



Source: Ministério da Saúde/Ministério da Justiça

UNFPA-SID Latin American and the Caribbean Regional Dialogue
“Reproductive Rights, Violence Against Women:
Boys and Men’s Roles and Responsibilities”
Hosted by CEPIA at Hotel Gloria, Gloria, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
3-4 May, 2002

The issue of gender violence is subversive because it reveals the profound inequality between men and women.
(Ximena Machicao, REPEM, Bolivia)



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The Context: Violence against women as a question of human rights and public health

How can we differentiate the types of punishment not according to the crime but to the relations between victim and aggressor? If a man hits an unknown woman in the street he goes to jail but if he hits his wife he goes to therapy.
(Jacqueline Pitanguy, CEPIA, Brazil)

The third regional dialogue SID-UNFPA on “Reproductive Rights, Violence Against Women: Boys and Men’s Roles and Responsibilities” was co-organized by Cepia with participants from Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Suriname and four different regions of Brazil. Its main goal was to discuss strategies to eradicate violence against women and promote reproductive health in general, addressing *how* and *when* to work with young and adult men, as well as strategies being used with community leaders, health professionals, the media, the judiciary and police officers.



Participants of the Rio de Janeiro workshop

The Dialogue provided the opportunity to exchange experiences, to analyze how to build networks involving researchers and activists, to coordinate strategies on how to reach medical sectors and the media, to create different communication tools and promote changes in medical institutions, police officers and in legislation. Different methodologies of working with male aggressors and information on various manuals, tool kits on how to reach the media, and other advocacy tools were very usefully shared.

As a starting point it was emphasized that the social perception and recognition of violence against women is historical in the sense that, through out the centuries, they have been modified largely due to women’s political struggle to denaturalize this concept and make this issue visible as a human rights violation and a criminal behavior. There was agreement in that violence against women should be understood within the broader context of power, politics and gender inequality on different levels such as access to income, to services, to education, to political power. And that gender violence has a strong cultural component that is not easily surmounted through norms and laws.

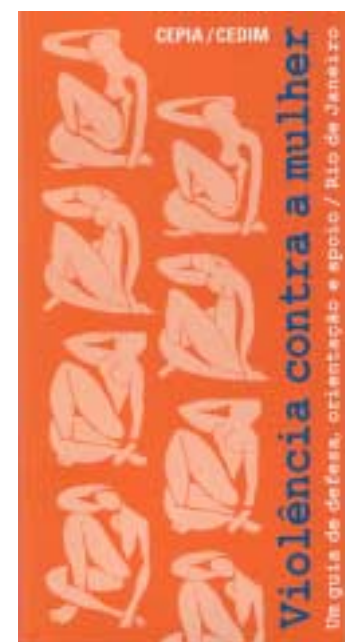
Participants also agreed that while it is necessary to frame violence against women in the broader context of violence that characterizes Latin America and the Caribbean, gender violence should be understood as a

specific issue demanding specific strategies. The need to respect the rights of privacy of the individual while dealing with domestic and sexual violence as a public issue was highlighted. Another point debated was related to the tension between the so called identity politics, which have enormous importance in relation to women, both in terms of violence and reproductive health and the danger of losing sight that such politics should not be disconnected from the transformation of society in all levels, including the criticism of the neoliberal model which imposes restrictions to social policies, and has a direct impact on women.

Participants pointed out that violence against women is still not seen as a violation of rights and a public health subject by all sectors of society. There are few resources for programs dedicated to its prevention and eradication, increasing the competition among institutions. The current strategies used to combat and eradicate violence against women were

evaluated and the efficacy of the work developed with male aggressors was debated. Another preoccupation of the participants of the SID-UNFPA Dialogue was with the improvement of strategies already in place in the areas of health, public security and access to justice.

When discussing different strategies which are being used in order to involve and give more responsibility to men in relation to prevention and reduction of gender violence, it was pointed out that it is important that men understand how they have learned to become what they are, how violence interacts with masculinity. The dialogue explored the best way to incorporate men in the initiatives against gender violence. It was agreed that men should denaturalize intimate life, working upon the tradition and experience that women’s movement has accumulated in the last decades. It was also pointed out that women should also be involved in the struggle against homophobia.



