Freedom at a price:
Caring for boys affected by sexual violence

A synthesis of primary research in **Cambodia**, **India**, **Nepal** and **the Philippines**

Picture by Voice of Children, Nepal

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Contents

Summary

Family for Every Child is an international alliance of local civil society organisations working to mobilise knowledge, skills and resources around children's care. A group of Family for Every Child member organisations in the Philippines, Cambodia, Nepal, India and Indonesia met in the Philippines in February 2017 for a practice exchange on child sexual abuse. Their purpose was to gain a better understanding of how social norms around gender influence care for boys affected by sexual violence, and what is already being done to ensure that boys affected by sexual violence grow up in a permanent, safe and caring family or, where needed, in quality alternative care.

The first stage of the ensuing project was to develop and publish a global scoping study entitled *"Caring for boys affected by sexual violence"*, published by Family for Every Child in 2018[1]. The study explored two aspects of sexual violence affecting boys: sexual abuse and exploitation of boys; and boys' harmful sexual behaviour. A key conclusion of the scoping study was the need for further primary research to better understand the dynamics of sexual violence in relation to boys, as well as to generate information on appropriate interventions.

> **"While this [scoping] study highlights some of the key drivers of sexual violence, it is important to think critically about why some boys are more at risk than others, and the varied ways that boys with different characteristics, and living in different situations and contexts, will experience and be affected by sexual violence. […] In-depth, participatory, primary research is needed to recognise these differences and identify the care, treatment and support needs of boys who are vulnerable to or affected by sexual violence."**
> Caring for boys affected by sexual violence, Family for Every Child, 2018, p.40-41.

Following the scoping report, and with co-funding from the World Childhood Foundation (for Cambodia and Nepal) and international and local research support, Family for Every Child member organisations from Cambodia, India, Nepal and the Philippines embarked on primary research with children and young people, caregivers and professionals situated in their respective contexts. A collective approach from the outset to the research design and methodology enabled the development of action-oriented studies which met the needs of the member organisations involved.

This report synthesises the key findings along with similarities and differences from the four country research reports, reflecting on their global-level relevance. This does not intend to replace reading of the full reports. Instead, the intent is to highlight points of similarity and difference from the reports. Each country report has some unique dimensions that can deepen understanding in each of the respective countries yet can only be fully appreciated when read in full.

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1 Family for Every Child (2018) *Caring for boys affected by sexual violence*. Family for Every Child. This report and an executive summary in several languages can be found at: https://familyforeverychild.org/report/caring-for-boys-affected-by-sexual-violence/

For those interested in understanding the issues involved in greater depth, reviewing the full reports is recommended. Links to the full reports can be found on members' websites, as listed below.

Cambodia (First Step Cambodia):
First Step Cambodia works with male victims of sexual abuse, along with their families, carers, supporters and communities. Click here for the full country research report.

India (Butterflies):
Butterflies works with street-connected and vulnerable groups of children in Delhi, India to support their self-reliance through rights-based approaches. The full country research report for India is to be published in 2020.

Nepal (Voice of Children):
Voice of Children works with street-connected children and their families and wider communities to protect them from sexual abuse. Click here for the full country research report.

Philippines (Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse – CPTCSA):
CPTCSA provides therapeutic support to young perpetrators and survivors of child sexual abuse in the Philippines. The full country research report for the Philippines is to be published soon.

Each of the four country studies sought to answer the following questions:

> **Gender/masculinity:** (a) What does it mean to be a male child and what are their lived experiences in the context of sexuality and masculinities? (b) How are masculinity and sexuality socially constructed? (c) How do boys and those around them perceive masculinity and sexuality and how does this impact them?
> **Sexual violence:** What are the links between the dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity and: (a) the sexual abuse of boys? (b) the 'harmful sexual behaviour' of boys?
> **Interventions:** What interventions exist, what challenges were encountered and how were they resolved?

The research design was qualitative in nature with a view to gaining an in-depth and contextualised understanding of sexual violence affecting boys. An ethical approach was an overriding priority, with a research protocol and ethical protocol developed specifically for the study. The research utilised a range of participatory techniques alongside interviews and focus group discussions.

While each country study contains rich, varied and contextualised detail on what it means to be male, on the diversity of factors driving and perpetuating sexual violence against boys, and on the range of responses in this area, findings coalesced around the following themes:

- what does it mean to be male?
- boys and sexuality
- boys and sexual abuse – victims and actors[2]
- support for boys affected by sexual violence.

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2 Please refer to the terminology section for definitions of 'victim' and 'actor'.

The synthesised recommendations in this report are drawn from the four country studies which focused on the following.

- Enabling boys and girls to better understand what it means to be male.

- Working with families, communities and educational establishments to support boys.

- Training for specialist professionals to support boys affected by sexual violence.

- Mapping and assessment of existing services relevant to supporting boys.

1. A guide to terminology

Term used	Definition
Harmful sexual behaviour	For the purposes of this research, harmful sexual behaviour of children is defined as follows: 'sexual activity where one individual has **not consented**, or where their relationship includes an **imbalance of power**, for example due to age, intellectual ability, physical ability or impairment (disability), or physical strength. The harm caused may be physical and/or emotional/psychological even though the behaviour is sexual in nature. The child with harmful sexual behaviour may use grooming, coercion or threats to influence the other person to comply with their wishes, or they may use force.
	'This term is useful because it is not appropriate to label a child's behaviour as abusive or criminal. However, it is important to intervene to protect the rights of other children and to support the child with harmful sexual behaviour to take responsibility for changing their behaviour. It is important to understand that the child's sexual behaviour is due to an underlying vulnerability.'[3]
Problematic sexual behaviour	For the purposes of this research, problematic sexual behaviour is defined as follows: 'children's sexual behaviour may be problematic, even if it is not yet causing harm to others. Problematic sexual behaviour is behaviour that is **a cause for concern** in terms of the child's age or developmental stage, according to the context; for instance, knowledge of sexual acts, or use of sexually explicit words or acts that is not appropriate for the child's age or developmental stage. Children's behaviour may also be seen as problematic if the behaviour is recurrent.
	'Without intervention, problematic sexual behaviour may pose a risk to the child or others. For example, bullying, stigmatisation, development of the child's sexual identity and vulnerability to sexual abuse. It may also be disturbing for others.
	'Problematic sexual behaviour can be divided into "self-focused behaviour" and "interpersonal behaviour". Self-focused behaviour may include compulsive masturbation and excessive interest in pornography. Interpersonal sexual behaviour may include sexual games with friends, sharing pornography and spying on others.'[4]
Victim (of sexual abuse)	For the purposes of this research, a victim is defined as a boy (under 18 years old) who has been forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities.

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3 Family for Every Child (2018) Caring for boys affected by sexual violence. Family for Every Child, p.8. https://familyforeverychild.org/report/caring-for-boys-affected-by-sexual-violence/
4 Ibid., p.8.

