

A Research Guide for Conducting an Exploratory Qualitative Study on the Roles of Positive Masculinities and Male Engagement in the Ending of Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa

Prepared by: African Population and Health Research Center (Kenya), Center for Social Research, University of Malawi (Malawi), The Sudd Institute (South Sudan), United Nations Population Fund (ESARO)

OCTOBER 2024



Table of Content

LIST OF ABBREVIATION	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
About the guide	5
How the guide evolved	5
KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONDUCTING A RESEARCH STUDY	7
Resources.....	7
Translation of the tools and language of interview	7
Recruitment and training of field teams.....	8
Fieldwork training	9
Fieldwork logistics	10
Risks and mitigation plans	10
Study environment:	12
Timelines:.....	12
A SAMPLE QUALITATIVE STUDY PROTOCOL	13
Abstract.....	14
Introduction	14
Problem statement and justification	14
Objectives.....	16
Literature review.....	16
Methodology	18
References	24
APPENDICES	25
Appendix 3: IDI Guide for Community Leaders	28
Appendix 4: IDI Guide for Programme Beneficiaries (English)	31
Appendix 5: FGD Guide for Community Members (English)	33

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

APHRC	- African Population and Health Research Center
UNFPA	- United Nations Population Fund
CSR	- Center for Social Research
SIARP	- Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program.
VAWG	- violence against women and girls
GBV	- gender-based violence
HP	- harmful practices
AU	- African Union
PI	- Principal Investigator (PI).
ToR	- Terms of references
FGD	- Focus group discussions (FGDs)
SRHR	- sexual and reproductive health and rights
SGBV	- sexual and gender-based violence
UNIMAREC	- University of Malawi's Research Ethics Committee
SDG	- Sustainable Development Goal
CSOs	- Civil society organizations
IPV	- intimate partner violence (IPV)
IDI	- In-depth interviews
KII	- Key informant interviews
PPE	- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
ESARO	- Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This protocol was developed and funded through the European Union to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) for the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program. We would like to express our profound gratitude to the African Population and Health Research Center, the Centre for Social Research at the University of Malawi, the Sudd Institute in South Sudan, and the Population Council of Kenya, who supported the development of the protocol and engaged in the study.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to the communities and study participants, the Ministry of Gender, and Spotlight program representatives in Malawi and South Sudan, whose participation in the study provided insights and contributed to the lessons learned, challenges, and best practices that were used for the improvement of the standard version of the protocol.



INTRODUCTION

About the guide

This guide offers a comprehensive overview of the elements to include in a protocol for a qualitative exploratory study on the roles of positive masculinities and male engagement in eradicating violence against women and girls in Africa. It is designed for use by institutions, individuals, and organizations involved in or planning qualitative research on initiatives aimed at ending violence against women and girls (VAWG), gender-based violence (GBV), and harmful practices (HP).

The guide outlines key considerations for conducting a qualitative study focused on positive masculinity and male involvement in addressing VAWG. It also provides a sample protocol that users can modify for their own research needs. Additionally, it covers essential topics such as ethics, data processing and sharing, risk assessment, and mitigation strategies. While many procedures are straightforward, contextual adaptations may be necessary.

This guide aims to assist in developing research protocols and managing fieldwork, highlighting important concepts and components to consider or include in study protocols as detailed in the following sections.

How the guide evolved

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), Population Council-Kenya, Center for Social Research (Malawi–University of Malawi) and The Sudd Institute (South Sudan) led exploratory studies on positive masculinity and male engagement in ending violence against women and girls in Malawi and South Sudan with support from the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program (SIARP). This guide is based on the protocol that guided the implementation of the studies. Its purpose is to inform the design and application of standardized protocols, instruments and techniques for conducting qualitative research on positive masculinity and male involvement to end violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the African region.

The adaptation of country-specific guidelines and instruments for conducting the country-specific studies was spearheaded by the principal investigators from each partner institution. The principal investigators also oversaw the process of obtaining ethical approvals. The implementation of the study involved a number of processes, including reviewing the tools and methodological approaches, training data collection teams, tool pre-testing and refinement, fieldwork supervision, transcription, coding and analysis of the data, and validation of the findings.

This guide is an essential step in generating evidence needed to inform effective male engagement in efforts to end VAWG, which is still a major concern in Africa and around the world. The guide responds to one of the goals of the SIARP, which is to produce high-quality data in order to strengthen the evidence base for policy actions to end VAWG in AU Member States.

Who can use the guide: This guide is intended for use by researchers, academicians and program implementers working to end VAWG, especially in the African context.

How to use it: Whereas core components of the guide are meant to be cross-cutting, specific components can be adapted to suit local contexts.

References: For further information, users of the guide can reach out to APHRC Research and Capacity Strengthening Unit (info@aphrc.org). You can also access online courses on the “Collection, Analysis and Utilization of Data on Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa” on <https://soma.aphrc.org/> and a “Harmonized and Standardized Data Collection Toolkit on Violence Against Women and Girls, Harmful Practices and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights”(United Nations Development Programme, 2023). These materials will provide reference information on some very important components to consider when planning for similar studies on VAWG.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONDUCTING A RESEARCH STUDY

Resources

- **Adequate interview equipment and study materials:** To conduct effective interviews, it's crucial to plan ahead and use high-quality recording equipment, including reliable recorders, and to budget for spare batteries. Due to the sensitive nature of the topics, personal phones should not be used for recording interviews to avoid ethical dilemmas. Whenever possible, having a backup recorder is recommended in case the primary device malfunctions. In addition to recorders, you will need notebooks and pens to take notes and document non-verbal communication that may not be captured by audio. Notebooks are particularly useful if there are issues with the recorders and for recording sociodemographic information, especially during focus group discussions where such data is collected separately to maintain anonymity. Other essential resources include field supplies like a bag for safely storing study materials, protective gear such as an umbrella if needed, appropriate footwear, and transportation arrangements.
- **Fieldwork allowances and wages:** Depending on the length of the study and the number of field interviewers, enough funds must be set aside to support research ethical approval and research permits processes, as well as staff costs for the core research teams and fees/wages for data collection teams and any consultants brought on board. If not provided as part of field supplies, a separate budget should be allocated for fieldwork expenses such as transportation, communication, and accommodation.
- **Reimbursements:** Often, research participants incur costs associated with participating in the study such as transportation to the interview venue. Studies should reimburse any cost incurred by the research participants. Some studies also provide a token of appreciation for participating in the study. However, careful consideration should be given in considering such incentives and should adhere to the approved research protocol, and research guidelines in the study context.

Translation of the tools and language of interview

Selection of study tools is done at the study design phase. However, the tools may need to be contextualized, including translation into a language understood by the study participants. Often, there is need to validate the tools, including the translated versions prior to data collection to assess whether the questions, concepts and constructs are understood the same by targeted populations.

During fieldwork training, the field teams review the data collection tools, allowing for additional contextual adaptations and refinement of translated versions of the tool. The translation process is iterative and involves both technical and non-technical expertise, forward and backward translations to

ensure no meaning is lost in the process and there is unanimity in the language, concept and constructs being translated. The language used to administer the tool is determined by the target study population or respondents.

Recruitment and training of field teams

- **Selection of field interviewers and translators (if needed):** Careful selection of field teams is vital to the study's success. To address language barriers between interviewers and participants, translators might be necessary. However, relying on translators can compromise data privacy and accuracy. Instead, consider hiring multilingual field teams capable of conducting interviews in respondents' preferred languages. This approach minimizes errors and ensures confidentiality. Some studies even exclude participants who can't communicate in the interview languages.

The success of qualitative interviews and the quality of the data collected hinge on thorough fieldwork training and highly skilled field teams. Key factors to consider when recruiting these teams include their education level, adaptability, contextual knowledge of the study sites, language proficiency, alertness, and strong communication and facilitation skills. Contextual factors and the nature of the study should guide the minimum qualifications for field teams, ensuring data quality is not compromised. These qualifications enable field teams to effectively recruit eligible participants, conduct interviews, compile reports and debriefing notes, and perform other tasks assigned by the supervisor, Principal Investigator (PI).

There are different approaches to recruiting field teams (United Nations Development Programme, 2023):

- Sourcing from existing databases of trained and experienced field interviewers (if one exists from the institution or institutional networks). The advantages of outsourcing field interviewers are that they are readily available, trained and have experience in data collection. However, training of field teams for the current study must take place even when the field teams have been sourced from existing database. There might be a need to develop terms of references (ToR) for the current study
- Another option is to conduct fresh recruitments. If this happens, it is important to develop a ToR that clearly spell out the specific roles and responsibilities of the field teams, desired skill sets, experience, education level, and other required minimum qualifications.
- In both approaches above, conducting interviews to recruit the desired field interviewers is important. The selection of suitable candidates should be based on pre-defined criteria. Important considerations may include the following:
 - **Gender and age considerations:** Consider the nature of the interview questions and whether participants will be comfortable answering the questions if the interviewer is of the opposite gender. For instance, most VAWG studies involve interviewing women and girls on sensitive topics and participants may feel most comfortable being interviewed by females. In addition, in some cultures, male interviewers may not interview female participants and vice versa. Similarly, depending on the focus of the study and the characteristics of the study population, age of the interviewer is an important factor to consider.
 - **Contextual factors:** Certain neighborhoods may pose potential risks, particularly for female interviewers, if no security measures are in place. Cultural contexts may dictate who you recruit as a member of the field team. Look out for suitable personal characteristics, including those with prior experience, empathy, and with good listening skills.
- **Number of field interviewers/teams:** The number of field teams in a study depends on the time it takes to conduct one interview, which in turn helps determine the length of the data collection period. Please be aware that a VAWG interview guide may take longer to complete due to the sensitive nature

of questions and sometimes the questions may. Do not expect interviewers to complete as many interviews as they would on less sensitive topics.

