

What Do We Mean by 'Gender Equitable Male Involvement'?

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Global Conference on Reaching Men to Improve Reproductive Health for All



Traditional Family Planning Programs Focused Exclusively on Women

- Assumptions about gender -- women responsible for reproduction
- Neglect of sexuality, gender, power relations -- women considered apart from social context
- Absence of rights orientation from family planning
- Simpler for research and programs to deal with women only



The Field Became Interested in Men

- Family planning movement acknowledges men's role in decision making +
- Researchers see gaps in understanding of reproductive behavior +
- Women's health advocates note social context of reproductive decision making =
- ICPD mandate with emphasis on promotion of gender equity



Differences of Opinion

- There *seems* to have been a convergence in commitment to “male involvement.”
- But quite divergent activities are called “male involvement”
- And large gaps exist between the ICPD ideal and actual programs.

Approaches to Involving Men in Reproductive Health

Approach	Emphasis
<i>CONVENTIONAL FAMILY PLANNING</i>	Increase contraceptive prevalence and reduce fertility through FP delivery to women
<i>1994 CAIRO ICPD -----</i>	
<i>MEN AND FAMILY PLANNING</i>	Increase contraceptive prevalence and reduce fertility through FP delivery to men and women
<i>MALE EQUALITY IN RH SERVICES</i>	Address men's reproductive health needs, much as women's have been addressed
<i>ICPD IDEAL: GENDER EQUITY</i>	Promote gender equity and reproductive health through male involvement

Possible Pitfalls to Involving Men

- Reinforce gender inequities
- Evaluate on same old basis, e.g., CPR
- Communicate false sense of symmetry
- Increase violence against women
- Entrench managerial hierarchies



Creative Strategies for Involving Men

- Examine gender socialization and support gender equitable boys – Instituto Promundo, Brazil
- Attend to broader societal context in addressing reproductive health issues – Men Can Stop Rape, US
- Mobilize communities to counter harmful practices – Stepping Stones
- Alert men to support women's health – Suami Siaga "Alert Husband" campaign, Indonesia
- Educate young people to respect the human rights of others – Conscientizing Nigerian Male Adolescents, Nigeria

Conclusions

- Programs can involve men in ways that support women and promote gender equity, but we're not fully there yet.
- This requires a clearer focus on how gender relationships constrain health, not a simple shift in what services are offered.