Actor (in problematic or harmful sexual behaviour)	For the purposes of this research, an actor is defined as a boy (under 18 years old) who has displayed harmful or problematic sexual behaviour.
Boys affected by sexual violence	Boys who are either victims of sexual abuse or who display harmful sexual behaviour.
Child sexual abuse	'Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to: • The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity. • The exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices. • The exploitative use of children in pornographic performance and/or materials.'[5]
Sexual violence	Family for Every Child member organisations agreed that the term 'sexual violence' should be used as an umbrella term for sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour in the research and scoping study.[6] 'Sexual violence includes non-consensual completed or attempted sexual contact; non-consensual acts of a sexual nature not involving contact (such as voyeurism or sexual harassment); acts of sexual trafficking committed against someone who is unable to consent or refuse; and online exploitation.'[7]
Child	All persons under 18 years old, as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.[8]
Young people	For the purposes of this research, 'young people' refers to people aged between 18 and 25 years old.

5 World Health Organization (1999) Report of the consultation on child abuse prevention, WHO, Geneva, 29-31 March 1999. Geneva: World Health Organization, Violence and Injury Prevention Team and Global Forum for Health Research, p.15-16.
6 Family for Every Child (2018) Caring for boys affected by sexual violence. Family for Every Child, p.7.
7 World Health Organization (2018) INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children. Geneva: World Health Organization, p.14.
8 UN (1989) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York: United Nations, Part I, Article 1.

2. Research design and methodology

2.1 The research purpose and questions

The overall purpose of this research was two-fold.

- To conduct participatory research to identify common and context-specific knowledge on how boys become victims of sexual abuse or engage in harmful sexual behaviour.
- To identify interventions that have been shown to be effective or to have strong potential for preventing and responding to sexual abuse and sexually harmful behaviour of boys, including therapeutic approaches to working with children and families.

Each of the four country studies sought to answer the following questions:

Gender/masculinity: (a) What does it mean to be a male child and what are their lived experiences in the context of sexuality and masculinities? (b) How are masculinity and sexuality socially constructed? (c) How do boys and those around them perceive masculinity and sexuality and how does this impact them?

Sexual violence: What are the links between the dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity and: (a) the sexual abuse of boys? (b) the 'harmful sexual behaviour' of boys?

Interventions: What interventions exist, what challenges were encountered and how were they resolved?

2.2 Research methods

The research design was qualitative in nature, utilising a range of participatory techniques alongside traditional data collection methods. The aim of taking this approach was not to show the size of the problem, but instead to gain an in-depth and contextualised understanding of the drivers of sexual violence as it affects individual boys and those around them. Thus, the study emphasised rigour in its approach to ethics and the recruitment of, and engagement with, research participants (see 'Research ethics' below). In each study, data was collected in several ways.

- A review of **existing relevant national literature**.
- **Key informant interviews (KII)** with service providers with sufficient knowledge and experience of working with boys affected by sexual violence.
- **Extended (in-depth) interviews (EI)** with boys who have experienced sexual abuse (referred to in this research as 'victims') and boys who have been actors in harmful sexual behaviour (referred to in this research as 'actors').

- **Informant interviews (II)** with parents and caregivers of boy victims and actors, as well as parents and caregivers of boys from the general population; with boys who have experienced sexual abuse; and with boys who have been actors in harmful sexual behaviour.
- **Focus group discussions (FGD)** with boys and girls, and with young men and women in the general population.

Participatory techniques were used with child participants in focus group discussions and extended interviews to engage interest, support participants' wellbeing, and provide focus and direction. Full details on the methodology used can be found in the individual country reports, which are available from the participating member organisations, or via the links provided in the summary of this report.

Selected participatory techniques used in the research

Researchers developed facilitation plans for FGDs and EIs with child participants, making use of a range of participatory techniques including the following.

- Body map – a visual point of reference which can be used to explore a child participant's own views or experience of an issue (such as masculinity/sexuality/sexual violence) and how others (family/community) perceive this.

- Spheres of influence – based on the ecological framework, with the child participant represented in the centre of concentric circles, then family, friends and community (school, religious bodies etc.). The spheres of influence tool was used to explore the influences and pressures on boys.

- Vignettes – short scenarios in words or pictures of people and their behaviours on which child participants can offer comments or opinions. Vignettes are useful to explore potentially sensitive topics that child participants might otherwise find difficult to discuss, as commenting on a story is less personal and less threatening than talking about direct experience.

- Protection shield – a visual tool using a shield to explore child participants' support structures and to protect children from potential negativity after the research process, used in closing sessions with child participants.

Across the four country studies **122 boys and young men**, ranging in age from 12 to 25, who have experienced sexual abuse or who have been actors in harmful sexual behaviour were interviewed, along with **87 parents or caregivers** and **75 key informants**. The victims and actors were interviewed individually and creative activities were conducted to create an enabling environment. These interviews also included activities to support the participants' wellbeing before the closing of individual interviews. A further **215 boys and girls and 35 parents and caregivers from the general population**, selected through simple random sampling, were involved in focus group discussions.

Research participants	Cambodia	India	Nepal	Philippines
Total numbers in sample group	**209**	**78**	**131**	**81**
Boys as victims	20 (II and EI)	15 (II and EI)	25 (II and EI)	7 (II and EI)
Boys as actors	7 (II and EI)	5 (II and EI)	25 (II and EI)	18 (II and EI)
Parents and caregivers	29 (II)	13 (II)	10 (II)	
Service providers	26 (KII)	15 (KII)	15 (KII)	19 (KII)
Boys in the general population	55 (FGD)	15 (FGD)	23 (FGD)	17 (FGD)
Girls in the general population	72 (FGD)	15 (FGD)	18 (FGD)	
Parents in the general population			15 (FGD)	20 (FGD)
Validation participants	**211**	**33**	**23**	**47**
Victims/actors		12	6	16
Children and young people	165	10		5
Service providers	46	1	9	4
Parents and caregivers		10	8	
Peers (mostly universities)				22

2.3 Research ethics

A research protocol and ethical protocol were developed for the study, informed by in-country risk assessments and Family for Every Child's ethics checklist. Researchers, who were the existing staff of the organisations, were trained on the protocols and were reference-checked (and police-checked where possible), briefed and required to sign the member organisations' child protection policies. In the case of the Philippines, the research was approved by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) – Philippine Council for Health Research and Development National Ethics Committee for the period of 14 September 2018 to 13 September 2019.

Data collection methods were piloted to ensure their appropriateness and to build research team confidence in using the tools. This was done through practising the tools and skills during training, then sharing feedback and refining the tools after practising each tool once with a sample group of participants.

All boys who were victims, actors or both were identified through members' caseloads or through the caseloads of their trusted partners. Each in-country lead researcher/head social worker completed an individual risk assessment with a boy's social worker to determine his suitability to take part. No boy that was known to be a victim or an actor was invited to take part before sharing information with

him about the study and seeking informed consent. The risk assessment included the boy's profile in terms of his age, care situation, the support he had received from the organisation and any special needs. It then went on to ask:

- Whether he had disclosed fully and was sufficiently 'recovered' to participate.
- The potential for participating to interfere with his ongoing therapeutic or other care and recovery, or to provoke aggressive or anti-social behaviour.
- The availability of care and support at home and/or within the organisation.

If from this assessment the social worker and researcher determined that there was no likely negative impact to the boy, he was invited to participate in an extended individual interview. The interview did not ask about the child's own experiences but used short case studies as a basis for discussing social expectations and the experiences of others. No boy that was known to be a victim or an actor was invited to take part in the research if this assessment process had not been completed.