Fieldwork training

Once a qualified field team has been recruited, it is crucial to train them to enhance their interviewing skills and deepen their knowledge of the study topic, enabling them to answer participants' questions accurately. Fieldwork training helps teams understand procedures, familiarize themselves with study tools (including any translated versions), and get to know other team members and the core research team. Given the sensitivities around VAWG studies, field interviewers must be trained and equipped with the necessary skills to navigate sensitive topics, ensure privacy and confidentiality, handle distress cases, and uphold ethical principles. To aid this process, the following general components should be covered during fieldwork training:

- a. Basic training:** This component should focus on equipping interviewers with skills to fully understand the purpose and structure of the survey, effectively and correctly conduct an interview, develop rapport and manage relationships with participants, understand their role in the data collection process, and accurately capture information. For VAWG studies, this may include:
 - Overview of VAWG
 - Research ethics and informed consent processes
 - Interviewing skills/techniques for VAWG studies
 - Review of data collection tools, including translated and electronic versions if applicable
 - Role plays and mock interviews to test the flow and consistency of the questions and familiarity with the tool
 - Roles and responsibilities of field teams, including communication channels.
 - Data quality assurance processes. Additional quality measures for interview processes should be discussed
 - Fieldwork procedures and logistics
- b. Sensitivity training:** This component should equip interviewers with skills to ask sensitive questions about experiences of violence respectfully, accurately gauge participants' emotions and reactions in various situations, and respond appropriately.
- c. Distress protocol, distress screening, referral and reporting:** Some questions can trigger past traumas and cause distress for both participants and interviewers. During training, teams should review a protocol for screening distress and outline steps to take when distress is detected. A referral mechanism for psychosocial support should be established. Cases should also be documented and reported on to the PI and in some cases, depending on ethical approval recommendations, to the ethics review board. The field teams should be well equipped with skills on how to respond to participants identified during the interview to be at risk or have experienced violence. A distress protocol should have the following components:
 - What to do if a respondent breaks down and what support is available to them.
 - When to report or refer victims for help.
 - How to identify trauma and appropriate protocol for addressing it
 - Where to seek help if affected by the horror stories or they are re-traumatized
 - How to handle cases of insecurity? For example, if the abuser walks in during the interview and overheard something that triggers his/her anger
 - How to obtain contacts of law enforcement in the study areas
 - The team should be provided with referral information for survivors who may need counselling and other support.

d. Community entry/stakeholder engagement:

This component should focus on providing field teams with the necessary skills to securely navigate the study community, such may include engagement with community leadership including government representatives at community level, managing contextual factors such as insecurity, community mobilization etc. Caution should also be exercised to prevent exposing for instance, VAWG survivors and their affiliates to the risks of stigma and injury from the community and perpetrators. Consistent messages should be shared with study communities and other stakeholders.

Fieldwork logistics

Fieldwork logistics may vary depending on nature of study, number of field teams, geographical location among others. Ensuring all field work logistics are in place ahead of fieldwork activities is important for the success of the data collection. For example, setting daily target number of interviews is a key component of fieldwork logistics.

The number of interviews conducted by a field interviewer is entirely determined by the length and complexity of the questionnaires or studies, the duration of the study or data collection period, available budgets, and the target sample size. The team should set reasonable daily target interviews to allow the research assistants to obtain quality data without strain.

Risks and mitigation plans

Data loss

The risk of losing data is a significant concern in research. Unlike quantitative data where there are measures to ensure that data are synced real-time to a central server ensuring back-up in case of loss, qualitative recordings are often the primary sources of data. In most contexts, the recordings need to be manually moved from the audio-recorder to a computer or a central server for further processing. Data may be lost due to various reasons—technical issues such as device malfunction, file corruption, accidental erasure, or improper management of recordings by field teams pose significant risks. Data that has been captured may also be lost due to theft or damage to recording equipment.

To address technical problems that may lead to data loss, it is crucial to implement proactive measures for managing recordings. The following measures may help safeguard qualitative research data from technical challenges and potential data loss:

- Train field teams on appropriate procedures to ensure data is not lost.
- Routine testing of recording equipment before each interview is essential
- Use of dependable and high-caliber backup and recording solutions to enhance data security
- Instantly moving recordings to a secure location like Google Drive after every session helps prevent loss during recording sessions
- Redundant recording techniques, such as using two devices simultaneously, which can provide increased dependability
- Provide resources to ensure data are backed up elsewhere other than the recording devices
- Implement version control to prevent unintentional deletions or overwriting of data
- Ensure that all recording devices have a full charge or are connected to a steady power supply to minimize the risk of data loss during the interview
- Consider employing backup power sources, such as external batteries or uninterruptible power supplies, for added reliability

Insecurity

Field teams might feel unsafe due to risky neighborhoods or the sensitive nature of the study and its questions, which could threaten their security. VAWG studies can be sensitive due to the nature of questions being discussed, and which may touch on social norms and cultural practices. For some communities, touching on such issues may pose a threat to their social fabric and hence a security threat to field teams. Perpetrators of VAWG may also pose a security risk not only to field teams but also to survivors of VAWG.

Security concerns expose researchers to a range of psychological and physical dangers. Therefore, a comprehensive risk mitigation strategy is crucial:

- Before embarking on fieldwork, conduct a thorough risk assessment, mitigation measures and establish communication plans for team members when they feel at risk.
- Prioritize the safety of the research teams by providing training on personal safety and cultural sensitivity. This may include culturally appropriate mannerisms in the study community such dress code and greetings that correspond to cultural values and foster positive interactions
- Have regular debrief sessions with field teams to discuss challenges being encountered.
- In case of emergencies, develop contingency plans and ensure regular check-ins.
- Having a field guide who has extensive knowledge of the study setting can further enhance security during fieldwork.

One specific concern is the potential for harassment or threats that researchers may face from participants, stakeholders, or other individuals involved in the study. Mitigating this risk involves implementing clear codes of conduct for all team members and establishing protocols for reporting and addressing instances of harassment or threats. Equipping team members with conflict resolution skills and personal safety training is essential for navigating challenging situations.

In environments with heightened risks, consider involving local authorities or security personnel such as the police to ensure the well-being of the research team. In practice, researchers must ensure they have all the contact information for security personnel in their possession and have identified stations that they can quickly rush to or call in cases of security threats. This information can be gathered at the time of community entry.

Emotional risks

In the course of an interview, both participants and field interviewers may encounter potential distress, particularly when delving into personal or sensitive topics. To mitigate the emotional impact of such discussions, it is crucial to proactively plan for counseling services and establish guidelines on how to address and handle distress. Recognizing the potential emotional impact, there should be implementation of support systems, including debriefing sessions and referrals to counseling services, to provide participants and field interviewers with the necessary assistance.

Additionally, fostering an environment that allows participants the option to skip questions or withdraw if they feel uncomfortable ensures ethical and considerate treatment throughout the research process. By integrating these mitigation strategies, the well-being of both participants and field interviewers is prioritized.

Time commitment in long interview sessions

Participants may feel burdened by the amount of time required for interviews, observations, and other research tasks. Prolonged focus group discussions (FGDs) can cause participant attrition, since some participants may leave the sessions midway to attend to other activities. Long interview sessions may lead to high non-response rates in future studies.

To address this problem clearly state the time commitment needed during the informed consent process. Show consideration for the time of participants by being accommodative and flexible when it comes to scheduling interviews. When it is feasible, the research budget should include consideration for tokens of appreciation or refreshments for participants and a strategy to refund any costs incurred because of their involvement in the study.

Study environment:

The sensitivity of the study requires prioritizing respondent safety when selecting an interview setting. Create a suitable and pleasant environment in which study participants can freely express themselves without fear of being victimized. To accord participants maximum privacy, interviews must take place in secure environments that are not accessible to third parties.

Interviewers should exercise vigilance to guarantee that there is no breach of privacy, and if so, the interview must stop or rescheduled as may be appropriate. The setting should also be very calm and conformable to allow for optimum attention with no distractions.

