

LASTING SUCCESS INSTEAD OF PROJECTS

Violence prevention experience in the Nordic countries



JÄMSTÄLLDHETS
MYNDIGHETEN



This publication is funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The purpose of this publication is to disseminate various Nordic experiences and ideas on violence prevention, and the text and quotations therefore do not necessarily reflect the views of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency in all parts.

Reference number: 433

Editor and factual texts: Lina Lundborg, Swedish Gender Equality Agency.

Photographer unless otherwise stated: Jöran Fagerlund, Swedish Gender Equality Agency.

Articles: Charlie Olofsson, freelance journalist.

Printing: Ale Tryckteam, meets the criteria for Nordic ecolabelled printing, November 2018. 

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The Gender Equality Agency has attracted international attention. Director-General Lena Ag is interviewed at the ICMEO conference.

PREFACE

Successful gender mainstreaming can only be accomplished by setting long-term goals and pursuing them with determination. The Gender Equality Agency was established to meet these requirements.

Ending men's violence against women is one of six sub-goals adopted by the Government to achieve the overall goal that men and women should have equal power to shape society and their own lives.

The goal of ending men's violence against women requires that we engage in violence prevention. Men and boys must have an active role in this work. Ideas about violence as a legitimate expression of masculinity must be challenged.

The Swedish Government has adopted a ten-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence

against women, emphasizing the importance of preventive measures, challenging norms that justify violence. The Gender Equality Agency will support and review the implementation of this strategy.

The Nordic countries share the goal of strengthening prevention and striving for zero-tolerance in relation to gender-related violence. In this publication, we describe some of the violence prevention programmes in relation to children and adolescents in the Nordic countries. We hope that you will find inspiration for your further work.

*Lena Ag
Director-General
Swedish Gender Equality Agency*



Shanga Aziz at ICMEO.

CHANGING SOCIAL STANDARDS IN FOCUS AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

In a summery Stockholm, around 350 participants gathered at the fourth international conference on men and gender equality (ICMEO), hosted by the Swedish Minister for Gender Equality, arranged by the Gender Equality Agency jointly with the Government Offices on 15-16 May 2018. Previously, ICMEO has been arranged by Germany, Austria and Luxembourg.

The conference hosted by Sweden focused on how changing social standards and stereotypes can strengthen the role of boys and men in the work on gender equality. Participants included several European Gender Equality Ministers, experts in several authorities, researchers and civil society representatives.

– Young men have experiences that are valuable in the work on gender equality, said Minister for gender Equality

Lena Hallengren, in the opening speech of the conference together with Shanga Aziz, founder of Locker Room Talk.

Shanga received warm applause when he talked about his work to stop the banter in the changing rooms that leads to skewed values. It's about helping young guys grow up in to something other than men who hurt others with conversations about gender equality and fair attitudes. He concluded by noting the importance of working on gender equality at school. This work must be allowed to take time – just like chemistry and mathematics. It cannot be solved with an hour's lecture at some point in the year.

Violence prevention experience in the Nordic countries

The second day of the conference had a Nordic Profile. One of the six workshops that took place was arranged by the



Mentors Mashury Mirza and Mmesoma Ezekiel were a hit during the workshop at the ICMEO.

Gender Equality Agency and highlighted the Nordic experience of violence prevention among young people, with a special focus on work that includes the participation of young men. The overall purpose of the workshop was to

highlight the importance of developing violence prevention and to complement previous exchanges of Nordic experience within this field. A number of Nordic examples of different approaches and methods were presented. ■

VOICES ON THE WORKSHOP AT ICMEO ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION

“It is very instructive to hear about the work on violence prevention among young people in other Nordic countries, as we have just started a similar project in Iceland. One problem identified by many is that it is difficult to achieve a long-term approach in the work, since it is often run by non-profit organisations and in project form. Therefore it is particularly enjoyable to hear about the mentoring program in Botkyrka in Sweden, which is actually run by the municipality and not integrated in the ordinary activities. Here we have a good example to point at!”