Source: CEPIA

Challenges

There is an epidemic of domestic violence going on that has to be faced by the health professional as a matter of public health. (Ruth Mesquita, Hospital Fernando Magalhães, Brazil)

There is a frequent discontinuity among the different services available in the region offered to women victims of violence because there is seldom an articulated action among the police, health professionals, women's groups, the justice system (special criminal justice, in Brazil) and men's groups. This fragmentation of strategies reduces the efficiency of the services offered. The crucial role of education as a major agent in the prevention of gender violence was also highlighted.



Source: Lola Press

Another deficit pointed out by participants is the lack of qualification of managers and other professionals, including lack of psychological and social support to health professionals that deal with violence. The training of these professionals was perceived as necessary to reduce institutional violence since health services can be very aggressive and many women suffer some kind of violence when they seek the services that attend victims of domestic and sexual violence. It was also pointed out that in the health services the women victim of domestic violence can be even worse assisted than a women victim of sexual violence.

Responsibility is a social value that takes place in the daily sphere. (Esperanza Cerón, RSMLAC, Chile)

The dialogue explored the best way to incorporate men in the initiatives against gender violence, recognizing that these strategies are diverse and reflect the diversity existing among men. It was pointed out the need to face the challenge of redefining language, and to reject the use of the term "men's involvement", which tends to attenuate the radical position of the women's movement in the subject. It was said that we should use the example of the change of language, that has happened in the field of reproductive health, where the term responsible paternity has been substituted by masculine responsibility. It was also said that it is necessary to emphasize not the meaning of responsibility or involvement, but that of the *transformation of masculinity*.



Participants at the Dialogue

Source: CEPIA

There is not yet full recognition that the work with men is grounded on international guidelines, expressed in the Plan of Action of the Cairo Conference (1994): "stimulate men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behavior, and to assume their familiar and social function." (Chapter IV, C). In the same way, at the XXI United Nations Meeting to evaluate Cairo + 5 it was pointed that "all leaders, at all levels, as well as parents and educators shall promote positive role models that help men to become adults sensitive to gender issues and to allow them to support, promote and respect women's sexual and reproductive health and rights." (IVA-52g).

It is still necessary to articulate violence against women and violence practiced by men in general without falling in the fundamentalist argument, naturalizing men's behavior as violent. Regarding black men and black women, this articulation is particularly important, because of the great number of young black men who are victims of urban violence (in the case of Brazil), what might minimize the question of violence against women, especially black women. Another trap is to fall in the victimizing approach of men's responsibility (which features on the way the Catholic Church has been dealing with the pedophilia among priests, for instance).

Another challenge is to develop an appropriate methodology for the work with men, a methodology that would really work for the eradication of violence against women, not only as a momentary remedy. It was also pointed the risk of methodologies that "psychologize" too much gender relations making difficult the promotion of changes.

Another problem in relation to this kind of work with men is when that a therapeutic treatment might replace the punishment for the violence practiced against women. How to define, in this case, the border between punishing and taking care of? How to differentiate, for men, the type of punishment according to the type of crime: if a man hurts a woman that he does not know in the street, he goes to jail. If he hurts his wife at home, he goes to therapy? There is, according to some participants, confusion between psychological and pathological.

All participants agreed that the empowerment of women relies on the access to information about their rights and to orientation about different public services available for them, like nurseries, training centers, and health and security services and that there has been some progress in this respect. However, empowerment also relies on psychological support and there is still a lack of this kind of support, very important to sustain the battered woman who feels the pain, and who will have to break with the situation of violence and take the decisions.

Achievements and Strategies to prevent and eradicate violence against women being developed in the Region

The Left must be more radical when criticizing political groups that use violence, claiming a so called legitimacy of violence in the defence of their cause. (Sonia Correa, DAWN/IBASE, Brazil)

A first observation made by participants of the dialogue was that, even if the formal advancements, through laws and specific programs achieved in many Latin American and Caribbean countries, haven't yet been fully translated into real changes nor into substantive transformation in mentalities of men and women. Many countries of the region have advanced past the stage when domestic violence was justified by "provocation"; alcohol addiction, and incapacity of expressing anger in a non-violent way. These myths, repeated over and over, even at the police station when the women looked for help, are not so powerful anymore.