Timelines:

It is important to provide a realistic and achievable activity plan with clear timeframes that indicate when you intend to complete the study within a specific timeframe and budget. The study timeline is critical for successful research implementation because it allows researchers to define their scope of work by breaking it down into realistic and attainable activities and measures. Setting clear and detailed timelines for each task will assist the researcher in assessing progress and adjusting the plan as needed. It also shows the researcher's high level of competence and dedication to the study. It assists researchers in preparing and adjusting mitigation strategies to foreseeable challenges and risks, as well as improving proper resource management. Creating a study timeline also helps to explain a researcher's intentions, commitments, and expectations for what to deliver and when, making it easier to provide funders, the research team, and study collaborators with correct information regarding the study.

A study timeline also aids in understanding and assignment of roles, responsibilities and expectations of research teams and collaborators. Setting up a realistic, achievable, and successful study timeline necessitates first understanding the study's duration, the available resources, and then breaking study down into achievable stages, measurable tasks for each stage, and the time period during which each activity may be completed. Then, work backwards to create realistic activity timeline that include all tasks and a definite implementation period. In general, a well-designed timeline is essential for defining one's scope of work, demonstrating one's competence, and communicating key deliverables at particular points in the life of the project.

Table 1: A sample project activity timelines/work plan for reference

Research Study Activity Plan - July to December, 2023	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
Protocol Development						
IRB approvals						
Recruitment and training of data collection teams						
Data collection						
Data cleaning, analysis and report writing						
Report Disseminationand Sharing of the study results						

A SAMPLE QUALITATIVE STUDY PROTOCOL

In this section, we provide a sample qualitative study protocol for an explorative study focused on positive masculinity and male engagement in ending VAWG in Malawi and South Sudan. The sample protocol refers to the Malawi context and can be used as a guide to inform the development of context-specific protocols by those who want to conduct similar studies in different settings in the sub-Saharan Africa. We highlight the main sections of the protocol. It is important to note that different organizations may have different templates for study protocols. However, the content of the protocol does not vary much.

Cover page

Cover page includes the title of the study and details about the research team, including their name, qualification, affiliation, and their role in the study. It is important to indicate who the principal investigator (PI) is and the co-PI, if any. Based on the scope of the study, it is important to mention the collaborating sites, including the site PI. Consultants in the study should also be mentioned if they are part of the research team. See the table below as an example:

Table 2: Research team

Name of investigator	Qualification	Role (PI, Co-Investigators, Data Analyst, Research Officers etc.)	Institution of affiliation
Jane Doe	PhD	PI	APHRC, Kenya
John Mumo	M.A.	Co-PI	APHRC, Kenya
Collaborating site			
Lucy Mudat Doe	PhD	Site PI	The Sudd Institute, South Sudan
Consultants			
Beatrice Kuntembwa	PhD	Data analyst	Center for Social Research, Malawi

Abstract

This is a summary of what the study is about. It should be clear and articulate enough for a person who has no time to read through the whole protocol to grasp the intended purpose of the study, methodology, expected outcomes and implications. It includes some background information, for this case on violence against women and girls (VAWG) including the magnitude, and policies and programmes that are in place to address the issue. It details the critical gap or problem that the study aims to address, and the methods being used to address this gap.

More importantly, it includes how the expected findings from the study are useful for research, programs and policy action and how those findings will be disseminated. Also included is the Institutional Review Board(s) that will review the protocol for ethical and scientific merit. If various approvals and permits are needed for the study, they should be indicated here. If a multi-country study is being conducted, the country-specific review boards should also be indicated. The duration of the study, and if need be, the funding agency can be included as well.

Introduction

This section gives detailed background information about the problem being investigated, in this case, VAWG, the justification and the objectives of the study. For example:

Quality and disaggregated data on violence against women and girls (VAWG) and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are important for (Kendall, 2020) informing policies and programmes that aim to prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)/harmful practices (HPs) and promoting SRHR, (United Nations Development Programme, 2023) monitoring progress, and (World Health Organization, 2022) ensuring accountability of duty bearers.

Lack of sex and age-disaggregated data is a critical data gap in effective programming to end SGBV and improve SRHR. While it is widely acknowledged that engaging men and boys in programmes aimed at ending VAWG is a promising strategy, rigorous measurement of gender norms change as they relate to VAWG and SRHR—including how positive masculinity and male engagement can be used to prevent VAWG and to empower women and girls—remains a gap in the global development community.

These challenges underscore the importance of generating evidence and strengthening regional data and research institutions, structures and mechanisms to collect and analyze age and sex-disaggregated data to inform policy and programme development on gender norms change, positive masculinities and male engagement to prevent sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices, and to empower women and girls.

This protocol is submitted by the Centre for Social Research (CSR) to the University of Malawi's Research Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC) for ethical approval. The project intends to explore the role of positive masculinities and male engagement in the elimination of violence against women and girls in Malawi, sexual and gender-based violence, and harmful practices.

Problem statement and justification

Violence against women and girls is a pervasive global public health problem, more so, in the African region. The effect of violence on women and girls' health and welfare, their families, and communities is substantial. The high rate of VAWG exposes women and girls to severe health and social challenges, including HIV, unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, maternal morbidity, and deaths. VAWG also poses broader socio-economic challenges.

Child marriage, for example, disadvantages girls by hindering their opportunities to attain the education and life skills required for their economic empowerment. The pervasive nature of VAWG demands urgent

action to promote and facilitate its elimination as articulated in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5)– achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

While it is widely acknowledged that engaging men and boys in programmes aimed at ending VAWG is a promising strategy towards the elimination of VAWG, rigorous measurement of gender norms change as they relate to VAWG and SRHR—including how positive masculinity and male engagement can be used to prevent VAWG and to empower women and girls—remains a gap in the global development community. These challenges underscore the importance of generating evidence and strengthening regional data to inform policy and programme development on gender norms change, positive masculinities, and male engagement to eliminate VAWG and empower women and girls.

Moreover, while the importance of addressing cultural norms and practices that drive VAWG is well known, the need to involve men and boys to address this is imperative. Programs aimed at the elimination of VAWG are now increasingly engaging men and boys as stakeholders and participants in gender transformative approaches. Emerging evidence has demonstrated that active and meaningful engagement with men and boys is essential in achieving gender parity and building positive masculinity, as men play an important role in challenging the patriarchal beliefs and practices that disadvantage women in society (MenEngage Alliance, 2014).

This is also an important strategy to transform community perceptions of VAWG (Jewkes et al., 2011). Well-designed interventions with men and boys that employ gender transformative approaches to establish gender equitable relationships have proven to be more effective in influencing positive behavior change and attitude transformation towards VAWG/GBV (Barker et al., 2010).

Although limited studies exist, there is a clear indication of successful male engagement or the potential and impacts of the program-level efforts to engage men and boys to achieve gender equality and transform their attitudes towards gender equality in the prevention of VAWG. However, there is a need to further explore and establish how best the process of male engagement can be facilitated and supported to the full realization of gender equality between men and women. As such, additional evaluation of VAWG interventions that engage men in gender transformative approaches is necessary and of priority to inform the design and implementation of similar interventions in different African contexts.

In view of the above, a consortium comprising of the African Population and Health Research Center, the Population Council-Kenya, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, UNFPA Malawi country office and the Center for Social Research, University of Malawi will implement a pilot study in Malawi to explore the facilitators and barriers to harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG and map out interventions or approaches perceived to be most effective in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programs to end/prevent VAWG.

The purpose of the pilot study is to generate evidence on positive masculinity and male engagement in ending VAWG as well as key learnings that can be used to scale up and implement larger studies in different contexts within the African region. In addition, the pilot study is aimed at strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs), research institutions, and government agencies on collection, and analysis use of data on positive masculinity and male engagement in relation to ending VAWG. The pilot study is implemented as part of the SIARP, which prioritizes strengthening existing strategies, protocols and initiatives that promote the rights of women and girls in Africa. SIARP underscores the need to support the capacity building of civil society organizations in data collection, analysis, use and coordination as focus areas related to VAWG.

The pilot study findings will provide policymakers and program implementers with an understanding of the influence of unequal gender norms and power relations on society and the impact and strategies of engaging men and boys as agents of change in the efforts to prevent VAWG (Jewkes et al., 2020).

Objectives

Main objective

To explore the role of positive masculinities and male engagement in the elimination of violence against women and girls in Malawi.

Specific objectives

1. To explore the facilitators and barriers to harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs
2. To map out and identify interventions or approaches perceived to be most effective in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programmes to end/prevent violence against women and girls/SGBV/HPs.