Steinunn Gudjonsdottir, Project Manager, Stigamot, Iceland



Press

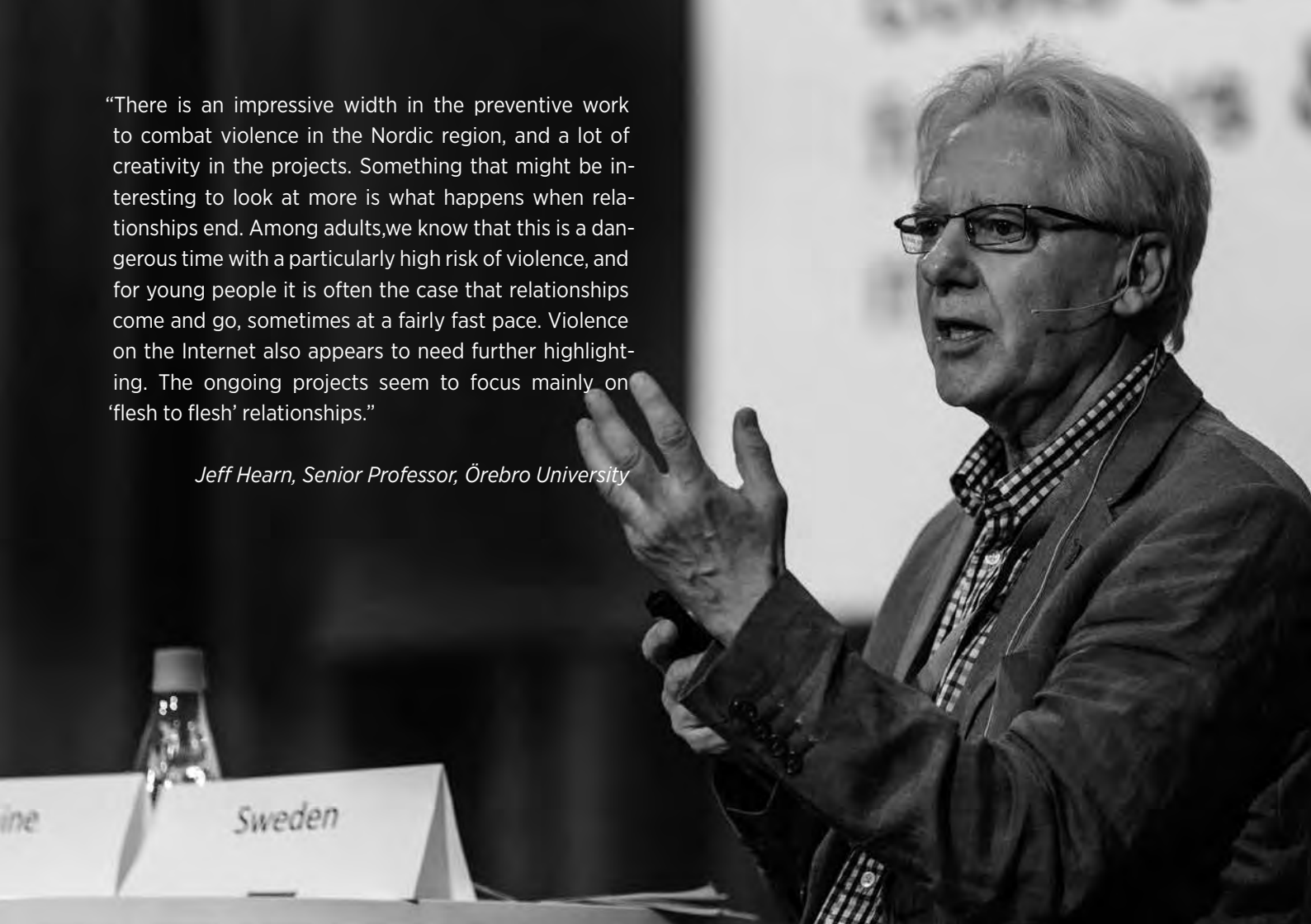


“One important issue is why men’s violence is not diminishing despite all the violence prevention efforts made, and even though legislation is changing and updated to protect girls and women. One explanation is the huge expansion of the pornography industry via the Internet. Today nearly every man, whether adult or child, has access to a mobile, computer or tablet, and this, combined with how violent pornography has become, makes our violence prevention efforts almost ineffectual. Children who watch violent, sexist and racist pornography on the Internet when they Google sex out of curiosity get mixed messages. Vigorous action against pornography is needed in sex education and in all violence prevention programmes. Pornography is totally incompatible with gender equality and the equal value of all human beings and it is time we jointly do something about it.”

Olga Persson, Secretary-General, Unizon

“There is an impressive width in the preventive work to combat violence in the Nordic region, and a lot of creativity in the projects. Something that might be interesting to look at more is what happens when relationships end. Among adults, we know that this is a dangerous time with a particularly high risk of violence, and for young people it is often the case that relationships come and go, sometimes at a fairly fast pace. Violence on the Internet also appears to need further highlighting. The ongoing projects seem to focus mainly on ‘flesh to flesh’ relationships.”

Jeff Hearn, Senior Professor, Örebro University





Breaking the ice.

STUDENTS DRIVE THE CHANGE

The municipality of Botkyrka witnessed increasingly serious violence at ever-earlier ages. Scissors were thrown in the classrooms and “fun-brawls” degenerated into real fights. Six years ago, a long-term effort was initiated to reverse this trend, and the initiative is underpinned by young role models.

It’s Monday afternoon and the sixth-formers are waiting outside the classroom at Grindtorpsskolan in Alby, south of Stockholm. Someone is curiously peeking through the glass pane of the door. Inside the classroom, ninth-formers are making the final preparations ahead of the lesson they will give. The focus will be on how to be an active bystander and intervene if someone is treated badly. All the desks have been pushed together at the front of the classroom to make room for a ring of chairs.

– I want the sixth-formers to understand what happens when you hit someone or say ugly words. Sometimes people don’t

really think about what they’re doing. They don’t understand the consequences, says Yousef Abdullah.

He is one of 13 ninth formers at the school who have been recruited to the leadership programme MVP, Mentors in Violence Prevention. In the programme, they are trained in how to prevent violence and be active role models. They hold lessons with sixth formers on eleven occasions during the academic year, and between these meetings they act as older students who listen and give support, under the supervision of adults from the school, social services, the police and rescue services.

“More intervene against violence”

The violence prevention initiative in Botkyrka involves several different actors in the municipality and is politically well-anchored. It is one of the few examples of violence

prevention with a long-term approach, integrated in the ordinary operations. Many other violence prevention initiatives, in other municipalities or countries, are in project form which means there is a considerable risk of running out of steam when financing stops, according to Mats Jonsson, Headmaster at Grindtorpsskolan. They have worked with MVP since 2015 and this is the second time the mentor is implemented. The aim is to achieve long-term results, and some effects are already visible at the school.

–For example, we are seeing that more people are intervening and opposing the violence, he says.

Overall, the violence prevention work has led to greater commitment to creating a better school environment, both among students and school staff, according to Mats Jonsson. He also describes how students have increasingly started to ask adults for help at school.

–There is a culture of not wanting to rat out and students may be afraid of being punished for involving adults, but I think this situation has improved a little. There is also an idea that it won't help to turn to us adults, so we need to show more clearly that we are actually doing something, he says.

An important building block in the MVP method is to highlight and challenge norms linked to gender, and es-

pecially expectations regarding how guys and men should behave. Mats Jonsson describes how, through his work with MVP, he has become very aware of the link between masculinity norms and violence.

–There is a macho culture throughout society, but I think it is expressed in a distinct way here, because we have special challenges involving honour culture, he says.

Challenging standards of masculinity

Mentor Yousef Abdullah thinks that the reason why guys use physical violence more than girls is because this is largely how guys get status.

–They think that if they're going to be a man then they can't cry, they can't show emotions, but that's wrong. It's normal to cry. You don't have to play tough, he says.

To fight and appear strong becomes a way for guys to gain respect, says Sabrin Mgadmi, who is also a mentor. But challenging the macho ideals is not an issue only for guys.

–Girls often want guys who are strong, so it's not just guys who need to change. We have to change this together, she says.

During the lesson with the sixth-formers, the mentors show a short film about bullying and discuss why nobody



Linda Pettersson, Mats Johansson and Sofi Sten.



