methodologies employed by these organisations
- Identify best practices used

## Ways of working with men

A number of different strategies are employed by organisations working with men, both locally and internationally. Three of the key areas identified include working with men to transform attitudes and values, working with men as partners and working with men as perpetrators.

### i. Transforming Attitudes and Values: Understanding Masculinities

The work undertaken by most organisations working with men to transform gender relations is underpinned by a focus on transforming attitudes and values. This focus is significant because it illustrates a deeper rather than a superficial analysis and points to the substantive nature of work being done in this area.

Globally, many organisations and structures are seeking to understand how masculinity is constructed and transferred between generations. The aim is to reinforce positive conceptions of masculinity and eliminate negative or destructive versions of masculinity, especially where they impact negatively upon the health and safety of women, and on society in general.

South Africa's need to address the issue of how men's masculinity is conceptualised and reproduced is a vital component of the efforts to rebuild society in the aftermath of Apartheid. Traced back to Apartheid and its ideological foundations, South African men are still trying to deal with an alienated identity – and the resulting manifestation is in asserting their masculinity through violence.<sup>54</sup> Within the white community masculinity has often been reinforced as an expression of power, control and violence.

The violence used to maintain Apartheid reinforced the role of violence within society. One way in which this was epitomised was through the 'family murder' syndrome, whereby a father would commit suicide but kill his wife and children first. In addition, the uncertainty surrounding Apartheid's end for all communities may have increased tendencies to use

violence as an instrument to regain a sense of control for some men. These social ills transformed male identities into something typified by aggressiveness, risk-taking, sexual prowess and dominance over women. Amplified by the media, such stereotyped notions of masculinity have now become entrenched.

With the introduction of HIV into the social equation, the consequences of reinforcing unequal gender relations are now deadlier than ever before. Commentators note that the twin epidemics of AIDS and violence against women and children in South Africa are linked to these concepts of male identity. With the spread of the AIDS epidemic, frequent casual sex, unprotected sex and forced sex put men and women at risk of HIV infection, and fuel the spread of the epidemic. Such sexual practices are often the result of power imbalances in relationships, where women have little say over the actions of men. Research and interventions in this area are thus crucial for South Africa and for many countries where rape and domestic violence are still commonplace in spite of progressive legislation and criminal justice system actions (see summary report for examples of rape in Northern European countries). Masculinity underpins male behaviour toward women, and thus initiatives in this area have to form part of action against gender-based violence.

Specific stand-alone initiatives in this area are not usually undertaken. Instead the theme is incorporated into general research agendas or undertaken as a component of other programmes.

### ii. Men as Partners

Many organisations that have been working in the area of violence against women have started searching for more comprehensive solutions. Part of this search has been working with the causes of violence against women and working with men, in particular. Organisations who have taken on work in this field view men as allies and partners in the struggle for gender equality and generally believe that when men are accountable and responsible, they can work alongside women to end gender-based violence and to transform gender relations.