Research questions

1. What are the facilitators and barriers to harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs?
 - What are the manifestations of positive and negative masculinities in different contexts?
2. What interventions or approaches are most effective in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programmes to end/prevent violence against women and girls/SGBV/HPs?
 - Policy interventions
 - Programmatic interventions

Literature review

Under literature review, highlight the existing literature on the topic, especially the more recent recently published literature, critiquing the literature to highlight the existing gaps in the literature, and how the current study will fill those gaps. For example:

Social and cultural norms influence behavior thus affecting various facets of life including health outcomes. Evidence has shown that inequitable socio-cultural norms significantly encourage power imbalances between men and women (Cislaghi & Heise, 2018). The unequal norms steered by negative masculinity—have continuously defined decisions and behavior that undermine gender-equitable relations (MenEngage Alliance; UN Women; & UNFPA, 2014). The dominant patriarchal ideology, which alludes to men as holding a high status in society, has derailed efforts to achieve gender equality and rendered girls vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Jewkes et al., 2005). For instance, perpetration of intimate partner violence (IPV) against female partners by heterosexual men has previously been associated with masculinity discrepancy stress emanating from perceived failure to conform to the socially prescribed gender norms of a particular community/society. Moreover, men who conform to the traditional masculine gender norms are likely to be at higher risk of perpetrating violence and harmful practices toward women and girls (Reidy et al., 2014).

A systematic review conducted across sub-Saharan African countries in refugee settings showed that perpetration of gender-based violence (GBV) by male youths is positively associated with pre-existing cultural and religious beliefs and social pressure (Fry et al., 2019). Further, amid forced migration, male perpetrators rode on personal, cultural, and societal established gender inequalities to support and commit GBV (Fry et al., 2019). Sociocultural and environmental factors including the traditional perception of masculinity, normalization of interpersonal violence, and commodification of sex that led to rape-supportive attitudes rendered girls vulnerable as victims of sexual exploitation and boys as perpetrators of GBV and harmful practices respectively (Petersen et al., 2005).

In South Africa, (Jewkes et al., 2011) found that sexual violence was associated with less equitable views on gender relations between men and women. For example, sexual entitlement was given as the reason why men engaged in rape (Jewkes et al., 2011). In Tanzania, findings from a study on community

perceptions of IPV showed that existing gender norms that accept women's subordination were continuously used to justify male violence (including IPV) and dominance towards women, and masculine norms were used to justify male dominance over women and IPV (Laisser et al., 2011). However, men who engaged in gender transformative programs exhibited divergent masculinity traits that were more gender-equitable demonstrating the effectiveness of gender transformative interventions to achieve gender equality (Park et al., 2022).

In South Sudan, findings from a study on gender inequitable norms and GBV showed that gender inequitable norms and violence against women and girls (VAWG) were acceptable (Scott et al., 2013). The study also showed the existence of socio-cultural beliefs that propagated VAWG including the need for women to tolerate violence to keep their families together. The study recommended the implementation of gender-transformative interventions that would address men's and women's attitudes toward GBV (Scott et al., 2013).

Retrogressive social norms and cultural practices coupled with a lack of legal knowledge have also worsened the issues related to GBV in Malawi, with women and girls bearing the heavy burden of GBV. In some communities in Malawi, women and girls are perceived to have a lower social status compared to men and boys making women and girls vulnerable to harmful practices from an early stage (Progressio blog, 2016). In addition, within patriarchal systems, negative stereotyping discourages men from actively engaging in gender equality activism (MenEngage Alliance, 2014).

Despite the evidence on how social norms propagate GBV, there remains evidence gaps to inform policy and programme development on gender norms change, positive masculinities, and male engagement to eliminate VAWG and empower women and girls. Programs aimed at the elimination of VAWG are now increasingly engaging men and boys as stakeholders and participants in gender transformative approaches, with emerging evidence showing meaningful engagement of men and boys is essential in achieving gender parity and building positive masculinity (MenEngage Alliance, 2014).

However, there is a need to further explore and establish how best male engagement can be facilitated to close the gender gap. As such, additional evaluation of VAWG interventions that engage men in gender transformative approaches is necessary and of priority to inform the design and implementation of similar interventions in different contexts. This pilot study explores the facilitators and barriers to harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG and map out interventions or approaches perceived to be most effective in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programs to end/prevent VAWG.



Methodology

The methodology section delves into the steps carried out in conducting the study. This is about the where, who, and how of the study. It may include the study population, study sample, sample size and recruitment, sampling methods (including inclusion and exclusion criteria), data collection procedures and how data will be analyzed.

This research builds on the socio-ecological framework to understand how positive masculinity impacts VAWG; and how male engagement could be a useful programmatic approach to eliminating VAWG. An ecological approach emphasizes the role of context in influencing behavior and looks at the individual, the individual's environment, and the interactions of the individuals with their environment and vice versa. The approach refers to the context in four nested aspects of the ecosystem—micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-systems. Microsystems are the pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations in a given face-to-face setting and include interactions with family, peers, partners, etc. that influence behavior. The interactions between the micro-systems to influence beliefs and behaviors create the mesosystem.

Mesosystems are mainly referred to as the “linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings”. Exo-systems refer to structures that impact one's behavior indirectly through interacting with microsystems and may include neighborhood contexts and community norms. The macro-systems refer to broad structures, such as culture, religious affiliations, ethnicity, laws and policies, and education systems that police behaviors. Using the socio-ecological approach is important in understanding the different levels and layers of interactions that influence positive masculinities and that are important in designing and implementing programmes aimed at ending VAWG.

Study site

The study will be conducted in Machinga District. Machinga district is one of the six districts where the Spotlight Initiative country programmes are being implemented. The district comprises both rural and urban areas.

Study participants

Since the study is about positive masculinity and male engagement in ending VAWG/SGBV/HPs, the population of interest is adults in areas where interventions on positive masculinity and male engagement have taken place. The research will be a cross-sectional exploratory qualitative study targeting adult community members (men and women aged 18 years or older), programme beneficiaries, community and religious leaders, representatives of community-based organizations, local government administration officials, and national-level policymakers and programme implementers.

Study period

The study is expected to take place from September 2023 to November 2023.

Sampling method

The study will be conducted in the purposively selected district of Machinga based on the presence of programme interventions on positive masculinity and male engagement in ending VAWG/SGBV/HPs. The study participants will all be purposively sampled as follows:

Community leaders will be purposively identified from the rural and urban communities based on their key roles as cultural and religious leaders, leaders of community-based organizations, and local government administration officials. These are likely to have information about interventions on male engagement and positive masculinity in their areas as well as information on VAWG/SGBV and HPs. Community leaders will be males or females aged 18 years or older.

Community members will be purposively identified with the help of the community considering their active participation in community activities. Community members will be males or females aged 18 years or older residing in the area who will be identified with the help of community leaders.

The key informants will be purposively identified based on their roles in formulating policies or implementing programmes related to gender, women's rights, or engaging men in the elimination of VAWG and harmful practices. The sample size for key informants was determined based on available resources for conducting the research. Key informants will be male or female individuals aged 18 years or older.

The beneficiaries will be purposively identified with the help of implementers of programmes that engage men in the elimination of VAWG and harmful practices and the promotion of women's rights. Similar to other target groups, the sample size for beneficiaries was determined based on available resources for conducting the research. Beneficiaries will be females and males aged 18 years or older who were targeted by programmes that support male engagement in the elimination of VAWG and the promotion of women's rights.

Table 3: Sample size

Category	Sample	Note
Key Informants	10	
Community Leaders	10	
Community Members	80	40 men and 40 women equally divided into 8 FGDs. For each gender, the groups will be disaggregated by age group (18-25 years, 25-35 years, 35-45 years, and 46 years or older).
Programme Beneficiaries	20	10 men and 10 women

Data collection instruments

Data collection will involve: Focus group discussions with community members; In-depth interviews with community leaders; Key informant interviews with policymakers and program implementers; In-depth interviews with programme beneficiaries.

Focus group discussions with community members

Focus group discussions with community members will be conducted face-to-face and will seek to understand the prevailing views on masculinity and engagement of men in programmes to end VAWG and promote women's rights. Each focus group discussion will comprise between 6 and 10 participants and will be facilitated by two interviewers with training in qualitative data collection (one facilitator and one note-taker) using a guide. Before each group discussion, participants will be asked to indicate their willingness to be part of the discussion by signing an informed consent form.

Participants will be asked to read, or the facilitator will read the informed consent document to participants and confirm that participants understand what it entails to participate in the discussions before allowing them to sign. Each group discussion is expected to last one hour and will be conducted in the national or the local language depending on which one the participants are comfortable with. The discussions will be held at locations that are convenient to most members of each group and will be audio-recorded with the consent of participants.

In-depth interviews with community leaders

In-depth interviews (IDIs) with community leaders will be conducted face-to-face by the same team of interviewers who will conduct focus group discussions with community members. IDIs with community leaders will explore the extent to which they are a barrier or facilitator of actions to eliminate harmful gender norms and practices in the community. Each community leader identified for inclusion in the

research will be asked to indicate his or her willingness to be interviewed by signing the informed consent document. Interviewers will give participants the opportunity to read or the interviewer to read for them the informed consent document. Interviewers will confirm that participants understand the nature of their involvement in the research before allowing them to sign the informed consent document.

Each IDI will last between 30 and 45 minutes and will be conducted in the national or local language depending on the preference of participants. The interviews will be audio-recorded with the consent of participants. It is anticipated that most of the interviews will take place at locations that are convenient for the participants. The interviewers will confirm with the participants that the chosen locations allow for the privacy of interviews. If the preferred location lacks privacy, interviewers will agree with participants on alternative locations that can provide privacy.