Domestic violence has become recognized as a crime in most of the region and should constitute a priority in the agenda of government and non-governmental institutions. In some countries however there isn't yet sufficient legislation and there is a lack of specific public policies to address the problem.

In this context, it is necessary to develop a work of sensitizing different sectors, so that domestic and gender violence can be seen as crime, changing the behavior of different professionals in relation to the victims. In places where an institutional policy for the

We have to work so that in the future there will be no need for specialized police stations for women and women will be well received in any ordinary police station. (Marta Rocha, District Chief of Police, Brazil)



Source: Red de la Salud de las Mujeres Latinoamericanas y del Caribe

eradication and prevention of gender violence still doesn't exist, it is necessary to work for a specific legislation, to be implemented through focal programs. In this process of mobilization, it is important to have the support of persons in positions of power who are sensitive to the problem, who will be able to act in terms of pressure and lobby with members of parliament and other official institutions.

The experiences described have shown that NGOs, both those that work with women victims and those who work with men aggressors, have a limited capacity, in terms of the number of people benefited. Thus, it is fundamental to establish partnerships with governmental bodies so that they can be directly involved in the development of policies to eradicate gender violence.

At the judiciary level some proposals to combat impunity have been implemented, as well as measures to simplify the procedures and reduce the number of processes in the system. However, justice has not been sufficiently prepared to face this issue. In the case of Brazil, for instance, there is a hot debate about the law 9099/95, which establishes a different court for the so-called crimes of less dangerous potential (crimes punished with less than 1 year of reclusion). Domestic violence crimes are included in this group. Before this law was enforced, the perpetrator of domestic violence was constrained to go to the police station, testify and he would also be filed a criminal record. With the law 9099, in the name of speeding the justice system, the role of the police station is, at most, to write a document containing

the description of the occurrence and send the case to the special criminal court. Participants pointed out that it is urgent to reconsider this definition since domestic violence is not a crime of less dangerous potential. Many participants highlighted the highly problematic character of suspending the judicial process for men who agree to participate in reflection and "therapeutic" groups.

It should also be mentioned the existence of a domestic violence cycle which needs to be understood by the professionals who work directly with the victims. A battered woman has an affective relationship with the man and she doesn't necessarily want him to go to jail, although she wants the

end of violence. The police officer cannot misjudge this woman because of her reluctant behavior. In Brazil, the majority of the women who seek help at the police stations specialized in domestic violence are of low-income and frequently are not informed about their rights, sometimes they don't even have a place to go if they leave their home. Around 80% of the registered cases are physical injuries considered mild by Brazilian Law.



Discussions at the Dialogue

Source: CEPIA

How to sensitize health professionals on VAW

Doctors run away from violence issues. First because it brings the violence within us and we are not used to discuss about it. Also because there are no support networks that would allow doctors to take care of the problem in a wider way. (Marcos Bastos, Municipal Health Department, Brazil)

Another issue intensely debated in the meeting were the initiatives implemented to sensitize health professionals so that they can be trained to correctly deal with women

victims of violence. In this case, the following experiences were highlighted:

In an analysis of the attitudes of Brazilian women victims of violence and the special

criminal courts were domestic violence is seen as crime of less dangerous potential, it was observed that once informed about the judicial process against their

aggressors, they go through two distinct reactions: first they are happy with the information and afterwards they are frustrated when they understand what will happen to their aggressors after the denounce is made. They classify as "ridiculous" or "absurd" the fact that aggressors are not punished the way they think they should be. The women want to be protected and compensated by years of aggression they have suffered.

In relation to the judiciary, some organizations, have been organizing campaigns to sensitize its members. Cepia, for instance, is coordinating a campaign together with the National Association of Judges, addressed to the application of international human rights instruments, diffusing, among members of the Judiciary, information about the conventions and treaties signed by Brazil, particularly those related to women's rights.