Sabrin Mgadmi

around intervenes, even though they can see what is happening.

– People are afraid of ending up in the same situation themselves, says one of the sixth-formers.

The method places great emphasis on the role of active bystanders. The goal is for students to begin to see themselves as a positive force in their environment. Being an active bystander is about having civil courage and saying stop when someone is treated badly, and this can be done in several different ways. Intervening is not always the best option. In the worst case, someone intervening can lead to even more violence, mentor Amanda Hadeeb explains to the sixth-formers in the ring.

– Sometimes it's better to distract by focusing attention in another direction or fetching an adult. You can also support the victims after the event. You can call or text and say that you saw what happened and show that you care, she says.

Invective and ostracism – a form of violence

When work with MVP started at Grindtorpsskolan, the goal was primarily to overcome physical violence in classrooms and during breaks, but it is also important to pay attention to psychological and verbal violence, says school counsellor

Linda Pettersson, who coordinates the work with mentors in the school. This can be ostracism or subtle things such as glances and faces that are difficult for the environment to discern, but where the victim feels clearly violated.

–It can also be invective, for example derogatory expressions regarding someone’s gender, says Linda Pettersson.

At the beginning of the work with MVP, she was surprised at how easy it was for the mentors in ninth form to connect with the students in the sixth form.

–I didn’t think it would be so quick. After only a few meetings, they were important, reassuring individuals to whom the younger students turned in relation to various issues, both relating to their private situation and things that happened at school. There are, of course, some things that young people should not take upon themselves, and we talk a lot about this. In my view they are good at coming to us adults and asking for help, says Linda Pettersson.

While the mentors support sixth-formers, they receive support from key individuals at the school. For example, there is always at least one adult in the classroom during MVP lessons, and afterwards everyone gets together to reflect.

–I am very impressed with how good they are at handling their younger classmates. It is unusual to talk about



Yousef Abdullah



The mentors explain the next exercise.

gender and violence that you witness at school or at home. These are difficult questions, and it is wonderful to watch how the mentors develop, both in relation to the issues and as leaders, says Linda Pettersson.

Mentor Sabrin Mgadmi believes that the fact that young people talk with young people is a major reason why the MVP method works so well.

–I think it is easier for us than for adults to get the sixth formers’ trust. I remember how I used to look up to ninth formers, she says.

“The train” – Violence prevention for young children

Alongside the work with mentors, Grindtorpsskolan also has a MVP programme for the younger children in the primary and middle school. It is called the train and coordinated by school counsellor Sofi Sten. The work includes both lessons for the children and coach meetings for school staff. At the staff meetings, theories and perspectives that are important in relation to violence prevention, for example gender perspective and attachment theory, are presented.

–This is an important part of the work because it means that we establish a common approach, says Sofi Sten.

She argues that it is important to start working with violence prevention early on, already in preschool and primary school, that this is important for the work to have an effect.

–The students are formed early, we can see this in particular when we talk about gender. Already as small children we end up in roles based on beliefs about what a guy or a girl should be like, she says.

Exercises break the Ice

In the lessons, the students will, for example, do different exercises, so-called ice breakers, intended to improve comradeship. It could, for example, involve solving a task without talking to each other, such as a line-up based on year of birth.

–If we are given such a forum to interact with each other, even with those who are not our best friends, then it is easier to build on that comradeship later, says Sofi Sten.

In the lessons, the children also learn how to talk about their feelings. For example, putting their feelings in connection with conflict resolution into words.

–Often, grief, anxiety or fear is behind anger, and we need to access this. This training is important for all

pupils, but perhaps particularly important for boys, says Sofi Sten.

“Adults are also gender carriers”

Work on violence prevention in school does not only concern pupils but also the staff, emphasizes Sofi Sten.

–It’s about how we respond to children. Adults are also gender carriers. Research shows that already from the age of one, girls receive more comforting words and physical touch when they are sad compared to boys. Clearly, we are shaped accordingly. If we expect girls to want to hug and talk more about feelings than boys, then we reinforce this, she says.

Headmaster Mats Jonsson says that, within the framework of MVP, school staff have been given more support in responding to pupils who are angry, sad and acting out.

–These situations are very difficult. As a teacher, you may have been provoked or angry and yelling, or have you screamed to try to calm the atmosphere, only to realize later that you made it worse, that the noise level is increasing, says Mats Jonsson.

He tells us he has had some hard conversations with teachers who felt that they have made mistakes.

–It is important to raise the problem from the Individual level, because it is not about the failure of individual teachers, but rather about how we, at the school, jointly manage these situations, he says.

Mats Jonsson thinks that the teachers feel a little safer now, when the difficulties have been raised to the surface.

–We are noticing a difference. There is less yelling at school, he says.

Open up for talking about vulnerability

At the end of the lesson with the sixth-formers, the mentors in the ninth form state that no one should be bullied or victimised, like the person in the film they just watched.

–Do you feel your everyday life is violent? For example, brawls, bad words or pawing. Have you experienced this?

There is silence in the ring. None of the sixth-formers answers Yousef Abdullah’s question, but that doesn’t matter. What matters is that the question is asked. Before the lesson ends, a teacher takes over and explains that talking about vulnerability can raise emotions, and that there are adults at the school who are available to talk with. When the sixth-formers have gone home, the mentors stay for a while and move the desks back.

–It went well. They talked more this time than last, says
Amanda Hadeeb. ■



Amanda Hadeeb





Mentors, from left: Sabrin Mgadmi, Rand Mohammad, Anahit Tovmasyan, Rabar Mohamed, Yousef Abdullah, Sabir Blixt, Steven Amartey, Amanda Hadeeb.



Pernilla Vera

IN BOTKYRKA, YET ANOTHER PROJECT WAS NEVER AN ALTERNATIVE

The violence prevention work in Botkyrka municipality is well-anchored politically right up to the Municipal Board.

–There is a risk that we politicians want quick results that we can tell the voters about, but if we want to achieve real change we have to work with a long-term perspective, says Ebba Östlin (Social Democrat), Chairman of Botkyrka Municipal Board.

She thinks there is a big risk of initiatives flaring up and then going out if violence prevention is run in projects.