Key informant interviews with policy makers and program implementers

Key informant interviews (KIIs) will be conducted face-to-face where feasible; otherwise through phone by the same team of interviewers who will conduct focus group discussions with community members. KIIs with policymakers and programme implementers will seek to understand best practices and challenges in harnessing positive masculinities and engaging men in programmes to eliminate VAWG and promote the rights of women. Interviewers will contact the key informants by phone and request if they can talk to them. Interviewers will then briefly explain the study and ask if the participants are in an environment that allows for private conversation so that they are given more details about the research. Once a conducive environment is confirmed, interviewers will ask if they can read the informed consent document to the participants. Participants will then be asked to verbally indicate their willingness to participate in the research. It is anticipated that each KII will last between 30 and 45 minutes and will be conducted in English or the national language, depending on the preference of participants. The interviews will also be audio-recorded with the consent of participants.

In-depth interviews with beneficiaries

IDIs with programme beneficiaries will be conducted face-to-face by the same team of interviewers who will conduct focus group discussions with community members. The interviews will explore the extent to which programmes that promote positive masculinities and male engagement in ending VAWG and promoting women's rights contribute to improved outcomes for women and girls.

Each beneficiary targeted for the interview will be asked to indicate her willingness to participate in the research by signing the informed consent document. Participants will be asked to read or the interviewer will read the informed consent document to the participant before confirming that they understand the nature of their involvement in the research and giving them the opportunity to sign the document. The IDIs with beneficiaries will last between 30 and 45 minutes and will be conducted in the national or local language depending on the preference of participants. The interviews will be audio-recorded with the consent of participants. Most of the interviews will take place at locations that are convenient for the participants. The interviewers will confirm with the participants that the chosen locations allow for the privacy of interviews. If the preferred location lacks privacy, interviewers will agree with participants on alternative locations that can provide privacy.

Data management

Anonymity: The research will generate anonymized, individual-level qualitative data on the facilitators and barriers to harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs and on interventions or approaches perceived to be most effective in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programmes to end/prevent VAWG/SGBV/HPs.

Storage of audio files and transcripts: Audio recordings and transcripts will be stored in password protected computers. Once transcription is done, audio files will be deleted and transcripts will be edited to remove all identifying information and will be securely stored.

Access: Anonymized data will be available upon request through APHRC's Microdata Portal (<http://microdataportal.aphrc.org/index.php/catalog>), a web-based platform that hosts metadata and corresponding documentation for datasets generated from research studies conducted by APHRC. Anonymized qualitative interview transcripts will be shared as Microsoft Word documents.

Data analysis

The data will be transcribed, typed in MS Word, and analyzed for content using NVivo software. Interviews conducted in Chichewa will be transcribed verbatim and translated into English. Data analysis will involve thematic content analysis that will entail coding, developing a list of emerging themes, categorizing the themes within a hierarchical framework of main and sub-themes, looking for patterns and associations between the themes, and comparing and contrasting within and between the different groups of participants. Study investigators will first review a few transcripts to identify and develop key themes which will be used to code all the transcripts. New themes that emerge during coding will be categorized separately or as sub-themes to the key themes identified during the initial coding. Coding of transcripts will be undertaken by at least two investigators, and any disagreements on the categorization of themes resolved through discussions among all investigators. The study investigators will then discuss the structure and undertake the writing of the study report. The audio tapes will be erased once the study report is finalized.

Research dissemination plan

This section details how study findings will be disseminated and what study products will be produced to document the findings.

The next three sections below detail the different components of dissemination plans.

Research uptake and communication

Study results will be strategically shared with civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, governmental agencies, researchers and other actors working on the generation of evidence to inform policy and programming on VAWG/SGBV/HPs and SRHR. We will host a dissemination workshop with these stakeholders where we share the research findings and their implications. As indicated in the next section, we will also produce a research protocol and research report that will be shared electronically through various platforms including institutional websites and social media.

Knowledge products

The team will produce a research report highlighting key findings and lessons from the research. We anticipate that findings from the research will be published in peer-reviewed journals.

Data sharing

Anonymized data will be available upon request through APHRC's Microdata Portal (<http://microdataportal.aphrc.org/index.php/catalog>), a web-based platform that hosts metadata and corresponding documentation for datasets generated from research studies conducted by APHRC. Anonymized qualitative interview transcripts will be shared as Microsoft Word documents.

Ethical considerations

There are **three core principles** that form the ethical basis for research involving human subjects around the world.

- Respect for persons require protection of people from being exploited because of their vulnerability, or because of power differentials between the researcher and the community. This means that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents, and that persons with diminished autonomy (such as children) are entitled to protection. The dignity of all participants must be respected.
- Beneficence requires that the researcher does no harm to participants. It also states that the researcher should minimize the risks to participants; whether physical, social, emotional, psychological or other forms of risks. The researcher should also maximize benefits to participants, ultimately striving to balance risks and benefits.

- Justice requires a fair distribution of risks and benefits resulting from the study. This means that those who take on the burden of participating also should share the benefits that may arise from the results. Study participants should be selected based on study objectives and not systematically because of their easy availability, their compromised position, or their manipulability.

Ethics training

To minimise any potential risk stemming from participation in the project one should ensure that all project team members have completed a research ethics course prior to the onset of the project.

Ethical approval and community entry procedures

The ethics committee reviews the study protocols assessing whether the three basic principles mentioned above are met in addition to the scientific merit of the study. In addition to ethical approval, community approval should be obtained at different levels and through various bodies. For example:

Before commencement, the study will be reviewed for ethical merit by the University of Malawi's Research Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC). Community entry approvals from relevant authorities in Machinga district (district commissioner, chiefs, etc.) will be gotten before commencing the data collection exercise. The study team will report any proposed changes in the implementation of the protocol to the ethics review committees requesting approval for amendment.

Risks and mitigation

Some studies have anticipated risks occurring from participation in the study. If such, they should be documented in the research protocol including the mitigation measures to be carried out. The team should inform the committee of any unforeseen events that have happened in the course of implementation of the study.

For example:

Given the continued risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission, the research team will be required to adhere to the following measures:

- The research and implementation teams will be trained on infection prevention and control protocols and hygienic practices that will ensure their and participants' safety. This training will happen during the main team training on study procedures, instruments, and data collection approaches that will come before the start of field activities.
- The training of research assistants will consider physical distancing protocols with sufficient space to allow for adequate spacing.
- Research assistants will be provided with essential personal protective equipment (PPE) that will include masks and hand sanitisers. The research assistants will be required to wear PPE at all times during their field activities while practicing regular hand washing and the use of hand sanitisers.
- Where necessary, disposable masks will be provided to participants.
- Research assistants will also be required to practice physical distancing at all times whilst the questionnaire administration and interviews/discussions are happening. This will involve ensuring that they sit a minimum of 1.5 meters away from the respondents during the data collection.
- Research assistants with flu-like symptoms, or who are aware that they were recently exposed (contact with a confirmed/suspected case) will be required to notify the field coordinator and to stay away from work.

Informed consent

We will seek informed consent from all participants before they participate in the study. As part of the informed consent process, we will inform each potential participant about the purpose of the project, aims of the project, methods used for data collection, the anticipated benefits and potential risks of their involvement in the study and any discomfort it may entail. We will conduct the informed consent process in Chichewa so that the participant can understand very well and in clear, simple and unambiguous terms.

The participants will also be informed of their right to abstain from participation in the study or to withdraw consent to participate at any time without reprisal. Participation will be voluntary after the participant has fully understood the information and freely given informed consent. We will inform all participants about their right not to participate at any time and for whatever reasons. The interviews and FGDs with community members will be done in Chichewa.

All interviews will take place in convenient places where the privacy and confidentiality of the participants can be maintained. All raw data will be protected as confidential and available only to the project team. No identifying information (names or addresses) of participants will be retained in the electronic versions of the data. No individuals will be identified in the dissemination of the findings or any report related to this study.

Consent form

Appendix 1 shows a sample consent form (English version). The consent form should include an information sheet which provides the study background and rationale, potential risks, potential benefits, confidentiality statement, the actual acceptance or denial of consent section, contact person at the implementing institution, contacts for the ethics review board, participant consent to participate in the study and where needed, for audio recording.

A sample project activity timelines/work plan for reference (Refer to Table 1 on page 10)

Research team and roles

The core study team comprises three researchers from CSR. Their profiles are briefly described below, including an outline of their respective roles and skills.

Dr Name: Dr **Name** is the Director of CSR and Principal Investigator (PI) for the study. As the team leader, she will provide overall direction, be the contact point with APHRC, Population Council, SUDD Institute and UNFPA. She will ensure that all activities are undertaken according to schedule and will oversee implementation of study activities including supervising project support staff like field interviewers, data analysis and report writing.

Name: Name is the Deputy Director and a Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Research. His main roles will be project coordination, overseeing implementation, supervision, data analysis and report writing.

Name: Name is a Junior Research Fellow at CSR. His main roles in the project will be field management, logistics, supervision as well as assisting with data analysis and report writing.