Participants' informed consent was gained through initial sharing of information about the research project and was followed up through attendance at a consent meeting prior to the research activity. Children's verbal consent was reconfirmed at the beginning of all FGDs and EIs. Where children were living with adults, researchers requested their caregivers' written consent. Consent was revisited at the end of each activity, with participants given the opportunity to redact anything they had said.

When collecting data, researchers worked in teams of at least two, with supervisors and/or trained child protection staff on hand in case of concerns, or the distress of research participants. All researchers were fluent in local languages, avoiding the need for interpretation. The gender of researchers was considered to ensure the boys' comfort and data accuracy. All victims and actors were interviewed separately. Reimbursement of travel expenses was provided for participants, along with refreshments. Given the sensitive nature of discussions all research activities took place in a safe and confidential environment, and at times that were suitable to participants.

Confidentiality of data was ensured through a system of coding for participants in all notes and transcripts of data. Codes for victim and actor participants were turned into pseudonyms for national reports and descriptions used for all other research participants so that all research participants were anonymised. Consent forms and participant contact details are to be kept confidentially for one year after publication of each country report, to enable consent and accuracy for use of quotes from participants to be revisited if needed.

Data analysis:
Interview and focus group data was transcribed and coded through an iterative process to progressively refine and categorise data and to build themes. Across the four country studies, emerging findings were validated through workshops with over 200 children and young people (aged up to 25 years old) and more than 75 parents, caregivers and professionals.

Study limitations:
The studies' emphasis on ensuring the safety of and support for participants meant that country research was limited geographically to areas serviced by the organisations conducting the research or their trusted partners.

The sensitivity of the topic resulted at times in difficulties in identifying victims and actors willing or available to talk to researchers. Despite a range of efforts to ensure their comfort, safety and anonymity, including the use of participatory techniques, respondents were often guarded in their responses, reflecting their anxieties and the trauma associated with their life experience.

A lot of time was spent in identifying the appropriate service providers to ensure that they were the people with sufficient experience and understanding on the topic. An important lesson learnt is that realistic time needs to be factored in for identifying the appropriate services providers as respondents in any similar research in future.

The three areas of focus in the research needed to be linked more strongly to enable analysis of the links between social norms and sexual violence. Further use of slightly different analysis tools by the four members limited the potential for cross analysis.

Good practices:

The research was co-designed by the four organisations involved as well as the consultants and Family staff, which enabled the research to be relevant and useful for the four organisations and has led to significant future advocacy work including successful outcomes.

Participants had, in many cases, built a relationship of trust with staff from the organisation conducting the research; consequently, researchers were able to build rapport quickly with participants and a referral system was already in place to deal with any follow-up support required for research participants.

3. Findings

Each country study contains rich, varied and contextualised detail on what it means to be male, on the diversity of factors driving and perpetuating sexual violence affecting boys, and on the range of responses in this area. At the same time, the studies reveal broad similarities in the underlying causes and consequences of sexual violence affecting boys, and broad consensus on the type of interventions that can prevent sexual violence, and those which can promote recovery and rebuild lives. These similarities across country contexts indicate the utility of international collaborative efforts to support and strengthen local actions tackling sexual violence affecting boys.

3.1 What does it mean to be a male?

Patriarchy, in some form, appears to be the overarching normative system that guides gender roles in all the country reports. The Cambodia report[9] reflects the role of a strong patriarchal system and the resulting expectations placed on boys to conform. The report describes the concept of a 'hegemonic masculinity', reflected in the patriarchal society that forces boys to fit into the 'masculinities box', even so far as, for example, accommodating violence in order to support this role. While not using the term 'patriarchy', the Nepal report[10] is similar in that it describes the expectations placed on boys by a narrative which says that males are superior to females. The report also cites the dominant role that males play in many cultural and religious rituals, which allows them certain entitlements and further emphasises their superiority as males. Again, this narrative could condone violence and reinforce gender inequalities. The India report[11] does not use the term 'patriarchy' either but cites the expectations, that reflect patriarchy, of the asli mard (real man) as one who must take care of the family within the community socially, emotionally and physically, with the strong assumption of heterosexuality. The Philippines report[12] cited that, while patriarchy plays a role in developing maleness, the historical role of matriarchy and matrilineal concepts in the Philippines remain strong enough to somewhat balance the system towards some form of a blending of matriarchy and patriarchy. The report cited numerous examples where the mother is the one providing care, attention and guidance to boys about how to be a man. All the reports appear to suggest that the male respondents embraced these definitions described above and the expectations of conformity which dominated in their respective countries.

The major characteristics of being male revolved around strength, physicality and emotional repression, with some entitlement to use violence when perceived to be necessary. In the Philippines, this means that boys can be physically punished more than their sisters and female counterparts, perhaps because they are supposed to be strong. In Cambodia, the male is considered as 'golden'; there is a belief that, because boys are perceived to be more capable than girls, valued more than girls, and believed to be more powerful, then these attributes require that they also be more responsible, both as the head of a family and in the community. Many respondents in the Nepal report

9 First Step Cambodia (2019) *Caring for boys affected by sexual violence: Summary report.* Phnom Penh, Cambodia: First Step Cambodia.
10 Voice of Children (2019) *Exploring and addressing sexual violence of boys in Nepal.* Kathmandu, Nepal: Voice of Children.
11 Butterflies (forthcoming) *I like having sex, I feel like a man: Exploring experiences and perspectives of boys in the context of masculinities and sexuality.* India: Butterflies.
12 CPTCSA (forthcoming) *Boys and sexual violence: A phenomenological study. Caring for sexually abused boys and young men.* Philippines: CPTCSA.

stated that boys are meant to be the protectors and income earners in the family, positions which are likewise linked to status and community power. Respondents from the Philippines also stated the need to be both physically and mentally strong for the family, and that a sign of mental strength was the ability to not show any emotion. The India report went further with the narrative of physical strength to include independence and knowledge about how to have sex. The statements made by the respondents from India provide additional insights into the sexual nature of being male and will be presented under the topic of boys and sexuality; only in India did some respondents state the expectation for men to know about 'how to have sex'.

A common thread throughout the four reports was the expectation that men will marry and have a family that they must support and protect. This implies procreation and therefore heterosexuality, which is further explained in the questions about boys and sexuality.

Each of the four studies indicated that boys have greater freedom to leave the house and to wander around than girls. They are also subject to less scrutiny of their actions than girls, until that time when a law is broken. This was seen as a good thing by boys, who contrasted this with the boundaries and restrictions placed on girls, due to their perceived vulnerability to sexual violence which, at times, could result in unwanted pregnancy. At the same time, the freedom enjoyed by boys appears to come at a price: it implies that boys can and should take care of themselves and need inherently less protection than girls. The physical strength and the freedom from risks, such as unwanted pregnancy, is perhaps the reason that boys/men appear to be given more freedom than their female counterparts. For example, a comment from the Cambodian report stated that "girls are weaker and need protection". The freedom appears to be what the male respondents from all the countries most appreciate.

Picture by Butterflies, India

A common response from participants highlighted in all the reports was that girls could be physically hurt, and thus need to be protected. While the responses from all the reports seem to attempt to support some sort of superiority of males, the very fact that they all recognise the need to protect the female and the family could be construed as a subconscious awareness that it is the female who

is the more important. The female is the one who gives birth. A subconscious understanding of the importance and value of the female, and thus of the male role being merely as the protector of the female, is strongest in the responses from the Philippines. In contrast, perhaps, is the statement from the India report that suggests females are considered as less than males because the female leaves the family when married; on the other hand, the family honour is often seen to rest with the female, with comments from participants that girls need to be 'good' and need to be protected, including by staying at home. This maintaining of the family honour is a great responsibility. Yet it is the male who must be responsible and caring as a household and family provider.