–Having a project day and then moving on is insufficient. Our way of working, with one thought that runs through the whole operation, pays off in the long run. We get more out of the resources we put in, she says.

Botkyrka municipality's work with MVP and the Train was started in 2012. Pernilla Vera, Head of Security at the

Municipality, participated already at the start, but then worked in social services.

–We had a situation with serious physical violence at school, especially in the junior years, and we had to do something about it. There were classrooms where scissors were flying, she says.

Collaboration

The seed for the new violence prevention was planted in a collaboration forum of the municipality with representatives from the school, social services and the police. The warning signals were strong, and, together, the participants in the collaboration forum evaluated their work.

Police officer Mats Jonsson notes that it is challenging to critically review one's own work and to ask oneself

whether one is doing the right sort of things.

– It can be uncomfortable to talk about things that aren't working. There are strategies in place, and to be the one questioning whether the measures taken are the right ones requires courage, he says.

Initiative without an end date

It was obvious from the beginning that the municipality needed a long-term and deliberate strategy to overcome the violence, says Pernilla Vera. Projects were never considered, instead the idea was always to incorporate a strategy in the ordinary operations and without an end date.

– We felt that we had to depart from the short-term, pop up-style approach. We needed continuity, she says.

The first mentors were recruited in 2015, so this method is still relatively new to the municipality. An evaluation by the Swedish National Agency for Education, which is not specifically about Botkyrka, states that the MVP method has potential, but that there are certain pitfalls. For example, it is important that the method handbooks are really followed as intended. Several of the schools included in the Agency's study are in the up-start phase with this work.

Nevertheless, the study shows a documented positive development among the pupils.

– The changes are small, but this is a large group of pupils where attitudes change slowly, says Pernilla Vera.

Quickly saw effects

It is still a bit too early to fully see the results of the work with MVP in Botkyrka, but some effects were noticed quickly, says Pernilla Vera. For example, staff at the schools saw, already at the beginning, that they received more information from pupils.

– I wouldn't say that we had a silence culture previously, but within the school environment, adults were not really informed about what is happening, says Pernilla Vera.

She says that in connection with the MVP strategy, for example, they started to get more information about drugs in the area.

– This meant that the police could meet up and focus on the school, she says.

Even at the beginning of the MVP strategy, they also saw that the violence within and outside of the school attracted more attention.

– When young people were involved, more people were willing to speak about things that might not have emerged



Mats Jonsson and Ebba Östlin.



otherwise. For example, we had a case where young people told an adult not to beat their child and when this adult was unable to accept this, the young people told the Headmaster, who took this issue further, says Pernilla Vera.

The MVP strategy has led to more notifications to the social services and a change in the violence at school.

–There is still a lot to be done, but it is not as serious as previously, and this has been really important for us. We get feedback that it is more peaceful inside the classroom – but still a challenge outside. It's not that everyone is happy happy, but we are seeing a clear effect, she says.

“Young people do the work”

An important success factor that Pernilla Vera emphasises is that, thanks to the MVP method, they have been able to involve young people.

–It is the young people who underpin this work. They have much more credibility among the younger pupils than adults, she says.

Police officer Mats Jonsson agrees that involvement of young people is key.

–It is a completely different thing when youths talk with each other about these issues than the police preaching



Sixth and ninth formers, side by side.

about law and order, he says.

In many municipalities, there is a collaboration between the police and the schools, where the police holds one lesson some time in form 1–9, but this is not enough, in his opinion. The MVP method has, as a positive side effect, led to increased trust in the police among young people in the area.

– The relationship between the police and the children has improved. This way of working contributes to an atmosphere where we can talk with each other without any conflict. In general, the police have been working repressively, we arrive when something happens, but we need to work more preventively and this is a good example, he says.

He believes that the MVP method and in particular the focus on how to be an active bystander has potential to contribute to improved civil courage and create a society where people stand up for each other to a greater extent. In the longer term, this may, for example, make it easier for the police to find individuals who are willing to testify, he thinks.

Political support is important

At present, five of Botkyrka's 21 schools work with the mentor programme and ten with the Train, the MVP strategy for primary and middle school. All schools that use

MVP have taken the initiative themselves to start, and this is important, according to Ebba Östlin.

– Otherwise, I don't think there would be the same commitment, she says.

As a tip to other municipalities who want to start working with violence prevention, Pernilla Vera especially highlights the cooperation between the local authorities and strong political support as two important success factors in Botkyrka.

– You might feel in your job that there is little response, that the politicians don't listen, but then you have to be even clearer in identifying the needs, she says.

From the political side, according to Ebba Östlin, it is important to persevere to ensure that resources are made available, and it may be necessary to find support across party boundaries.

– There has been no political dividing line around this in Botkyrka, instead we have made sure that there is a broad majority supporting the effort. It is important to avoid polarisation, and that we politicians find a common view of what needs to be done and take joint responsibility, she says. ■

MENTORS IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION (MVP)

The Violence Prevention programme Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) was founded in 1993 at Northeastern University's Centre for The study of Sport in Society by Jackson Katz. In the US and Scotland the programme is used successfully in among others high schools and upper secondary schools, universities, sports associations and the military.

MVP is based on a series of fourteen thematic lessons. The programme includes changing stereotypical gender standards that link masculinity with violence, to get young people to identify different types of actions as violence and inspire them to act constructively when they became bystanders of various violent or offensive situations.

The effect of the programme has been evaluated in the USA on three occasions, with high school students (Ward 2000, 2001, 2002, Katz et al. 2011), and with university students (Cissner 2009). The evaluations show in brief that participants in the programme have less sexist attitudes, more often see different forms of violence as wrong and are more likely to intervene in a constructive way in situations of violence.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) presented a report in 2011 in which MVP was raised as a violence

prevention method that the agency proposed could be used in Sweden.

In 2018, Swedish National Agency for Education reported on an evaluation of MVP in a Swedish context that they had carried out on behalf of the Government. The researchers behind the evaluation concluded that MVP has potential to create a positive development. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL) subsequently received special funds from the Government to make use of knowledge and recommendations from the National Agency for Education's Report on MVP, in order to help gather success factors for the school's work on gender equality and violence prevention measures for children and pupils in preschool and school.

