Program H: Challenging gender stereotypes and changing attitudes in Brazil and other countries

Advocacy initiatives designed to educate men and women on the benefits of gender equality and joint decision-making can help nurture a more cooperative relationship between them.

A Brazilian non-governmental organization, Instituto Promundo, is implementing one such gender-sensitive programme, with positive results for women, men and children. Program H (the H refers to homens, or men in Portuguese) encourages young men to respect their partners, to avoid using violence against women, and to take precautions to avoid HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Through a creative blend of radio announcements, billboards and dance, Promundo challenges traditional male attitudes by promoting the idea that it is ‘cool and hip’ to be a more gender-equitable man.

Evaluations of the group meetings, where young men discuss the consequences of high-risk lifestyle choices, show that men who complete the programme are less likely to support traditional gender norms (for example, the belief that childcare is a woman’s job and that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten). The number of young male participants (aged 15 to 28) who supported the statement that “a woman’s most important role is to take care of the home and cook” declined from 41 per cent in the pretest to 29 per cent after completion of the programme.

The success of the Program H initiative in Brazil has inspired similar programmes in other countries in the region, as well as in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the United States. In India, for example, where programmes modelled on the Program H approach have been adopted, preliminary findings suggest that men’s attitudes towards women have changed. See References, page 88.

UNICEF has joined with other UN agencies and institutions to create a partnership dedicated to producing more comprehensive and accurate data.44

• Violence against women: Only 38 countries in the world have conducted at least one national survey on violence against women since 1995. A further 30 countries have surveys completed that cover parts of the country.45

• Enrolment, school attendance and literacy: While there are significant data disaggregated by sex on school enrolment, sex-disaggregated data on literacy and school attendance are available for only 112 and 96 countries, respectively. Efforts to compile and release sex-disaggregated data on female completion rates at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education must also be strengthened.44

• Labour force, unemployment and occupational distribution: Just over half the world’s 204 countries and territories provided sex-disaggregated data on these fundamental areas of work, with only 105 providing data on occupational segregation by sex.44

• Wage statistics: This is a vital area where discrimination affects women and their children, and yet just under half (52) of the 108 countries or territories that reported wage data were also able to provide disaggregation by sex. Europe and Asia account for almost three quarters of these countries.45

• Informal employment: Even with an internationally agreed-upon definition of informal employment, only 60 countries have produced data on informal employment, and in many cases these statistics are not fully comparable.49

• Unpaid work and time use: Since 1995, 67 countries or areas have conducted time use surveys, with again the vast majority in CEE/CIS and South and East Asia. Only seven countries in Africa and three in South America have collected such data.50

• Women’s participation in national and local governments: The Inter-Parliamentary Union collects data on the number of women in parliaments and how the numbers have changed over time.51 Data on women’s participation in local government are relatively scarce, however, although United Cities and Local Governments has collected data in more than 70 countries.52

• Women in peace negotiations and peace-building: No systematic data are available on women participating as parties to peace negotiations. With the exception of the statistics made available by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, no systematic data are available about women involved in different dimensions of peace-building.

In some areas, collection of data is much more difficult than in others. Collecting data on violence and trafficking, for example, poses more methodological problems than data on women in national parliaments. However, the lack of data in many key areas reflects not the difficulties of data collection, but rather the significant discrepancy between the resources invested in the excellent and careful collection of data in some areas, and lack of data in others. In other words, it is not only a question of capacity but also one of political will to invest in data collection.

When statistics are a priority, even if difficult to collect, they are there. Financial statistics such as inflation, for example, are not easy to collect as they require detailed and rapidly updated economic information, yet they are available almost universally – even in the poorest countries. But many countries, particularly poorer ones, do not currently have the statistical capacity to regularly collect the most basic disaggregated statistical series, let alone in areas such as informal employment, time use and wages.

While country-led censuses and surveys are the centrepiece of statistical collection, other approaches can rapidly produce data even where statistical capacity is limited. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, a household survey programme developed by UNICEF to...