Potential study limitations

It is important to document any study limitations and assumptions and how the study team plans to overcome these limitations.

For example:

While we have adopted a rigorous exploratory qualitative design, there are several potential limitations. First, the short study timelines preclude an in-depth study on positive masculinity and male engagement. However, study findings are expected to highlight important insights into these issues that can inform future studies. Second, our study is limited to a selected setting in Malawi (Machinga).

While we will interview policy actors who can give national-level insights, our interviews with community members are limited to Machinga district. Further, the qualitative nature of the study means that our study has limited generalizability. However, our experiences implementing the study and the findings emerging from the interviews are expected to provide useful insights for other actors planning to conduct similar studies in different contexts.

References

- Barker, G., Ricardo, C., Nascimento, M., Olukoya, A., & Santos, C. (2010). Questioning gender norms with men to improve health outcomes: evidence of impact. *Global Public Health*, 5(5), 539-553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441690902942464>
- Cislaghi, B., & Heise, L. (2018). Four avenues of normative influence: A research agenda for health promotion in low and mid-income countries. *Health Psychology*, 37(6), 562-573. <https://doi.org/10.1037/HEA0000618>
- Fry, M. W., Skinner, A. C., & Wheeler, S. B. (2019). Understanding the Relationship Between Male Gender Socialization and Gender-Based Violence Among Refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 20(5), 638-652. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838017727009>
- Jewkes, R., Jordaan, E., Myrttinen, H., & Gibbs, A. (2020). Masculinities and violence: using latent class analysis to investigate the origins and correlates of differences between men in the cross-sectional UN Multi-country Study on men and violence in Asia and the Pacific. *Journal of Global Health*, 10(2), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.7189/JOGH.10.020439>
- Jewkes, R., Penn-Kekana, L., & Rose-Junius, H. (2005). "If they rape me, I can't blame them": Reflections on gender in the social context of child rape in South Africa and Namibia. *Social Science & Medicine*, 61(8), 1809-1820. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SOCSCIMED.2005.03.022>
- Jewkes, R., Sikweyiya, Y., Morrell, R., & Dunkle, K. (2011). Gender inequitable masculinity and sexual entitlement in rape perpetration South Africa: findings of a cross-sectional study. *PloS One*, 6(12). <https://doi.org/10.1371/JOURNAL.PONE.0029590>
- Kendall, T. (2020). "A Synthesis of Evidence on the Collection and Use of Administrative Data on Violence against Women: Background Paper for the Development of Global Guidance." New York: UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/02/background-paper-synthesis-of-evidence-on-collection-and-use-of-administrative-data-on-vaw>
- Laisser, R. M., Nyström, L., Lugina, H. I., & Emmelin, M. (2011). Community perceptions of intimate partner violence - a qualitative study from urban Tanzania. *BMC Women's Health*, 11(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6874-11-13/FIGURES/2>
- MenEngage Alliance; UN Women; & UNFPA. (2014). Men, Masculinities, and Changing Power: A Discussion Paper on Engaging Men in Gender Equality from Beijing 1995 to 2015. New York, USA: UNFPA. <https://xonline.net/content/men-masculinities-and-changing-power-discussion-paper-engaging-men-gender-equality-beijing>
- Park, E., Wolfe, S. J., Nalugoda, F., Stark, L., Nakyanjo, N., Ddaaki, W., Ssekya, C., & Wagman, J. A. (2022). Examining Masculinities to Inform Gender-Transformative Violence Prevention Programs: Qualitative Findings From Rakai, Uganda. *Global Health: Science and Practice*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.9745/GHSP-D-21-00137>
- Petersen, I., Bhana, A., & McKay, M. (2005). Sexual violence and youth in South Africa: the need for community-based prevention interventions. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 29(11), 1233-1248. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CHIABU.2005.02.012>
- Progressio blog. (2016). How harmful social norms and poverty exacerbate the issue of violence against women in Malawi | Progressio. Progressio Blog. <https://www.progressio.org.uk/EVAW-Malawi>
- Reidy, D. E., Berke, D. S., Gentile, B., & Zeichner, A. (2014). Man enough? Masculine discrepancy stress and intimate partner violence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 68, 160-164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.PAID.2014.04.021>
- Scott, J., Averbach, S., Modest, A. M., Hacker, M. R., Cornish, S., Spencer, D., Murphy, M., & Parmar, P. (2013). An assessment of gender inequitable norms and gender-based violence in South Sudan: a community-based participatory research approach. *Conflict and Health* 2013 7:1, 7(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1752-1505-7-4>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2023). Toolkit to Guide Collection and Use of Harmonized and Standardized Data and Indicators on Violence Against Women and Girls, Harmful Practices and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-03/Harmonized%20Data%20Collection%20Toolkit_March_2%20%281%29.pdf
- World Health Organization. (2022). Improving the collection and use of administrative data on violence against women: global technical guidance. World Health Organization.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form Sample Guide

Information Sheet

Hello, my name is _____. I am part of a research team from Centre for Social Research (CSR), University of Malawi. In collaboration with the African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC) in Kenya, the Population Council-Kenya and UNFPA ESARO, we are conducting a study in Machinga to explore the facilitators and barriers in harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs and to map out and identify interventions or approaches perceived to be most effective in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programmes to end/prevent violence against women and girls/SGBV/HPs.

We are giving you this information because we would like you to participate in our research project as a [community member/community leader/key informant/programme beneficiary]. Participation is voluntary and we want to make sure that you have all the information that you need before you decide. If you prefer not to participate, you are free to choose to do so. I will answer any questions you have about this study or your participation in the study. If you do not understand any of the words or ideas that you see on this form, please ask me to explain the information to you.

Potential Risks

There are no major risks involved in this study. An inconvenience may be the time and effort you take to be a participant. You do not have to respond to any question that makes you uncomfortable.

Potential Benefits

There will be no direct or monetary benefits to you for participating in the study, nor would you incur any costs. The intention of this study is to contribute to efforts geared toward the elimination of violence against women and girls.

Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to keep the information shared with us confidential. We will not share any study records or notes with anyone outside the research team. The results of the study will be presented and reported on. You will not be identified in any publications or presentations resulting from this study. You do not have to tell anyone that you participated in the study. Study records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or a password protected computer and only accessible to the research team. All handwritten notes will be entered into a computer and destroyed as soon as that is complete. At the end of the study, all study data will be de-identified meaning no one, not even the research team, will know who provided the information. These de-identified data will be stored by the research team and may be used in the future for other studies. You will not be told if the study data is used in the future because no one will know that you provided the information.

[Additional information for FGDs] However, it is difficult to ensure full confidentiality in focus group discussions as we cannot guarantee that other group participants will not share the information discussed in the group with others outside the group. We will request the participants to keep the contents of the discussion confidential even after the study is completed. Despite this, we acknowledge that since the participants will see each other, it is impossible to provide full anonymity.

Can I refuse to participate or withdraw from the study?

Nothing bad will happen to you or your family and there is no penalty if you choose not to participate or if you withdraw at any time. We will respect your decision.

Contacts and complaints

This study has been reviewed by University of Malawi Research and Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC). In case you have any complaint about the way you have been treated during the study or any possible harm you might suffer will be addressed. Please contact **Prof. Name (UNIMAREC) (0888822004)**

If you have a concern about any aspect of the study, you should ask to speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions. You may contact **Dr Name** on **0991056559**

Do you have any questions at this time?

Do you want to participate in the study?

• Yes

• No

If you sign or print your thumb below it will mean that you understand what we have discussed and would like to take part in this study.

PARTICIPANT STATEMENT AND SIGNATURE FOR PARTICIPATION

I voluntarily agree to take part in this study. If I do not agree, I do not need to sign.

Signature or Thumb print of participant:	
[Box for Thumb print]	
Witness in case participant is illiterate or impaired:	
Date:	
Contact number:	
Place of residence (village/block/area):	
Consent for audio recording (signature):	
Name of Interviewer Obtaining Consent:	
Signature of Interviewer Obtaining Consent:	
Date:	

Appendix 2: KII Guide for Policy Makers and Programme Implementers (English)

As part of consortium comprising the African Population and Health Research Centre, the Population Council-Kenya, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office and UNFPA Malawi and South Sudan country offices, the Sudd Institute and the Centre for Social Research, we are conducting research to explore the facilitators and barriers to harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG and map out interventions or approaches perceived to be most effective in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programs to end/prevent VAWG.

Our interest is to learn from your experience. This information you will give will be summarized and included in a report for our use. This interview will take about one hour. I will be taking notes from time to time, but the information I collect will be anonymous. There are no wrong views or answers. Everything we talk about will be useful. Any data provided will be treated in adherence to the highest ethical standards for conducting human subjects' research. Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality will be respected.