The programme has been translated and adapted to Swedish conditions by the national organization MÄN who, since 2012, work with context customisation and pilot testing of MVP in a number of Swedish primary and secondary schools. Since 2015, MÄN have scaled up the work further by educating local MVP teams and supporting municipalities around Sweden who are now working on local implementation of the programme. ■



Sofie Kindahl. Photo: Roger Gustafsson.

“WE WANT TO INVOLVE THE ENTIRE MUNICIPALITY TO PREVENT VIOLENCE”

In order to succeed with violence prevention, different parts of society must work in the same direction, says Sofie Kindahl, Project Coordinator for *A municipality free from violence*.

– We can have a fantastic effort in schools, but this will not produce any effect if the leisure centre or sports club conveys a completely different message.

In the three-year Inheritance Fund project *A municipality free from violence*, MÄN worked together with two pilot municipalities and four reference municipalities to develop and strengthen efforts to prevent male violence.

Since the project started in 2015, increasingly municipalities have jumped on the bandwagon. Today, 20 or so municipalities and urban districts have initiated cooperation with the organisation.

The goal is for all municipalities in Sweden to have suf-

ficient knowledge and tools for a long-term effort to stop and reduce violence.

The school is a hub – together with others

The school has been the hub in municipal violence prevention, where the Mentors in Violence Prevention method (MVP) has been at the core. Today the method has been introduced in nearly 40 schools. However, MÄN also support the municipalities with other types of initiatives, such as starting dad groups or public campaigns to prevent violence.

– Our work is aimed at ensuring that different actors who meet children and young people develop their work with broad and early initiatives at different levels in the municipality. We have trained and managed the process of an enormous number of people with the aim of creating consensus and coordination, says Sofie Kindahl.



“I want to prevent violence because I have seen a lot of violence at school. Usually it starts as a brawl, but then, when someone hits too hard, it becomes for real. The hardest thing about being a mentor will probably be to involve the younger kids in discussion. They were rather quiet at the beginning.”

Rand Mohammad, mentor Grindtorpsskolan.

She feels that there is a strong will to work on prevention of violence within the relevant municipalities. At the same time, knowledge about violence prevention is, according to Sofie Kindahl, generally poor.

–Our main lesson learned is that you have to spend a lot of time anchoring the issues so that everyone pulls in the same direction.

Three key ideas on change

In its violence prevention work, MÄN apply three key ideas to create change. The first idea of change is that violence can be prevented by increasing awareness and knowledge about different forms of violence and how these are connected.

–We usually talk about the scale of violence, from normalized to serious. Various forms of abuse, jargon and jokes are part and form a culture that enables more serious violence, says Sofie Kindahl.

Another central idea about change is to challenge stereotypical beliefs about masculinity that legitimise violence.

Almost all violent crimes are perpetrated by men, especially young men. Many of the victims of violence are also men. This is connected with beliefs about what it means to be a man and a guy.

THREE IDEAS FOR CHANGE

1 Violence – Increasing awareness and knowledge about violence.

2 Gender – Challenging stereotypical and limited norms regarding gender.

3 Bystander approach – Motivating us all to intervene and to protest when we see violence.

– Many guys feel emotionally limited and often experience that they need to prove to others that they are “tough and strong”. Together, we can change this, says Sofie Kindahl.

Changing norms linked to masculinity is a central part of MÄN’s violence prevention strategy.

– It is important to help both young people and adults to become aware of the norms in their own lives. By working in a norm critical or norm-transforming way, starting with ourselves, we can get knowledge to land in the guts in a way that facts or statistics don’t, says Sofie Kindahl.

“Must be part of the ordinary operations”

Visualising the gendered violence can give rise to resistance. To create change, MÄN uses a third, key idea for change by working with a bystander perspective.

– By inspiring everyone ‘around’ when violence and abuse takes place, we can focus more on solutions, and this increases the feeling of being part of the change. We need tools and training to dare to act, says Sofie Kindahl

– We want to encourage young people to dare to speak up and to be active bystanders. This can be intervention

against violence or breaking the silence culture and daring to create an uncomfortable atmosphere.


The major challenge facing violence prevention, in Sofie Kindahl’s opinion, is the lack of a long-term approach and permanent structures.

– This work must be included in the ordinary operations of municipalities, in schools and in teacher training, she says.

In the current situation, much of the violence prevention work is being carried out by civil society. Much is done in the form of specific measures, and the funding is insufficient.

– Since almost everything is done in project form, we have to constantly come up with new innovative ideas, otherwise we get no money. Today, there is no lack of methods and knowledge, she says, stating that what is needed now is that different functioning methods continue to be spread and evaluated over time.

– We must look at the methods available. Then we have to have the opportunity to scale up and continue working with the methods that actually work! ■



“Guys fight more than girls, but girls use more psychological violence. It can be bad words or writing something in social media. Girls can really hurt each other and we need to talk more about this, because it is often not visible. When someone fights, you see it, you hear it. There is shouting, but that is not the case with psychological violence.”

Anahit Tovmasyan, mentor Grindtorpsskolan.



Hedda Hakvåg

“WE DON’T USE HINDSIGHT”

Involving young men in issues related to violence is not difficult, says Hedda Hakvåg of Reform – a resource centre for men, in Norway.

–Young people are keen to have these conversations about relationships, gender and sexuality, she says.

The project *Stopp kjærestevolde* is aimed at young people aged 14–15, with courses on violence in close relationships.

–Many start flirting, having sex and starting relationships at this age. It is important to be there and talk about violence and negative patterns of control and jealousy, says Hedda Hakvåg.

Many young people see relationship violence as a problem among adults and do not perceive the violence among young people as violence.