Another possible contradiction to the 'male as protector' construct is the potential factor of neglect. That is, if girls need to be protected, do not boys also need to be protected? If parents are not as concerned about their sons being in dangerous places or situations, does that not fall within the definition of child neglect, albeit passive neglect as they are just following what is a social norm? The statements reflected that the boys don't feel the need for protection, or that they believe they can protect themselves by using their strength. However, none of the respondents in any of the four studies appeared to feel that they were in fact being neglected, even if their apparent lack of protection could be defined as neglect. This question was asked directly of several of the Philippine respondents for clarification during a validation meeting, and their response confirmed that they do not feel at all neglected in this manner.

The issue of violence in relationships was brought out in two reports. In Cambodia, many respondents stated that men are entitled to use violence both as a form of power and as a form of communicating stress. Respondents stated that men do and can beat their wives because of the pressures that they have as men in daily life as well as to show their power. One example was that a man would be 'allowed' to beat his wife when he could not financially support the family so would need to assert his power differently. The acceptance of the use of violence was also reflected in the India report that cited a form of resilience through physical strength and violence. Physical strength was highlighted, along with courage as well as the ability to have sex. The issue of violence also appeared in the responses of the respondents in the Philippines. For some of them, the requirement to control their emotions led them to alcohol, which in turn led them to use sexual violence against a woman, for which they were arrested.

The notion of the 'real man' that boys are expected to become emerged clearly from each of the studies. Characterised as courageous and independent, 'real men' are not only physically strong but emotionally 'strong' too, meaning that there is pressure to not display feelings that might indicate vulnerability. The studies also indicated that physical violence is an accepted expression of being a strong, brave man, and that aggressive behaviour in boys is not only tolerated but taught, for example through receiving harsher physical discipline in the family than girls.

Regardless of the expectations placed on boys, the male respondents in all the studies appeared happy to be boys. Across the four studies, boys were identified as having two core roles within their families: as protectors of girls and women, and as providers. While the responsibility of looking after their families comes with privileges, such as being head of the family and giving their name to the family unit, there was also recognition of the considerable pressure on them to fit this dominant image of 'being a man'.

3.2 Boys and sexuality

The India report used the term 'ambiguity' around sex and sexuality when referring to respondents' statements. The term is apt for all the country reports. Although the India study participants spoke the most clearly about sex, responses were still somewhat going around the point by merely referring to the sexual act. This reflects a possible lack of explicit guidance and support within the socio-cultural construct of masculinity, and the expectations that are placed on boys as they work to become adult men. While homosexuality[13] is spoken of, in all the reports the references to masculine behaviour as the preferred norm are clearly heterosexual. Yet one of the India respondents stated that a boy can engage in same-sex behaviour, but not once he is married. In fact, it is suggested by the respondents' statements that in India sex with numerous partners is only forbidden once married. In the Philippines, at the other end of the spectrum, is the Catholicism that teaches virginity until marriage. Homosexuality was not a large part of the established social norms around masculinity except for the example of the Philippines where respondents would cite same-sex behaviour as something not to do. Masculinity is about family and community, which assumes procreation.

Heterosexuality is embedded in masculine norms across all four contexts, with other forms of sexuality considered to be deviant. However, the reports also indicated a movement from a strict heterosexual expectation to one that begins to include same-sex relationships, or at least an acceptance of something beyond strict heterosexuality. This tendency appeared in the Philippines report quite clearly yet also in the India report. An example from the India report: "The majority of participants were able to explore sexuality either with their older boyfriends or girlfriends during adolescence. The[se] episodes were observed to be consensual. The majority of boys from this category had been sexually abused in the past. In general boys used 'did with me/her' to indicate consensual sexual interactions."

The India report placed a great deal of emphasis on heterosexuality. That is, while homosexuality is not unknown and even practised, once married a man is expected to practise only heterosexual sex with his partner and must be faithful to that partner. The strength of this expectation of sexuality was reflected in the respondents' statements that the researcher characterised as "fear, anger, rage, positivity and ambiguities" around the experience of sexual abuse, which intersects with the discussion of sexuality in general. For example, the report cited a respondent who, after worrying following his sexual abuse, did eventually have consensual sex with a female and pointed to having moved on the sexual experience continuum to now feeling desire and positivity. According to the report, having had sex appeared to remove the negative ambiguities he felt about sex. And yet, he continued to fear that sharing this with his parents or adult caregivers would result in punishment.

For boys, their family members, caregivers and teachers play an important role in defining their masculinity and sexuality, but they are more directly influenced by friends, and a variety of media platforms such as television, film and social media. Where they learn how to be male is implicit: through observation, rather than explicit direct teaching. Regarding where they learn to have sex within the socio-cultural contextual expectation, all four country reports recognised the lack of sex education for boys by those who 'should' be the teachers, mainly the family. Yet talking about sex remains a taboo in all these contexts, especially within the family. In the Philippines, for example, many male respondents stated that while they felt it should be their father from whom they got information

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13 This report uses 'homosexual' rather than 'LGBTQ' as this is the terminology used by respondents. Respondents did discuss homosexuality, but not the other communities in the LGBTQ grouping. Their use of language reflects the fact that most respondents do not seem to have very accepting attitudes towards same-sex relationships, which fits in with the very fixed ideas that most display about masculinity, and about heterosexuality being the preferred norm.

about sex, most fathers are absent and most of the respondents got their information and general support from their mother. What boys are taught directly is most likely what not to do, including how not to disrespect females, with dire warnings of HIV, pregnancy or jail. Learning about sex, therefore, requires personal experimentation from information they mainly get from media sources.

While all four countries practise some form of patriarchy that shapes the norms that boys and young men face (and which they appear to have embraced for the most part), the differences are important to note by using the contrast between India and the Philippines. While all four reports stated the need for mental and physical strength, only the India respondents took the questions further to explicitly state specifics about sex as an act. The report cited respondents who talked specifically about the requirement to have sex; that is, how to "perform the sexual act". Masculinity includes sex and sex assumes procreation. In India there is a strong concept of heterosexuality.

Picture by Butterflies, India

The Philippines report cited numerous statements that point to a confusion about same-sex relationships. For example, respondents expressed a great deal of anger against gay men, who they perceived as often being offenders. And yet numerous statements pointed to the role that gay people in lower income communities often play in providing nurture, advice and material needs. This possible contradiction was clarified by some respondents, who said that what they feel to be objectionable are the aggressive and feminine behaviours that they perceive some gay men to be displaying, rather than the idea of same-sex intercourse itself. These respondent statements that focused on homosexuality are unique amongst all the country reports and could offer some additional insights on the role that homosexuality plays in shaping the masculinity of boys and men.