Background characteristics of the interviewees	
How old are you?	
What is your sex?	
What is your highest education level?	
What work do you do? How long have you been working?	
Where do you live and how long are you living there? (city, town, village)	
What is your marital status?	
If married, for how many years?	
Is it a monogamous or polygamous marriage?	
What is your religion?	
What type of family are you from? Single-parent family? Two-parents family? Polygamous family	

1. What are the general power dynamics between men, women, boys and girls in your community? (probe who holds more power and why?)
2. What factors are shaping the concept of masculinity in your community? (PROBE: for how social, culture and religion develop, shape and reinforce masculinity.)
3. What are the manifestations of negative masculinities in your community? Is there a difference in these between those who live in urban and those who live in rural settings? If so, what are those differences? (probe for linkages between negative masculinities and violence against women and girls, and women's decision-making,)
4. What are the manifestations of positive masculinities in your community? Is there a difference in these between those who live in urban and those who live in rural settings? If so, what are those differences (probe)?
5. What are the facilitators for harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs?
6. What are the barriers to harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs?
7. What policy/programme interventions are there to enhance the involvement of men and boys in ending/preventing violence against women and girls/SGBV/HPs?
 - Are you involved in any of these interventions?
 - If so, tell me more about the interventions, what are the aim/goals of these interventions? How and where do they engage men and boys?
 - How has each of these interventions performed in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programmes to end/prevent violence against women and girls/SGBV/HPs and improve SRHR?
8. Probe: negative and positive
 - What have been the notable changes in attitudes regarding masculinity among beneficiaries?
 - How have these been harnessed to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs and improve SRHR?
 - What are the challenges in changing the attitudes of beneficiaries with negative masculinities in your community?
9. What do you think should be done to encourage more men and boys' involvement in programmes to end/prevent VAWG/ SGBV and improve SRHR?

Appendix 3: IDI Guide for Community Leaders

As part of consortium comprising the African Population and Health Research Centre, the Population Council-Kenya, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office and UNFPA Malawi and South Sudan country offices, the Sudd Institute and the Centre for Social Research are conducting research to explore the facilitators and barriers to harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG and map out interventions or approaches perceived to be most effective in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programs to end/prevent VAWG.

Our interest is to learn from your experience. This information you will give will be summarized and included in a report to improve programming for ending/preventing VAWG. This interview will take about one hour. We will be taking notes from time to time, but the information we collect will be anonymous. There are no wrong views or answers. Everything we talk about will be useful. No personal identifying information will be collected. Any data provided will be treated in adherence to the highest ethical standards for conducting human subjects' research. Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality will be respected

Note for the interviewer

Masculinity is the expression of manliness. It is the expectation of how a man should behave, act, and express his manhood at home and in public. Men act in certain “masculine” ways that are considered to be appropriate for their gender, so that they can be considered as “real men”. No man wants to be called effeminate or weak. Men practice and act out their masculinities from waking up to going to sleep, or even in their dreams. They choose when, where, how and what masculine actions they would do.

Every day, men (and sometimes women) make choices about how they will portray and exercise their masculinity. For example, **a man may speak softly and gently** when he speaks with his young daughter, but when he is with his male friends he can be loud and aggressive. Men are valued and respected based on how much they successfully conform to the standard masculinity. **Leaders, protectors, breadwinners, fighters, competitors and sexual performers** are referred as real men. The standard and demand of ideal masculinity is very high, and is almost impossible. If men do not “perform”, men are ranked in “lesser-man” groups. As such, it creates a strong sense of inadequacy within men and requires them to do everything to meet this standard. Men are pressured to behave or conduct themselves in certain ways that can go against who they actually are and what they actually feel or desire. For example, some men do not like drinking alcohol, but feel the pressure that they have to drink to show their strength and manliness.

1. How do people in your community define/view the concept of masculinity/manliness? What does it mean to be a man?

Probe for How is a “real” man expected to behave in the household and community? What are the things a “real” man is expected to do? How is a “real” man expected not to behave in the household and community? What are the things a “real” man is expected not to do?

2. How would you define a weak man? Probe for: How would you define a strong man?

Note for the interviewer: Question 1 aims to understand what the interviewee **thinks** about manliness and how it is **expressed in his/her community/household**. The discussion should focus on who is an ideal man, including **physical, emotional, and behavioral attributes**. Ask each person in the FDG who their ideal man is. How their ideal man behaves or is expected to **behave, talk, and show emotions**, at home and in public.

Ask specifically what **they think** or **have experienced**. For men, ask for their community and friend’s expectations of what a real man is. For women, ask what they expect from their ideal man. Ask interviewees to provide examples of how they have experienced masculinity in their relationships (with their friends and opposite sex), and in their community. Ask men how masculinity norms have shaped their behaviors or how they express their manliness. For women, ask how masculinity norms have shaped their expectations towards men.

3. How is masculinity/manliness expressed positively in your community? Probe for examples. Ask men how they express their manliness positively and women how their men express their manliness positively.
4. In what ways could the expression of masculinity/manliness bring harm to men/women? Probe for: How is masculinity/manliness expressed negatively in your community? How do men react when their masculinity/manliness (e.g. sexual prowess and ability to provide for their family) is questioned by their partners?
5. How are masculinity norms/beliefs learned and internalized? Probe for interviewees’ specific experiences.

6. In your experience or observation in your community, which gender is the perpetrator and victims of violence? How do you see the VAWG being linked to ideas about how masculinities are defined and enacted in this community? Probe for patriarchal beliefs, masculine superiority, and male gender identity.
 - In what instance is it justifiable for a man to beat his wife/woman/partner? Probe for neglect of children, going out without permission or telling him, refusing him sex, burning of food, and arguing with him.
 - How do the masculinity norms affect the reporting of domestic violence?
 - How do patriarchal beliefs affect police's response to victims of domestic violence?
 - How do patriarchal beliefs shape the advice given to women experiencing intimate partner violence?
 - What other forms of violence against women do you observe in your community? In what ways are they related or justified by patriarchal beliefs/masculinity?
7. What can men do, as individuals, parents, community members, and community leaders to promote positive masculinities (positive ways of expressing manliness, e.g. kindness, being open about mental health, being present dad, being protective but respectful of others' autonomy, doing housework and childcare, speaking against violence against women, condemning behaviors that demean women, supporting women's and girls' education/leadership and expressing their emotions) in relation to ending VAWG and improving SRHR outcomes.
How is a typical man expected to resolve disputes in the household? Ask men how they typically resolve disputes and women how their men resolve disputes.
8. What does your culture prescribe on the power relations between men and women? Probe for what they personally believe about gender equality. Probe specifically by asking: are there any cultural practices that promote negative masculinity? If yes, what are those practices? What is being done to address them?
9. Are there any cultural practices that promote positive masculinity? If yes, what are those practices? What is being done to promote them?
10. Do you know any cases of VAWG or violence against men? What can men do to prevent such cases?
11. How, where and why should men and boys be engaged in programmes to maintain peace by protecting everyone in society, especially women and girls from violence/SGBV/HPs?
12. What programmes do you know that are there to enhance the involvement of men and boys in activities to end/prevent violence against women and girls/SGBV/HPs?
13. How has each of the programmes performed?
14. What difficulties have been experienced with the programme? What challenges are there in engaging men and boys to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs?
15. Has the programme met your expectations? In what way?
16. What is the role of traditional leaders in enhancing positive masculinity?
17. What do you think should be done to encourage more men and boys' involvement in programmes to end/prevent VAWG/ SGBV?

Appendix 4: IDI Guide for Programme Beneficiaries (English)

As part of consortium comprising the African Population and Health Research Centre, the Population Council-Kenya, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office and UNFPA Malawi and South Sudan country offices, the Sudd Institute and the Centre for Social Research are conducting research to explore the facilitators and barriers to harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG and map out interventions or approaches perceived to be most effective in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programs to end/prevent VAWG.

Our interest is to learn from your experience. This information you will give will be summarized and included in a report to support programming for ending/preventing VAWG/SGBV. This interview will take about one hour. I will be taking notes from time to time, but the information I collect will be anonymous. There are no wrong views or answers. Everything we talk about will be useful. No personal identifying information will be collected. Any data provided will be treated in adherence to the highest ethical standards for conducting human subjects' research. Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality will be respected.

Note for the interviewer

Masculinity is the expression of manliness. It is the expectation of how a man should behave, act, and express his manhood at home and in public. Men act in certain "masculine" ways that are considered to be appropriate for their gender, so that they can be considered as "real men". No man wants to be called effeminate or weak. Men practice and act out their masculinities from waking up to going to sleep, or even in their dreams. They choose when, where, how and what masculine actions they would do. Every day, men (and sometimes women) make choices about how they will portray and exercise their masculinity. For example, a man may speak softly and gently when he speaks with his young daughter, but when he is with his male friends he can be loud and aggressive. Men are valued and respected based on how much they successfully conform to the standard masculinity.

Leaders, protectors, breadwinners, fighters, competitors and sexual performers are referred as real men. The standard and demand of ideal masculinity is very high, and is almost impossible. If men do not "perform", men are ranked in "lesser-man" groups. As such, it creates a strong sense of inadequacy within men and requires them to do everything to meet this standard. Men are pressured to behave or conduct themselves in certain ways that can go against who they actually are and what they actually feel or desire. For example, some men do not like drinking alcohol, but feel the pressure that they have to drink to show their strength and manliness.