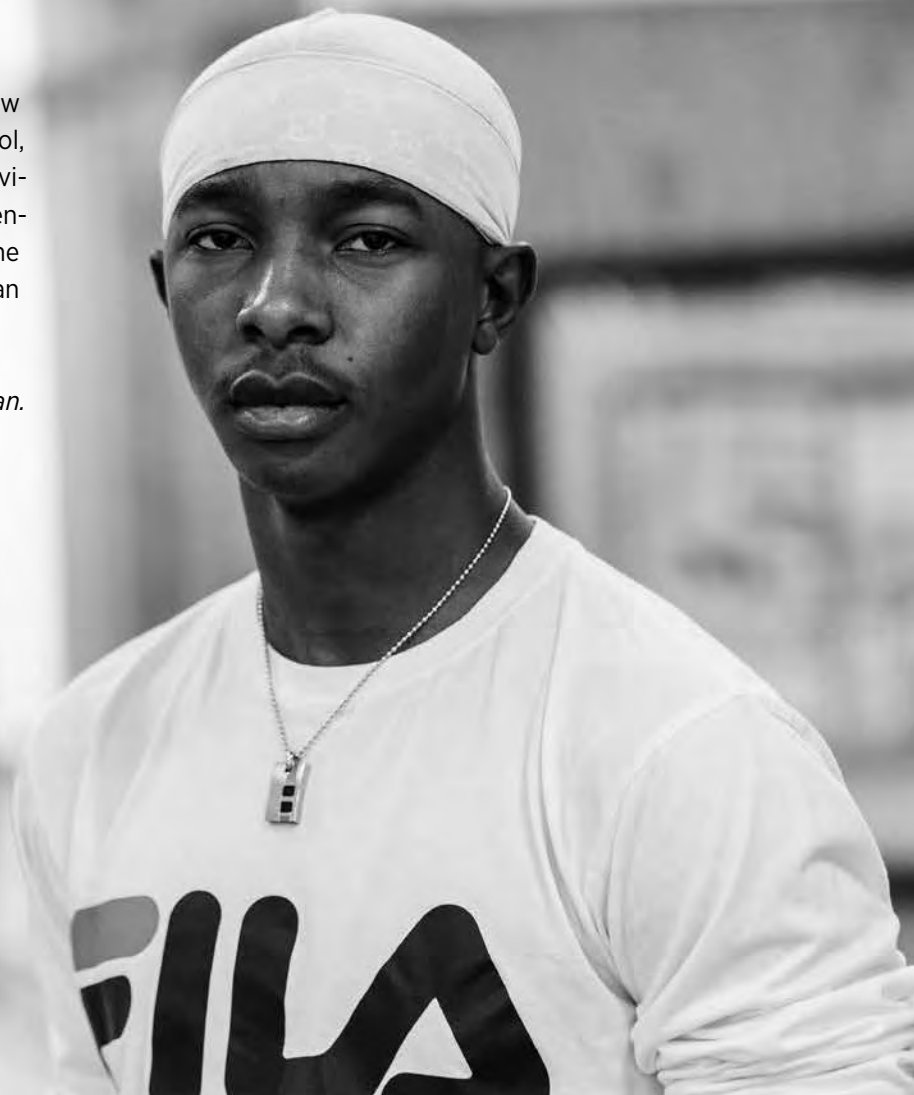
–Sexual harassment, for example, is perceived by many young people as something that takes place in the workplace, and not among young people on the Internet. Here we want to intervene and help them to become aware of their own experiences of violence.

Engaging with a bystander perspective

Stop Kjærestevolden is based on a so-called bystander perspective and stresses that everyone can be a positive force in combating violence, for example by intervening if a friend talks about their partner in a disrespectful way. *Stop Kjærestevolden* focuses not only on boys’ exercise of violence, but highlights that everyone, regardless of gender, can exercise or be the victim of violence. However, the project is not gender neutral.

“Male standards dictate that guys always have to show that we are stronger than others, but that’s not cool, it’s silly. We have to break this, to make a better environment for both girls and guys. I wanted to be a mentor because I wanted to make a difference. I want the sixth formers to feel that there is someone they can talk to.”

Steven Amartey, mentor, Grindtorpsskolan.



–We do not turn a blind eye to the fact that the most serious violence is perpetrated by men, but we do not start our training with this statement, says Hedda Hakvåg.

According to Hedda Hakvåg, it is easier to involve young guys with a bystander perspective than with a perspective where men are described as perpetrators. From a norm critical perspective, it is also problematic to have a starting point saying “guys, you have to stop raping girls”.

–By talking in this way, you re-create norms about guys as active and girls as passive. Instead, we choose to talk about men as both subjecting others to violence and being subjected to violence. I think it’s important not to place young people in the role of either perpetrators or victims, says Hedda Hakvåg.

Want to see new efforts against violence on the Internet

She adds that this is especially true in the work with boys who have a migrant background, who are at particularly high risk of being subjected to violence.

–They face particularly strong stereotypes and must always deal with the image of the immigrant or black man as the perpetrator. They already feel they have to prove that they are not ‘that kind of man’, she says.

A large part of the violence among young people takes place on the Internet and this places new demands on those who educate about violence in close relationships.

–We need to keep up to date and perhaps we need new methods. For example, it is a completely different matter to intervene in a situation at a party compared with intervening in and speaking up online, where you risk getting a much larger mob against you, says Hedda Hakvåg.

A starting point for the training in Stopp kjærestevolden is to try to engage people and get them talking rather than delivering facts.

–We do not use hindsight but on open questions: What is violence? What is consent? We want to start a dialogue.

“Sometimes my work feels like a drop in the ocean”

Hedda Hakvåg believes that the biggest challenges in the work to combat relationship violence among young people in the future lie in finding a sustainable structure for the work and long-term funding.

–At the grassroots level, a lot of great work is done, but project funding means successful initiatives are discontinued and important skills are lost. Sometimes I feel like our work is a drop in the ocean, she says.

In the Nordic region, some countries have slightly better conditions, she feels. In Sweden, for example, it is possible to get project funding for three years, while organisations in Norway almost always apply for funding one year at a time. However, what we really need is a more long-term approach and stability, she thinks, explaining that a short-term approach makes cooperation between different organisations and countries more difficult.

–Everyone is so busy keeping their own projects going. It is also difficult to plan cooperation when we don't know how long the projects will last. ■

“I want to change the culture at the school. There are a lot of fun-brawls that can lead to worse things. It’s mostly guys who fight – they want to raise their status through fun-brawls and show that they are strong. I want those who are younger to learn to see the consequences for the person who is the victim.”

Rabar Mohammed, mentor Grindtorpsskolan.





ICMEO gathered 350 participants from 35 countries.