There appeared to be indications that there is movement in what is acceptable or unacceptable sexual behaviour towards something less strident. For example, the Philippines report indicates that masturbation, which used to be considered as strictly forbidden in this Catholic country, has moved to now being an acceptable private behaviour. In the India report there were some indications from the respondents that force was not acceptable in a sexual context. In Cambodia, likewise, acceptable

sexual behaviour meant respecting the girl's rights: boys need permission from a girl for sexual acts, giving the female now some importance compared to the relative importance of the male. Yet, as the India report states, these are "rather vague ideas" about what would be considered as acceptable or unacceptable sexual behaviour. However, these definitions continue to not allow for the possibility of a male victim, only a female victim who is not being respected.

The India report stated something that is perhaps relevant to all the four countries. The discussion of masculinity and the expectations placed on males appeared to refer to adult men only and not to adolescents, as the report talked about 'sex within adulthood' and thus sex which is associated with procreation, as in the Philippines report. In the India study, the perspectives of the respondents were clearly that heterosexuality within marriage was the norm and correct. How the adolescent achieves their socio-cultural expectation to be that sexual person once married, based on the four country study respondents, continues to be based on experimentation from what pornography teaches them – behaviours that are often punished once discovered.

One purpose of these studies was to discover variables that are a part of moving a boy from sexual experimentation to inappropriate and possibly harmful sexual behaviour. These four studies, individually and together, have pointed out several possible links. One is the patriarchal gender expectations placed on boys that include physical and emotional strength, with violence playing a large role in relationships. Two is that this strength assumes males can take care of themselves in vulnerable situations, and indeed that they must eventually be able to physically care for their family and community as well. Three is the assumption that they will have a family to physically care for, which implies the knowledge and ability to have sex and procreate. Four is the implicit importance of the female as the primary procreator who has been relegated as weak and thus 'less' than a male. Five is that boys seem to be getting their sexual education through observations and experimentation with little guidance from adults such as the father, who tends to be absent. How these variables link to harmful sexual behaviour are explained in the following sections.

3.3 Boys and sexual abuse – victims and actors

The expectations of adolescent development are often to learn how to be an adult, to decide what career they are most suited to, and to find their partner in life. The role of the adolescent is to experiment. Yet there appears to be a conflict between what is expected of boys and how they are being taught or supported through this process of experimentation. Dominant notions of masculinity serve to instruct boys that they must be strong and independent and that they are responsible for what happens to them, including being sexually abused, albeit abuse that is not recognised as such. The reports point to a lack of support, direct teaching and supervision, and describe how guidance is often provided in the form of physical punishment, which appears to leave these boys vulnerable to being abused as they seek support and answers outside the family.

Boys are reproached differently to girls when they have been abused. For example, being perceived as weak for 'allowing it to happen', and, where the abuser is male, being stigmatised as deviant. Widespread incomprehension about the potential for sexual violence against boys is mirrored in denial, embarrassment amongst caregivers, community members and boys themselves, and disbelief by authority figures, all contributing to under-reporting and social isolation. The silence surrounding

any discussion of sexual violence against boys can aggravate trauma and exacerbate their vulnerability to further abuse. Furthermore, perpetrators may use the stigma surrounding male-to-male sex, as well as money and gifts, to ensure that their victims do not speak up.

Many respondents in the Nepal report stated that, until recently, sexual abuse of boys was unheard of. The beginning of the national discussion started with a legal case against a foreign paedophile. Many respondents did now recognise that there is abuse of boys, although they also recognised that abuse is still primarily of girls. However, they stated their belief that when a boy is abused the impact is the same as, if not greater than, for girls. They see the impact as being greater because males are meant to be able to protect themselves. The perpetrator could be a male or a female, although male examples were most often stated by the respondents. Many respondents in the Nepal report suggested that boys who are sexually abused are gay, which would support the concept expressed by many respondents that boys who are sexually abused are somehow responsible for what happened to them.

The Cambodia report also pointed to boys being blamed for their victimisation, because many respondents believed that these boys wanted something in return, and that they were therefore somehow 'greedy'. This continued with an apparent belief that boys cannot be victims, merely offenders, and so if they were victimised then they would certainly have had a role in that. For example, even socialising with girls was a concern in case the boy was later falsely accused for sexual assault. This concern describes something similar to what happened in a few cases of respondents from the Philippines, who were incarcerated for claiming that they had had consensual sex with their girlfriends but later stating that it was rape in order to avoid trouble from parents.

What was suggested in all the reports was that boys do not appear to understand that boys can be sexually abused. They could give examples of sexual abuse, but the focus always appeared to be the abuse of girls. That is, many of the male respondents did not know that what they had experienced was abuse, and often what is legally defined as abuse was described by a boy as experimentation or even as transactional. In the Philippines, for example, where some gay people in lower income communities sometimes provide some kind of incentive in return for sex, for example, gifts or money, the sex becomes transactional and thus perceived to benefit both parties even if they are under 18. Likewise, in the Philippines, when pregnancy is not possible then the sexual behaviour would be socially considered more as some form of play, unless violence was used. The line between normal sexual exploration and "morally or socially" unacceptable sexual misbehaviour, and again between this and harmful sexual behaviour, becomes blurred in some participants' responses, and thus what tends to be the focus of discussion is what is defined by the law. The India report provides some excellent examples of the experiences of boys on this continuum.

The reports from Cambodia and India shared an expansion of the working definition of an 'actor' to include initiating or having mutually consensual sex. In India, for example, the definition is "a boy [under 18 years] who has displayed harmful sexual behaviour and is consensually involved in sexual exploration". This expanded description allowed a deeper understanding of the continuum of the sexual behaviour of respondents. In this report, the definition of an 'actor' was not focused only on harmful sexual behaviour. That is, there were respondents who experienced sexual abuse, moved to consensual sex that they enjoyed, and yet also used force to have sex with their romantic partner. The report described these as "changing subjectivities". Of note is that, due to the normalisation of

violence by males in relationships, what could be defined as harmful sexual behaviours were instead perceived as normal expressions. This can be best summarised directly from the India report:

"The boys who explored their sexuality through consensual relationships with boys or girlfriends highlighted positive experiences. Ambiguities around sexuality were also stated by the boys as some of them could not make out what happened with them while others failed to understand the way they transgressed the boundaries of consent and (mis)used their power in different ways."

The report from India stated examples of women as sexual abusers, which were not stated in the Philippines or Nepal reports and only briefly in the Cambodia report. In the Philippines, there were clear statements that men who sexually abuse boys are gay. This could be merely because the focus of the study was on male victims.

Regarding the distinction between what would be socially acceptable sexual exploration and harmful behaviours, the line appears to be drawn by the law. Yet the question is: what moves a person from sexual exploration to harmful behaviour? The one major variable described in the studies was anger. In India, for example, a respondent who had sex with his girlfriend several times mutually, but once when she did not want sex and he did, said that his anger pushed him towards non-consensual sex. The Philippines report pointed to actors' expectations, or inability to communicate their emotions, which led to alcohol use, which led to harmful sexual behaviour.

Some respondents in the Nepal report made statements about boys who are actors in harmful sexual behaviour and men who sexually abuse. For these respondents the line is very clear between consensual and forced sex. For these boys and men, the respondents stated that they are without 'morality', have certainly committed a crime, and deserve punishment.

The India report provided insight similar to the Cambodia report regarding an apparent acceptance of violence in sexual behaviour. This is embedded in dominant notions of masculinities that influence the use of harmful sexual behaviour even in intimate romantic relationships.

