



Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Program H

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Global

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

ABAAD (Lebanon); Quartiers du Monde (Morocco); Latin-American Youth Center (USA); Terre des Hommes (Jordan); SEED (Kurdistan, Iraq); among others

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Gender transformation, gender equality, gender norms adolescent boys, digital, in-person and hybrid;

6. What makes it a best practice? *

The invitation to boys to reflect on and interrogate how they have learned to 'be' men is a rare, unique and important opportunity, particularly in a school setting where they are first testing out relationships with their classmates. Program H engages boys in a guided curriculum, facilitated by a trained mentor, that leads them to come to new understandings of themselves, others and the world around them and promotes as outcomes healthier, more consensual romantic/sexual relationships, allyship for girls and women, and non-violence.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

Program H is composed of three interrelated parts:

1. a gender-transformative group education curriculum that includes the Program H manual and an educational video (Once Upon a Boy) that is also used in some settings for promoting attitude and behavior change among young men;
2. community campaigns, led by young people themselves, that seek to change community norms related to what it means to be men and women; and
3. a culturally relevant, validated evaluation model (the Gender Equitable Men, or GEM, Scale) that seeks to measure the degree to which young men and women change their gender attitudes as a result of the interventions.

Of the three components, the centerpiece of Program H is the manualized curriculum of participatory group activities promoting critical reflection and discussion on gender and masculinities that are carried out in same-sex and/or mixed-sex groups. These group sessions are usually led by trained community facilitators, who serve as gender-equitable role models for young men. Activities include role-plays, brainstorming exercises, group discussions, and individual reflections about how boys and men are socialized to be men, the “costs” of manhood, and the benefits of becoming more gender-equitable men.

Program H is framed by the concept of “gender consciousness,” which originates from the idea of critical consciousness developed by Paulo Freire. The process of “conscientization,” according to Freire, links individuals’ capacity to reflect on the world and to choose a given course of future action informed by and empowered by that critical reflection. This process of reflecting critically on the history of cultural conditions and class structures that support and frame experiences of gender inequality can help to promote personal growth, political awareness, and activism, which can create the conditions to change gender role prescriptions. By questioning gender stereotypes, youth who already act as “voices of resistance” on rigid gender norms become further engaged and serve as role models for other youth. Some of the first Program H activities came directly from formative research in Brazil that explored which topics, within a critical awareness of masculinities, were salient to engage young men. The first case studies, examples, and topics came out of these direct discussions.

The Program H theory of change is also informed by social norms theory, which states that our behavior is influenced by misperceptions of how our peers think and act; the theory of reasoned action, which states that a person’s behavior is determined by their intention to perform the behavior and that this intention is, in turn, a function of their attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms; and the theory of gender and power, which describes the structures that characterize men’s and women’s gendered relationships. Program H posits that young men learn through questioning and critically reflecting on gender norms, power, and privilege; rehearsing equitable and nonviolent attitudes and behaviors in a comfortable space; internalizing these new gender attitudes and norms; and applying them in their own relationships and lives. Indeed, research on HIV and sexual health programs shows programs that include an examination of power dynamics and gender norms are more effective at achieving SRH outcomes.

Supporting institutions and structures, such as community-based youth organizations and after-school programs, reinforces the group education process in encouraging young individuals and organizations to develop and use the tools to become agents of change for gender equality.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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Perhaps one of Program H's most notable achievements is its evaluated impact, alongside the number of places where it has been adapted and how easily it has been adapted to be culturally relevant over the years. Though the focus of this paper is to take stock of and reflect on those Program H adaptations that have more robust evaluations, it is also important to note the diversity of places where Program H has been implemented. At least 36 countries – in the Global North and South – have implemented Program H within various settings, from school and vocational training classrooms to sports settings to health clinics to juvenile justice detention centers to community settings. Many of these adaptations were carried out by a range of actors – from multilateral institutions such as the United Nations to local community-based organizations and local governments. As an open-access resource, Program H is available for anyone to adapt and implement. As such, Promundo's involvement in these adaptations has also varied; in some places, Promundo has led the project, while in others, the organization has been engaged only as a technical advisor or not at all.

The data presented in this submission brings together findings from 14 Program H impact evaluations

that have been carried out in 12 countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Ethiopia, India, Kosovo, Namibia, Rwanda, Serbia, the United States, and Vietnam. It highlights findings from studies that were the most robust in terms of evaluation methodology or sample size and that included a substantial portion of the original Program H activities. The review includes three randomized controlled trials, nine quasi-experimental designs, and two pre-post evaluations (without a comparison group), with sample sizes ranging from 100 to more than 3,000. The timing of follow-up varied across sites, but most surveys occurred directly after the intervention ended, approximately three to six months after baseline. Several studies were designed to compare the impact of Program H group education versus a campaign or a combined intervention (group education plus campaign).

To be included in the review, evaluations had to include boys and young men aged 12 to 24; assess interventions that have at least half of the group education sessions adapted from Program H, delivered over a minimum of three weeks; use a pre-post, quasi-experimental, or experimental study design; have a minimum sample size of 100; use the GEM Scale to assess changes in young men's gender attitudes; and assess changes in young men's attitudes or behaviors related to intimate partner violence (IPV) or SRH. The cultural and contextual adaptability of Program H – something that is

considered one of its main strengths – is also what makes comparing the results of one Program H with another challenging. Adaptation has varied across settings in terms of focus (e.g., HIV or violence prevention), participants (from adolescents without a stable intimate partner to older married men), and duration. Thus, the outcomes of interest for the evaluations vary.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

Program H has produced positive changes in young men’s gender attitudes in most, but not all, settings. Researchers found more gender-equitable attitudes among participating young men in nine of the 14 studies reviewed. Three additional evaluations reported more equitable gender attitudes among both intervention and control participants. The studies demonstrate that improvements in gender attitudes can be achieved via group education alone, as well as a combined intervention (group education plus community campaign).