“WE HAD A YOUNG-TO-YOUNG APPROACH”

To reach young people is crucial in the work against violence in close relationships according to Susanne Nour Magnusson, head of the Danish treatment and skills centre Dialog mod Vold. With the project *Voldsom kaerlighed* (Violent love), they were pioneers in the work against relationship violence among young people. The project name *Voldsom kaerlighed* is ambiguous and can bring to mind a crush.

Through the project, young people aged 16 to 24 with violent behaviour have been offered advice and treatment. Meanwhile, the project has spread knowledge about violence in close relationships through workshops at schools and music festivals, and through campaigns in social media.

– We’ve had a young to young approach, and I think that’s important. It is important that those who come to

us for treatment don’t feel that the psychologist is living a completely different life, says Susanne Nour Magnusson.

To succeed in combating violence in close relationships, it is crucial to catch the behaviour early on.

– It is much easier to work with someone who is 15 years old and has used violence once or twice than with a 50 year old who has been violent throughout life, she says.

Queue to get counselling

Voldsom kaerlighed has attracted a lot of interest, according to Susanne Nour Magnusson.

– We were a bit worried that nobody would dare to come forward and talk to us during the festivals, but there has been a queue. Among adults, violence is completely taboo and those of us who work with counsel-



Susanne Nour Magnusson, pressbild.

ling must be available in very anonymous places. There is probably a greater openness among young people, she says.

Through their information and campaigning work, the centre wanted to create a discussion about what violence really is.

– Many people only think of physical violence, but violence in relationships can be many other things, like going in and checking their partner's Facebook or smashing their stuff, says Susanne Nour Magnusson.

Girls need help too

Susanne Nour Magnusson thinks there is a close correlation between masculinity standards and violence, but adds that violence can also have other causes.

– The norms contribute to men using violence as a form of expression. That's the way it is, and this is important to understand, but violence is not just a problem among men, she says.

Voldsom kaerlighed widely addressed all young people, which was a positive thing, according to Susanne Nour Magnusson. If guys feel that someone is pointing a finger at them in a negative way, they are less willing to partici-

pate. She says that about half of the 16 – 24 year olds who sought treatment within the project were girls.

–The most serious relationship violence is perpetrated by men, but if we pretend that only men commit violence, we will not be able to help these girls and they will not be able to express their problems, she says.

Lack of help for perpetrators

Susanne Nour Magnusson identifies several challenges in the continued work against violence in relationships. These issues need to be addressed in school and in teacher training. More knowledge about working with perpetrators of violence is also needed.

–As things stand now, many perpetrators move on without getting help and are violent again, in the same or new relationships. We also know that children who grow up in families where there is violence are more prone to be violent as adults. To help these children, both the parents and the children should be offered treatment. In our experience at Dialog mod Vold, the best help involves the whole family, she says.

Another challenge, as she sees it, is that many initiatives are in project form with uncertain funding. *Voldsom kaer-*

lighed is an example. Even though the project has been praised as successful, it has been on hold since year end 2016/2017, when the funding ran out.

–There is no overall strategy or stable funding for the methods that have actually been proven to work. Governments and municipalities need to get involved and provide funds. ■



Sigrid Bacher Frederiksen

“PERSONAL STORIES MAKE IT EASIER TO RELATE”

Personal stories became a tool against honour crimes. The Danish initiative *Dialogkorpset* (the dialogue team) offers training on honour crimes and oppression by individuals who have themselves been victims.

– Personal stories affect us in a totally different way than facts, says Sigrid Bacher Frederiksen, coordinator at Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet.

The dialogue team consists of 30 individuals, youths and adults, who travel around the country and visit schools and associations. They educate on issues relating to gender equality, honour and family conflicts, based on their own experiences.

– They share an ambition to combat honour crime and negative social control, says Sigrid Bacher Frederiksen.

She describes the personal approach as an important part of their method.

– That’s what makes it successful, I think. This means that those who participate in the training gain a better understanding of what it is like to be subjected to violence. It also allows participants to relate to the dialogue team and reflect on their own sources of frustration, thoughts and emotions, she says.

She explains that it is important for participants who carry out their own experiences of honour crime to be able to recognize their own experiences and be strengthened by finding out that they are not alone.

– When the person in charge of training talks about their personal experiences, it becomes easier to share one’s experiences. The individuals in the team create a safe room where everyone can talk, and that’s important, she says.

At the beginning, *Dialogkorpset* was exclusively an initiative for young men, but now it is aimed at everyone,

regardless of gender. For a few years now, the training is held not just with young people, but also with parent groups. It is typical of honour crime that men are considered to be at the top of the family and that men's honour is underpinned by women.

– Young men are brought up in this hierarchy and are often given more freedom than their sisters, whom they are expected to protect or monitor, says Sigrid Bacher Frederiksen.

Statistically speaking, women are more vulnerable to honour crimes than men, and men are over-represented among the perpetrators. But men are also victims, and Sigrid Bacher Frederiksen emphasizes that this should not be forgotten.

– Young men can be victims both because their own living space is restricted and by older relatives forcing them to participate in the social control of women and girls, she says.

She sees a clear link between honour crimes and standards of masculinity.

–It is an important part of our work to highlight and change standards of masculinity. It is also important to understand that negative control occurs in different types

of societies and families, and not just in certain countries or cultures, she says.

“Continuous work is needed”

When *Dialogkorpset* was formed, its purpose was to offer male role models for young guys, but nowadays the initiative has a different approach.

–I think one should be careful in promoting role model, to avoid putting some individuals on a pedestal. If a few are highlighted as successful examples, an identification opportunity may be lost, says Sigrid Bacher Frederiksen.

She believes the biggest challenge in the continued work to combat honour crime and oppression in Denmark is to increase awareness among young people and among different professional groups who deal with youths.

–It is not enough for us to come to a school once to provide training, we need a continuous effort. We are trying to get municipalities to take over responsibility and prioritize these issues, she says. ■

“If there are many people arguing, it is not possible to intervene, then you need to get a teacher. I saw what the previous mentors did and felt that I also want to make a difference. I want to make things better in school. If we talk with the sixth-formers about this now, they will also participate in stopping the brawls.”

Sabir Blixt, mentor, Grindtorpsskolan.