Acceptance of violence in multiple situations of anger in intimate sexual relationships revealed the way varying forms of violence were normalised. The findings also reflect how (hetero) sexuality is being defined and shaped by the patriarchal values wherein extra- and or pre-marital [heterosexual] sex and violence are perceived as acceptable amongst males and as part of masculinity. Thus, the dominant notions of masculinity and sexuality, and the intersections between them, were found to be important in defining boys' experiences and perspectives.

3.4 Support available for boys affected by sexual violence

Legal reforms that place some emphasis on boys as victims of sexual violence have been taking place and continue to evolve, such as the law on sexual offences against children in India, which covers both boys and girls. Similarly, in Nepal the 2018 Children's Act defines sexual offences within the purview of violence against children. However, very few interventions yet exist which attend to the prevention of sexual violence affecting boys, or which focus on the recovery of male victims, or on the rehabilitation of males with inappropriate, harmful sexual behaviour. Instead, the subject of sex and

sexuality appears to be such a taboo or so sensitive that sexual misbehaviours often get overlooked or ignored and thus inadvertently rewarded or severely punished. Either response at either end of the continuum is mostly inappropriate and often traumatic and ineffective.

In the Philippines study, what the boys as victims and actors appeared to want most was family support. While most boys stated the need for support from their mother, young men who had been incarcerated wanted support from their fathers. According to the Philippines report, the common challenge was absent fathers. Therapy for male victims and actors is available from private professionals, who are limited, and mostly in urban areas, and even these professionals have few male victim or actor clients. Of note are the statements that services to boys in conflict with the law have support from social workers and the legal system, while boys who are victims are not given these services. The perception from the boy respondents is that seeking help for male victims is difficult because of the fear of negative responses from authority or other possible support systems. Boy victims described a social and legal bias towards helping girls and the limited existence of both legal and other support services for boys, even from their families. Most cases of boy victims and actors are seen in institutions, where the services focus on alternative education, sports and recreation; very few of the services are abuse-specific for either of the populations. Gender-related services were cited as being needed, with comments about the need for increased gender equality too, with more services being made available for boys than there are currently. Numerous other challenges exist when working with this population, from lack of qualified staff to the lack of abuse-focused services. In addition, what services do exist are not known to most people and thus accessibility appears limited.

The Cambodia report stated that there is a lack of services for boys in general in the sphere of sexual abuse and violence, and that the services that do exist are not easily accessible (in particular, for those living in remote areas). One of the issues regarding accessibility is a lack of awareness of what does exist, even if this is minimal. However, the Cambodia report cited promising interventions which are leading to increased awareness-raising amongst boys about sexual violence through measures which include visual materials and home visits by social workers to ensure that someone is available to care for the boy. Challenges do remain, largely because the community continues to feel that the sexual abuse of boys is not serious or that boys do not need support or other services. Regarding help for the actors, some participants shared criticisms they had received from the community for helping boys and youth who the community felt should be punished instead. Actors tend to be viewed as 'bad boys'. Most participants did not know where boys could go if they needed help, or if they needed to find help for other boys. While there are several shelters for females, there are none for boys. The issue, therefore, is not only limited availability, but that what is available is not accessible because boys do not know that these services exist.

The India report also stated that the importance of family support was paramount. And again, most responses were legal-related. This report highlighted the issue of the gender of the case workers and counsellors and the possible impact that a mostly female workforce could have on male clients within their socio-cultural contexts. It also stated the common concern that work with men in the gender arena often focuses on how not to abuse women, rather than on what it is to be male. The report highlighted several intervention services within the legal framework, yet acknowledged that few men seek services. Additional challenges noted in the report include the age of the victim-survivor, the fact that children in conflict with the law in general are stigmatised, the lack of support from parents, and continued violence against women that keeps the focus on female victimisation.

The Nepal report also cited limited services. While respondents who had experienced abuse often stated that they had sought help from family as well as from social workers (through a helpline) and authorities, reporting to the police appears foremost. That is, the response tended to be legal.

Picture by Butterflies, India

Regardless of who they feel is available to help, they remain fearful to disclose or report, as well as experiencing difficulty in even communicating what happened to them. A suggestion to address this concern was to provide sex education, which is also lacking in all four countries, in order to educate and empower boys with the vocabulary to seek help. Many were not aware of what sexual abuse of boys is, and whether what they experienced was abuse. Unfortunately, or perhaps because of the way the question was posed, the legal option is what was noted first when participants responded to the question of where to get help for boys/youth who display inappropriate sexual behaviour. This report recognises the need to intervene within the grey area between normal sexual exploration and harmful sexual behaviour, when too often the response is to either ignore or severely punish. As explained by one respondent in Nepal: "Not every person has the ability to understand the reason behind displaying harmful sexual behaviour, and some families support, while some blame and ignore the issue. It might be useful to advise him through counselling not do such things in the future. If it does not work, rehabilitation support is needed."

There is limited understanding amongst many professionals about supporting boys, as they are better prepared to support girls and women. Public awareness on the issue of sexual violence affecting boys is minimal, and similarly on the availability of those services that exist to support them.

3.5 Conclusion

Each country study contains rich, varied and contextualised detail on what it means to be male, on the diversity of factors driving and perpetuating sexual violence against boys, and on the range of responses in this area. At the same time, the studies also reveal broad similarities in the underlying causes and consequences of sexual violence affecting boys – stemming from social norms on masculinity and sexuality that deeply affect boys displaying problematic or harmful sexual behaviour and boys who experience sexual abuse. Consequently, there is a broad consensus on the type of interventions which can prevent sexual violence and which can promote recovery and rebuild lives. These similarities across country contexts indicate the utility of international collaborative efforts to support and strengthen local actions tackling sexual violence affecting boys. Findings coalesced around the following conclusions.

1. Boys have more freedom and fewer restrictions than girls but can be less protected as a result.

Each of the four studies indicated that boys have greater freedom to leave the house and to wander around than girls. They are also subject to less scrutiny of their actions than girls. This was seen as a good thing by boys, who contrasted this with the boundaries and restrictions placed on girls, due to their perceived vulnerability to sexual violence. At the same time, the freedom enjoyed by boys appears to come at a price: it implies that boys can take care of themselves and inherently need less protection than girls.

> **"Most of the time, their parents don't worry too much about them because they're boys, they've got nothing to lose. Unlike for girls who can get pregnant or be raped. Hence, (girls) are really protected."**
>
> Jaycee, boy victim of sexual abuse, Philippines

> **"Boys can roam around anywhere freely, but girls cannot. For girls it is better not to roam around outside as lot of bad people are outside."**
>
> Navdeep, boy victim of sexual abuse, India

> **"My parents never cared where I was going out, and they did not worry about me as they think I know how to protect myself as a boy."**
>
> Kim, young person from the general population, Cambodia

> **"If girls raise their voice their family members say, 'Are you the brother or what?' Boys are not told about what to do by the society; only girls are told."**
>
> Sapana, caregiver of victim, Nepal

2. 'Real men' are strong and brave, and physical violence is an expression of being male.

The stereotypical notion of the 'real man' which boys are expected to become emerged clearly from each of the studies. Characterised as courageous and independent, 'real men' are not only physically

strong but emotionally 'strong' too, meaning that there is pressure to avoid displaying feelings that might indicate vulnerability. The studies also indicate that being physically violent is an accepted expression of being a strong, brave man, and that aggressive behaviour in boys is not only tolerated but taught, for example through receiving harsher physical discipline in the family than girls.