Findings on violence perpetration were mixed, but several studies found reductions in men’s perpetration of partner violence or reduced acceptance of violence against women.

Program H has contributed to positive changes in young men’s SRH knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in several settings. Several, but not all, Program H adaptations were designed to reduce HIV risk and improve SRH outcomes. Despite differences in key outcomes and measures, taken together, the findings suggest that Program H can successfully contribute to increased condom use (India, Brazil, and Vietnam), reduced STI symptoms (Brazil), increased HIV testing and use of SRH services (Rwanda), improved attitudes toward contraceptives (Rwanda), greater communication with partners about HIV and contraceptives (Ethiopia and India), and improved SRH knowledge (the Balkans).

The accumulated evidence from diverse settings finds that Program H, when implemented well and culturally adapted, can lead to self-reported changes in attitudes and behaviors related to SRH and intimate partner violence.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

Young men appreciate participating in Program H, but low or inconsistent attendance is a pervasive issue when working with young men. Creative recruitment and retention strategies are needed, and young men should be engaged early on to design the best ways to deliver the program, including the best times to hold the sessions.

Those programs that were implemented in schools and involved stakeholders from the beginning, particularly teachers and youth workers, had the highest attendance and retention rates.

Most organizations said it is difficult – or not within their program scope – to recruit the hardest-to-reach young men, such as out-of-school youth, young men in situations of economic stress, and youth experiencing homelessness. It is not enough to engage young men directly affected by the intervention

- iv) such as students – without understanding and engaging the stakeholders around them who shape their gender attitudes and may perpetuate inequitable gender norms.

Many Program H implementing organizations find it challenging to implement sessions over a sustained period without sufficient support from decision-makers, financial resources, and staff capacity (i.e., time and training), and they often have to make decisions to cut content in order to accommodate young people's availability, school schedules, and other limitations.

At the same time, some evidence suggests that a longer intervention implemented consistently over a longer duration is necessary to see significant change in gender-related outcomes

Though not all of the evaluations assessed the impact of group education alone versus group education plus additional program components (such as campaigns), there is evidence in a few settings that the impact of group education alone may be comparable to that of a combined intervention involving youth-led campaigning

More can be done to adapt Program H in ways that reflect and address the multiple inequalities that young people face – including those based on income, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Program H implementers in a few settings have engaged with or been part of advocacy efforts to question structural social injustices

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

When Promundo first launched Program H in 2002, there were few structured group education programs for young men that addressed harmful masculinities as their central theme. Of those that did exist, few had a strong theory of change, let alone been rigorously evaluated. Approximately 20 years later, the landscape of engaging men and boys for gender equality has grown and evolved. The field as a whole has invested more energy and resources into evaluating the effectiveness of Program H’s group education sessions.

What can be said with a high degree of confidence is that when implemented well, Program H achieves a positive impact on gender attitudes and some behaviors. In a few settings, where funding and institutional buy-in made it possible, implementing partners were able to engage other components of the socio-ecological model, such as pushing for progressive and inclusive policy changes, sensitizing and shifting norms within institutions such as school administrations, advocating for youth employment, and joining forces with other social movements supporting and advocating for affirmative action programs to redress historical racial inequalities.

Clearly, a single program model cannot on its own redress systemic and structural change, but Program H has often been an important value-adding component to gender justice and other social justice advocacy in some countries. In other settings, it has been a time-bound, short-term intervention.

What is urgently needed is rigorous evaluation of comprehensively designed and scaled-up versions of Program H – versions that include components besides group education – youth-led advocacy, engagement of key stakeholders, changes in service provision to include young men (in the health sector, for example), and income support or job training. There are examples of what this can look like when done well from the Balkans, Brazil, India, and Vietnam, for example.

In other settings, it may be more strategic to implement Program H with groups that hold tremendous influence over social and gender norms, such as older adolescents and young men in their early 20s in a given community, coaches, and caregivers or health care professionals. Rather than scaling up Program H to reach greater numbers of young men, it may be more effective for key influencers to conduct community outreach and serve as positive role models.

These nearly 20 years of experience would suggest that gender-transformative group education does not on its own lead to the large-scale change needed to shift gender norms and achieve gender equality, but that well-done gender-transformative, critical consciousness-raising education is vital to create cohorts of young or adult women and men who often become voices of change in their households, schools, workplaces, and communities, particularly when such efforts partner with national and local advocacy for women’s rights, antiracism, violence prevention, and broader social justice

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

<https://promundoglobal.org/resources/program-h-a-review-of-the-evidence-nearly-two-decades-of-engaging-young-men-and-boys-in-gender-equality/>

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/program-hmd-toolkit-action-engaging-youth-achieve-gender-equity/#:~:text=Toolkits%20and%20Guidance-,Program%20H%2FM%2FD%3A%20A%20Toolkit%20for%20action.,Youth%20to%20Achieve%20Gender%20Equity&text=%E2%80%9CToolkit%20for%20action%3A%20Engaging%20Youth,youth%20to%20achieve%20gender%20equity.>

<https://promundoglobal.org/programs/manhood-2-0/>