1. How do people in your community define/view the concept of masculinity/manliness? What does it mean to be a man?
 - a. **Probe for:** How is a "real" man expected to behave in the household and community? What are the things a "real" man is expected to do? How is a "real" man expected not to behave in the household and community? What are the things a "real" man is expected not to do?
2. How would you define a weak man? Probe for: How would you define a strong man?
 - a. **Note for the interviewer:** Question 1 aims to understand what the interviewee thinks about manliness and how it is expressed in his/her community/household. The discussion should focus on who is an ideal man, including physical, emotional, and behavioral attributes. Ask each person in the FDG who their ideal man is. How their ideal man behaves or is expected to behave, talk, and show emotions, at home and in public.
 - b. Ask specifically what they think or have experienced. For men, ask for their community and friend's expectations of what a real man is. For women, ask what they expect from their ideal man. Ask interviewees to provide examples of how they have experienced masculinity in their relationships (with their friends and opposite sex), and in their community. Ask men how masculinity norms have shaped their behaviors. For women, ask how masculinity norms have shaped their expectations towards men.

3. How is masculinity/manliness expressed positively in your community? Probe for examples. Ask men how they express their manliness positively and women how their men express their manliness positively.
4. In what ways could the expression of masculinity/manliness bring harm to men/women? Probe for: How is masculinity/manliness expressed negatively in your community? How do men react when their masculinity/manliness (e.g. sexual prowess and ability to provide for their family) is questioned by their partners?
5. How are masculinity norms/beliefs learned and internalized?
6. In your experience or observation in your community, which gender is the perpetrator and victims of violence? How do you see the VAWG being linked to ideas about how masculinities are defined and enacted in this community? Probe for patriarchal beliefs, masculine superiority, and male gender identity
 - In what instance is it justifiable for a man to beat his wife/woman/partner? Probe for neglect of children, going out without permission or telling him, refusing him sex, burning of food, and arguing with him.
 - How do the masculinity norms affect the reporting of domestic violence?
 - How do patriarchal beliefs affect police's response to victims of domestic violence?
 - How do patriarchal beliefs shape the advice given to women experiencing intimate partner violence?
 - What other forms of violence against women do you observe in your community? In what ways are they related or justified by patriarchal beliefs/masculinity?
7. What can men do, as individuals, parents, community members, and community leaders to promote positive masculinities (positive ways of expressing manliness, e.g. kindness, being open about mental health, being present dad, being protective but respectful of others' autonomy, doing housework and childcare, speaking against violence against women, condemning behaviors that demean women, supporting women and girls education and expressing their emotions) in relation to ending VAWG
 - How is a typical man expected to resolve disputes in the household? Ask men how they typically resolve disputes and women how their men resolve disputes.
8. What programme are you involved in that promotes male engagement in ending VAWG/SGBV/HPs at present? For how long have you been in the programme?
9. What is your involvement in the programme?
10. How have your perceptions of being a man changed since joining the programme?
 - Probe: by using the preceding questions
11. What difficulties have you had with the programme? What challenges are there in engaging men and boys to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs?
12. Has the programme met your expectations? In what way?
13. What has worked well in promoting men's and boys' engagement in ending VAWG/SGBV/HPs?
 - What do you think should be done to encourage more men and boys' involvement in programmes to end/prevent VAWG/ SGBV?

Appendix 5: FGD Guide for Community Members (English)

As part of consortium comprising the African Population and Health Research Centre, the Population Council-Kenya, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, and UNFPA South Sudan country office, we from the Sudd Institute are conducting research to explore the facilitators and barriers to harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG and map out interventions or approaches perceived to be most effective in enhancing the involvement of men and boys in programs to end/prevent VAWG.

Our interest is to learn from your experience. This information you will give will be very useful as it will contribute to programming. This FGD will take about one hour. We will be taking notes from time to time, but the information we collect will be anonymous. There are no wrong views or answers. Everything we talk about will be useful. No personal identifying information will be collected. Any data provided will be treated in adherence to the highest ethical standards for conducting human subjects research. Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality will be respected.

Harnessing positive masculinities to end VAWG

Masculinity is the expression of manliness. It is the expectation of how a man should behave, act, and express his manhood at home and in public. Men act in certain “masculine” ways that are considered to be appropriate for their gender, so that they can be considered as “real men”. No man wants to be called effeminate or weak. Men practice and act out their masculinities from waking up to going to sleep, or even in their dreams. They choose when, where, how and what masculine actions they would do. Every day, men (and sometimes women) make choices about how they will portray and exercise their masculinity. For example, a man may speak softly and gently when he speaks with his young daughter, but when he is with his male friends he can be loud and aggressive. Men are valued and respected based on how much they successfully conform to the standard masculinity.

Leaders, protectors, breadwinners, fighters, competitors and sexual performers are referred as real men. The standard and demand of ideal masculinity is very high, and is almost impossible. If men do not “perform”, men are ranked in “lesser-man” groups. As such, it creates a strong sense of inadequacy within men and requires them to do everything to meet this standard. Men are pressured to behave or conduct themselves in certain ways that can go against who they actually are and what they actually feel or desire. For example, some men do not like drinking alcohol, but feel the pressure that they have to drink to show their strength and manliness.

1. How do people in your community define/view the concept of masculinity/manliness? What does it mean to be a man?
 - a. **Probe for:** How is a “real” man expected to behave in the household and community? What are the things a “real” man is expected to do? How is a “real” man expected not to behave in the household and community? What are the things a “real” man is expected not to do?
2. How would you define a weak man? Probe for: How would you define a strong man?
 - a. **Note for the interviewer:** Question 1 aims to understand what the interviewee thinks about manliness and how it is expressed in his/her community/household. The discussion should focus on who is an ideal man, including physical, emotional, and behavioral attributes. Ask each person in the FDG who their ideal man is. How their ideal man behaves or is expected to behave, talk, and show emotions, at home and in public.
 - b. Ask specifically what they think or have experienced. For men, ask for their community and friend’s expectations of what a real man is. For women, ask what they expect from their ideal man. Ask interviewees to provide examples of how they have experienced masculinity in their relationships (with their friends and opposite sex), and in their community. Ask men how masculinity norms have shaped their behaviors. For women, ask how masculinity norms have shaped their expectations towards men.

3. How is masculinity/manliness expressed positively in your community? Probe for examples. Ask men how they express their manliness positively and women how their men express their manliness positively.
4. In what ways could the expression of masculinity/manliness bring harm to men/women? Probe for: How is masculinity/manliness expressed negatively in your community? How do men react when their masculinity/manliness (e.g. sexual prowess and ability to provide for their family) is questioned by their partners?
5. How are masculinity norms/beliefs learned and internalized?
6. In your experience or observation in your community, which gender is the perpetrator and victims of violence? How do you see the VAWG being linked to ideas about how masculinities are defined and enacted in this community? Probe for patriarchal beliefs, masculine superiority, and male gender identity
 - In what instance is it justifiable for a man to beat his wife/woman/partner? Probe for neglect of children, going out without permission or telling him, refusing him sex, burning of food, and arguing with him.
 - How do the masculinity norms affect the reporting of domestic violence?
 - How do patriarchal beliefs affect police's response to victims of domestic violence?
 - How do patriarchal beliefs shape the advice given to women experiencing intimate partner violence?
 - What other forms of violence against women do you observe in your community? In what ways are they related or justified by patriarchal beliefs/masculinity?
7. What can men do, as individuals, parents, community members, and community leaders to promote positive masculinities (positive ways of expressing manliness, e.g. kindness, being open about mental health, being present dad, being protective but respectful of others' autonomy, doing housework and childcare, speaking against violence against women, condemning behaviors that demean women, supporting women and girls education and expressing their emotions) in relation to ending VAWG
 - How is a typical man expected to resolve disputes in the household? Ask men how they typically resolve disputes and women how their men resolve disputes.

Engaging men and boys in interventions/programmes to end VAWG

Positive masculinity programs are touted as a key to changing/transforming men. It focuses on helping men challenge gender norms and masculine ideals that perpetuate gender inequality and understand the advantages of gender equality. It aims to improve SRHR outcomes, promote men's acceptance of responsibility for their actions, and improve men's understanding of the dynamic socio-cultural forces at work in their lives.

1. Should men and boys be engaged in programmes to maintain peace by protecting everyone in society, especially women and girls from Violence/ SGBV/HPs? Probe: Why? How?
2. What programmes do you know that are there to enhance the involvement of men and boys to end/prevent violence against women and girls/SGBV/HPs?
3. What are your perceptions about each of the programmes you have mentioned?
 - How has each of the programmes performed?
4. What are the barriers to engaging men and boys to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs?
5. What are the facilitators for engaging men and boys to end VAWG/SGBV/HPs?
6. What do you think should be done to encourage more men and boys' involvement in programmes to end/prevent VAWG/ SGBV?