> **"My parents taught me not do something that a girl does; do not be weak like a girl, but be strong."**
> Vantha, boy victim of sexual abuse, Cambodia

> **"There is (a difference). When I was younger, my parents used to spank me often when I'm too playful. As for my sister, she gets locked up in the room."**
> Bungka, boy victim of sexual abuse, Philippines

> **"An asli mard [real man] is one who is courageous and strong… and fearless even in late night. A person who is darpok [coward] is not an asli mard."**
> Ajmal, boy victim of sexual abuse, India

> **"At a very young age, the male child shows manly behaviour such as playing boxing games. I think for me that is a mark that he is a man and whenever someone teases him that he is gay he will violently retaliate."**
> Grace, female caregiver, Philippines

> **"Fighting is the quality of being a boy."**
> Ahir, boy from the general population, Nepal

3. Being a man means being a family protector and provider.

Across the four studies boys were identified as having two core roles within their families: as protectors of girls and women, and as providers. While the responsibility of looking after their families comes with privileges, such as being head of the family, there was also recognition of the considerable pressure on them to fit this dominant image of 'being a man'.

> **"Men must earn the money to support the family."**
> Vireak, boy victim of sexual abuse, Cambodia

> **"An asli mard [real man] is one who controls his tears and comforts everyone […] A man who takes care and protects the dignity of girls is a hero."**
> Anupam, boy victim of sexual abuse, India

> **"Men have to work, marry, […] start a family and educate the children."**
> Doreman, boy victim of sexual abuse, Nepal

> "My understanding of masculinity is growing up in the Philippines it is more demanding because there are a lot of expectations. You are expected to be the breadwinner, to do the physical tasks, not to show emotions in times when you should be emotional, like being faced with emotions is a sign of weakness; that's always [how] it has been."
>
> Bert, boy from the general population, Philippines

> "There is a saying that boys are born to struggle, and it is true we have to teach our son to struggle."
>
> Shraddha, caregiver of victim, Nepal

4. Boys learn about masculinity and sexuality primarily from their fathers, mothers, community members, friends, the media and the internet: where heterosexuality is presented as the norm.

For boys, their family members and caregivers play an important role in defining their masculinity, but they are also influenced by friends, teachers and a variety of media platforms such as television, film and social media. However, families and schools appear to be far less influential than friends, television and the internet in constructing boys' sexuality. Heterosexuality is embedded in masculine norms across all four contexts, with other forms of sexuality considered to be deviant.

> "[Boys learn about being a male] first, from the family; then nowadays, from the social media. But if you can observe it, social media is more influential than the values in the family. Because of this, children could learn just by watching the television that males should smoke or behave in such a way."
>
> Gha, female service provider, Philippines

> "I came to know of sex through some of my friends. I also watched movies on TV and the mobile and came to know what sex is."
>
> Aseem, boy victim of sexual abuse, India

> "Children can share ideas and experience freely with their friends, but they will not talk with their parents because they are worried that if they tell something about sex to their parents, they may get blamed from parents."
>
> Tika, female caregiver, Cambodia

> "There's also the internet – you'd encounter advertisements of sexy films which will ignite your curiosity, pushing you to ask: 'Is there a porn site here?' Because you're interested. Then, they will give you the website where you'll be able to watch sexual materials."
>
> Joshua, boy victim of sexual abuse, Philippines

> **"The boy will be treated badly if he does not conform to accepted sexual behaviour in the society. He will be seen in a negative way. He will also be humiliated, and some superstitious people will also say: 'Even if we just see such a guy, bad things will happen to us.'"**
>
> Mukesh, boy actor in harmful sexual behaviour, Nepal

> **"[…] man and woman having sex is ok as something can come out of it […] Boys should marry girls only. It is the law/rule of nature […] Boys should not have sex with boys, as it is wrong, it harms the sexual organs and is unnatural too, and it causes diseases also."**
>
> Kameel, boy actor in harmful sexual behaviour, India

5. The dominant perception is that boys can't be abused.

Dominant notions of masculinity serve to instruct boys that they must be strong and independent and that they are responsible for what happens to them. Boys are reproached differently to girls for their abuse, for example being seen as weak for 'allowing it to happen', and, where the abuser is male, stigmatised as deviant. Widespread incomprehension about the potential for sexual violence against boys is mirrored in embarrassment amongst caregivers, community members and boys themselves, and disbelief by authority figures, contributing to under-reporting and social isolation. The silence surrounding any discussion of sexual violence against boys can aggravate trauma and exacerbate their vulnerability to further abuse. Furthermore, perpetrators may use the stigma surrounding male-to-male sex, as well as money and gifts, to ensure that their victims do not speak up.

> **"When a boy gets sexually abused, people don't say much to him except like he must be naïve and innocent and was easily taken advantage of. People will also blame a victim for not defending and protecting himself."**
>
> Mukesh, boy actor in harmful sexual behaviour, Nepal

> **"I also do it with one friend. I give him solution [a drug] and he agrees to have sex with me."**
>
> Vijay, boy actor in harmful sexual behaviour, India

> **"(I) was scared also of teachers and other children […] I tried once hard to tell my teacher […] I was also worried of how the teacher will react as it was a government school. I didn't feel like telling as it would have been an insult to the family also."**
>
> Asif, boy victim of sexual abuse, India

> **"If my friend said that he was sexually attacked, we would laugh at him and would not believe him."**
>
> Kimly, boy from the general population, Cambodia

> **"I feel like on the part of the abuser, it seems that they are less likely to be caught because they could always manipulate the victims or place societal pressures on them that they are no longer men because that happened to them. Eventually, the victim will no longer report on what happened to them because they are embarrassed."**
>
> Bert, boy from the general population, Philippines

> **"People would hate [boy] victims because they don't like the idea of boys being sexually abused."**
>
> Lim, actor in harmful sexual behaviour, Cambodia

6. Support for boys affected by sexual violence is very limited.

Very few interventions exist which focus on the prevention of sexual violence affecting boys, or their recovery. There is limited understanding amongst many professionals, who are better prepared to support girls and women. Public awareness on the issue of sexual violence affecting boys is minimal, and similarly on the availability of those services that exist to support them. Each of the studies reported the need for trained counsellors, male and female, who understand the needs of boys affected by sexual violence. At the same time, emerging community-level practice and recovery interventions in the four study areas give an indication of what is needed to support boys affected by sexual violence.

> **"If I became a victim of sexual abuse, if I were able to escape, I [would] report what happened to me; otherwise, nothing could be done... Because there is a lack of people who will defend the male children unlike with female children. The government's focus is on female children; but with male children, there is none."**
>
> Don, boy from the general population, Philippines

> **"Service for boys is very limited, so we have to improve the ability to refer victims to NGO that can help."**
>
> Paneth, female service provider, Cambodia

> **"It is really difficult for the victim of sexual abuse to express about the incident with others. Many do not share about it, especially boys. Therefore, we need to create such environments where the victim can express what happened to them."**
>
> Teacher, Nepal

> **"For me, whenever I'm in the cottage [centre], I always think for boys like me... there should be a programme for all boys who've been involved in sexual abuse that would teach them how to control themselves from adopting what they experienced."**
>
> 20-year-old male, Philippines

"We don't have a lot of male social workers or counsellors, so to tell a woman, a didi [elder sister] about this is a little bit difficult for them. They take a lot of time to build a rapport with us."