“I remember when I was younger that it wasn’t easy to talk with adults about stuff that happened in school. I think it’s a good thing that we, who are still pupils, get to be mentors, and it’s good that we have so much responsibility. It feels like the adults trust us.”

Linda Odukpe, mentor.



PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY PREVENTS MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Historically, men's violence against women and violence in close relationships has been primarily regarded as a deviant phenomenon of a private nature. In recent decades, we have gained a deeper understanding and different types of violent treatments are seen as part of a larger structural problem that affects everyone. In particular, several international policy documents highlight the need for men's violence against women and violence in close relationships to be understood as a gender equality problem and counteracted and prevented by public authorities.

Violence – a social mechanism that maintains a unequal power order

In 1993, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was adopted. The

declaration states that the violence is caused by the historically unequal relationship between women and men. States are encouraged to condemn and prevent violence against women and to work preventively. The declaration emphasises that violence is one of the social mechanisms that maintain the subordinate position of women and that violence takes place in both the private and the public domain.

Violence prevention – a prerequisite for achieving gender equality

The Istanbul Convention is the first legally binding instrument on violence against women in Europe. The Convention was opened for signature at a ministerial meeting in Istanbul in May 2011. The official name of

the Istanbul Convention is *The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. The Convention condemns all forms of violence and describes violence against women as an expression of historically unequal power relationships between women and men. The prevention of violence against women is described as crucial to achieve equality between women and men.

Zero tolerance against gender-based violence in the Nordic region

For over 40 years, the Nordic countries have been working jointly to improve gender equality in all areas of society. Gender equality is one of the areas where the Nordic countries have cooperated most. This has contributed to the fact that Nordic countries in international comparisons are regularly ranked among the most gender equal in the world. Meanwhile, power surveys and statistics indicate that a lot remains to be done. Men's violence against women is a major gender equality problem, also in Nordic countries. Within the framework of the Nordic cooperation programme for the Nordic gender equality cooperation, the Nor-

dic countries and the autonomous areas of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland are striving for zero tolerance against gender-based violence. ■

A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH IS MORE EFFECTIVE

Violence is a widespread social problem. Most men do not turn to violence, but the absolute majority of perpetrators of violence are men and boys. Rigid standards regarding gender, gender roles and the family appear linked to the use of violence in close relationships. More gender equal attitudes and standards, on the other hand, appear to be linked to less use of violence and lower acceptance of violence.

The concept of gender is usually simply described as the socially and culturally construed sex, as opposed to the biological sex. There are many standards and expectations based on sex. Expectations focus on differences that are also based on a hierarchy. Historically, we can see that behaviours and properties regarded as feminine tend to be devalued, while behaviours and properties that are seen as masculine are given more status. In research on masculinity, many have noted

the link between masculinity and violence. Violence, or the threat of violence, can be a way of constructing masculinity.

Among the strategies brought forward by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as important for effective violence prevention, there are strategies such as promoting gender equality to prevent violence against women and to change cultural and social standards supporting violence. WHO has also been able to demonstrate that in preventing violence of men and boys against women and girls, programmes that take into consideration gender from a critical perspective are more effective in achieving changes in behaviour. The gender-transforming approach is important in relation to violence in general and it appears particularly important in relation to prevention of violence in close relationships. (WHO 2007, Barker et al 2010.) ■

THREE GENDER APPROACHES

In the field of prevention, there are three defining gender approaches: gender neutral, gender sensitive and gender transformative.

1 Gender neutral approach – an approach with no gender perspective. In this approach, the measures differentiate between the needs of women and men to a very small extent and neither reinforce nor challenge established conceptions about gender.

2 Gender sensitive approach – an approach that pays attention to the particular experiences and needs of women and men as a result of established conceptions of gender. For example, where a particular method has previously proven to function less well for boys, a meas-

ure may be adapted to the needs of boys. A measure that, for example, is based on the fact that women are usually victims of men's violence can be deemed gender sensitive.

3 Gender-transformative – an approach that seeks to change gender standards and promote more gender-equal relationships between men and women. This is accomplished by critically reflecting on, questioning or altering institutional practices and broader social standards that create and recreate the vulnerability and inequality of men and women.

ME TOO IS ABOUT ALL OF US

Men's sexualized violence against women is a major social problem. This was highlighted globally under the hash tag #metoo where women and girls around the world share experiences of sexual harassment and abuse but also experiences of serious violent crime. All of these calls highlight a patriarchal social structure.

Sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public places are incidents that women and girls around the world are exposed to on a daily basis. Harassment, abuse and violence hinder or impede the ability of women and girls to participate in school, at work and in public life.

Both the UN and the Council of Europe express in their definitions that every gender-related act of violence that results in, or may lead to, physical, sexual, psychological or mental harm to women, as well as

threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary detention constitutes violence against women, whether these acts take place in public or private life.

The Nordic countries have committed to measures

By acceding to the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, the Istanbul Convention, the Nordic countries have committed themselves to taking necessary measures to prevent all forms of violence falling within the scope of the Convention. The countries that have acceded to the Convention also have an obligation to take the necessary measures to encourage all members of society, especially men and boys, to actively contribute to prevention of violence.

Although much has happened in terms of the improved understanding of men's violence in close re-

relationships as a structural problem, violence against women and girls in public places is still a major problem. Work on preventing and combating violence must include the broad spectrum of the expressions and arenas of violence.

Promising results for bystander approach

Literature reviews of the current research support for violence prevention programmes indicates promising results for programmes with a bystander approach, in other words measures that appeal to those who are by-stander of an incident and could intervene. Violence prevention programmes with a bystander approach appear to strengthen the willingness to intervene against violence, and faith in one's own ability to intervene against partner violence or sexual violence. (Storer, Casey & Herrenkohl, 2016.)

The Me too movement put a finger on one of society's tender spots. The violence is about us, it affects us in our daily lives, in family life and at a structural level.

By working consciously to change gender standards, to promote equal relationships and continue to develop violence prevention measures that appeal to and in-

volve all of us, there are good prospects of realising the goal of zero tolerance against gender-based violence. ■

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GATHERING SWEDEN'S MOMENTUM FOR GENDER EQUALITY

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