Shreya, female service provider, India

"Awareness is the main key as the boy or his family has less or no idea about this issue and another thing is deterrence since public have no awareness, they do not report the cases as well. This shows that society is ignoring the fact. If children are abused and do not report, it encourages the abuser. There are legal provisions in Nepal for this but if no case is reported, the law does not activate itself."

Service provider, Nepal

4. Recommendations

The conclusions from this four-country study highlight the combined force of norms on masculinity and sexuality that deeply affect the two key experiences of sexual violence of boys explored in these studies: that of harmful sexual behaviour by boys and the sexual abuse of boys. Consequently, in many cases, recommendations have been developed which address the experiences of both actors and victims of sexual violence, which is particularly pertinent for prevention activities. Given the conflated understanding of harmful sexual behaviour and sexual abuse in boys, recommendations on identification of these two experiences of sexual violence are highlighted in recommendations for recovery activities.

Prevention activities

A concerted effort is needed at local, regional and national levels to build awareness about sexual violence against boys. This would require advocacy through mainstream and social media channels to counter prevailing myths and beliefs about the victims, perpetrators and consequences of sexual violence against boys. Advocacy efforts should enable a national conversation about child sexual abuse and the ways in which boys and young men are stigmatised and discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Greater understanding is needed amongst boys and girls around how issues relating to sexuality and sexual and reproductive health affect boys. This has implications for how caregivers rear and care for their children, as well as when and how sexuality and masculinity are discussed in school and in other community-based settings.

Recourse to legal redress is uncommon in seeking justice for boys who are victims of sexual abuse. Advocacy is needed to encourage better understanding of the law and its coverage, tackle under-reporting, and support implementation of legal provisions.

Schools and educational establishments

School curricula should be reviewed with a view to raising and discussing sex and sexuality with students in an open and non-judgemental way. Parent-teacher sessions should be organised to inform parents about the potential for boys to be victims of sexual violence, and to provide orientation on protecting their sons from sexual violence.

School-based support should be offered to both boys and girls in the responsible use of social media and the internet. Creative ways should be found to establish safe spaces on the internet and social media for children and young people to discuss sexuality.

Family

Parents and caregivers need assistance in advising and better supporting the emotional development of their boys, in terms of sexual relationships, and in creating an environment at home that enables boys to be listened to and believed.

Programmes targeting fathers should be set up to encourage more supportive relationships between fathers and sons and model positive masculinity.

Support to parents and to both boys and girls is needed in the responsible use of social media and the internet.

Community

Boys and young men who are affected by sexual violence need a supportive environment and safe spaces where they can discuss and be guided on issues relating to their sexuality and masculinity, specifically in the context of support to comprehend and manage their emotions and what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable sexual behaviour, as well as support in building positive relationships.

Greater awareness is needed amongst community-based institutions – including local government and religious groups – not only about sexual violence affecting boys, but also the existence of services to support them.

Response activities

Identification and early intervention

Child protection mechanisms rooted in communities require strengthening to enable them to identify boys affected by sexual violence – both boy victims of sexual abuse and boys displaying harmful sexual behaviour – and understand how to respond and how to support them sensitively. Safe spaces for boys need to be located where they can ensure protection and confidentiality for boys seeking support.

Because of the difficulty in identifying boys affected by sexual violence, consideration should be made of how to target recovery interventions differently according to context-specific risk factors. For example, boys living in insecure communities or without adult care, and boys whose parents are engaged in transactional sex, boys who identify as being from LGBTQ communities, and boys with disabilities have been identified in some communities as at heightened risk of sexual violence. Such groups of boys with heightened risks need to be targeted with specific interventions based on their unique needs. School counsellors should be trained in how to identify problematic or harmful sexual behaviour in boys as well as indicators of sexual abuse in boys.

Community-based care and protection services – whether governmental or non-governmental – should be made more accessible to boys in general, and provide support to boys affected by sexual violence that enables them to understand and manage their emotions and behaviour, and encourages them to foster positive relationships, for example through a life skills curriculum.

Specific services should be provided to boys who have been sexually abused. In addition, children's clubs and groups in community settings can be assisted to create a supportive peer environment which avoids boys affected by sexual violence becoming isolated and which can link them to trained and supportive professionals.

Upskilling professionals

More specialist professionals are required to be trained to work with boys affected by sexual violence, including social workers, case workers, police officers, medics and lawyers. A range of training methods should be piloted to ensure their contextual effectiveness, including the use of trauma-informed approaches.

Teachers and school managers in schools and other educational establishments need training on the appropriate guidance and advice they can give to boys experiencing sexual abuse or displaying problematic or harmful sexual behaviour. School counsellors should be able to offer confidential support to boys affected by sexual violence, with greater understanding of the diverse range of sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour so that boys are effectively supported without being criminalised. All students need to be made aware of whom they can approach for help when needed.

Addressing knowledge gaps on boys affected by sexual violence

Mapping and assessment of existing services that are in any way relevant to boys affected by sexual violence (i.e. for boy victims of sexual abuse and for boys displaying harmful sexual behaviour) is needed to establish where services can be adapted or expanded to incorporate the needs of boys and young men affected by sexual violence. This activity will require a multi-disciplinary team approach.

Evidence-based studies should be undertaken to give an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of sexual violence against boys, including research in the following areas.

- Female perpetration of sexual violence against boys.
- The long-term impact on boys and their families of sexual abuse.
- How the criminal justice system treats actors and victims of sexual violence.
- Boys' experiences of trauma, as current responses to child sexual abuse revolve largely around an understanding of trauma based on the experiences of girls.

Further studies should be considered on how to target interventions differently according to context-specific risk factors. For example, boys living in insecure communities or without adult care, boys living in religious institutions or in residential care, boys whose parents are engaged in transactional sex, boys from LGBTQ communities, and boys with disabilities are in some communities seen to be at heightened risk of sexual violence.

Research is also needed to inform training and guidance for key role models in boys' lives, notably fathers, teachers and community leaders, on how to support boys affected by sexual violence and how to model positive masculinities.

5. The way forward

For Family for Every Child, sexual violence against boys is a key concern and represents a major focus of work. Based on the global scoping study Caring for boys affected by sexual violence and driven by these primary research reports, Family for Every Child in July 2019 launched a global campaign entitled 'United for Boys'. This calls for action from different stakeholders worldwide in uniting together to focus and strengthen interventions to prevent and respond to sexual violence affecting boys, within the scope of violence against children.

In alignment with the above, the four members who conducted this study (CPTCSA, Butterflies, Cambodia and Voice of Children) have been implementing national advocacy in their countries amongst various stakeholders including practitioners, relevant government departments, media and others. In addition, these four members have also developed a regional advocacy strategy to collectively influence relevant actors in the South Asia and South East Asia regions to improve media narratives on sexual violence of boys, strengthen services for boys affected by sexual violence, and integrate and provide information and support to children on connected issues of gender and sexuality within the education system.

Coordinated regional and national initiatives are also being planned by other Family members in other countries drawing from the common findings of both the global and the primary research as part of the global campaign to stimulate discussion and to promote good practice. At the same time, action research of a similar design to the studies highlighted in this report is currently under way in Zimbabwe and South Africa.