Sexual and reproductive rights are the first ones to be renounced in political campaigns. Those are the themes that make candidates loose votes. (Mariana Romero, CEDES, Argentina)

- Mariana Romero, from CEDES, Argentina, has presented the results from the research "Doctors and the reproductive debate: opinions from obstetrics and gynecologists from Buenos Aires." She observed that doctors have a major influence on women's decisions about reproductive health, both through their practices and through their messages, actions and omissions. This research, showed that violence against women (sexual abuse and domestic violence) doesn't appear as a highly relevant subject when compared with other public health problems.

- Jacqueline Pitanguy, pointed out that Cepia has developed, in Brazil, different experiences of training health professionals. The institution also works with medical and nursing students, through courses organized with two different universities, raising the issue of gender violence and human rights in medical practice.



Source: Instituto PROMUNDO y colaboradores

- Elcylene Leocadio pointed out that the Ministry of Health in Brazil has established specific policies to help women victims of violence. In 1998, the area of Emergency and Trauma of the Ministry was renamed Accidents and Violence and a Commission for the Prevention of Violence was established. Since then the Ministry has been giving support to state administrations in order to implement policies addressed to women. The Commission has defined and published a normative rule indicating the procedures to be adopted by health professionals and health units in the attention to victims of sexual violence. The Health Ministry has, published in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, a leaflet that orients adolescents and gives support to community health agents, in accordance with the National Program of Family Health.

It is fundamental to perceive that young boys can be great allies on the prevention of violence and on the transforming of masculinities. (Marcos Nascimento, Instituto Promundo, Brazil)

Raising awareness of young men

It is necessary to rethink the conception of men's role. How can we work with men placing them not only as the aggressor, but also assuring their commitment in the struggle against gender violence? We must not silence nor allow this violence to take place. (Jorge Lyra, PAPAÍ, Brazil)

The values of hegemonic masculinity are present in all the spaces where adult and young men interact. Projects which aim to address this group are “a drop in the ocean”, bringing to young men the reflection about new roles, and aiming to promote changes in the behavior of adult men, being them authors of violence or not. We have registered in this sense the following initiatives:

- Fernando Acosta, presented the work of NOOS Institute, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil which organizes reflection groups about gender, not only with authors of domestic violence, but authors of violence in general. They also work with a group of policemen. In this case the groups are organized inside the military police headquarters, especially after violent operations. Men who are authors of violence are sent by different institutions, like CIAM (Integrated Center to of Attention to Women), the Special Criminal Justice, and police stations and also by individuals. The proposal is to implement a Center for the Responsibility of Authors of Violence against Women (CRAVO). The



Discussing issues around domestic violence

Source: CEPIA

- Jorge Lyra, from PAPAÍ, Recife, Brazil presented their work of social intervention with men of different ages, in the Metropolitan area of Recife,

Pernambuco, as well as their research program on masculinities. They promote social activities related to health, gender relations, and sexuality and reproductive rights. In the field of reproduction, they work with the adolescent father, who is seldom considered in reproductive health policies.

- Marcus Nascimento, from PROMUNDO Institute, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – presented their work with men and masculinities, through a gender perspective, taking in account the social, cultural, economical and political contexts. The institute develops research activities, advocacy, creation of training materials, and evaluation of the impact of direct intervention in low-income communities. They

coordinate a project for training of young activists for the dissemination of ideas and information on the promotion of health and gender equity. The

institute works in articulation with other institutions, which develop similar activities.

- Roberto Garda talked about “Men resigning their violence” which is one of the projects developed by CORIAC, in Mexico. CORIAC means Men's Collective for Equal Relationships. It is a non-governmental organization created by men who work to transform traditional features of masculinity, which impoverishes life, and are oppressive to women. They do research and develop activities to promote institutional and personal changes, in order to generate constructive and affective forms of being a man. Their aim is to contribute for the development and strengthening of a culture based on equity and respect at public and personal level. CORIAC works with adult men who recognize their violence; father's groups; policemen; young men; indigenous men; men who have been in prison. Their main strategies are: campaigns; sensitising

Gender violence is incompatible with democracy. In spite of it being a post modern theme, we won't fulfill the ideals of modernity if we don't add a gender dimension to it. (Suely Almeida, UFRJ, Brazil)

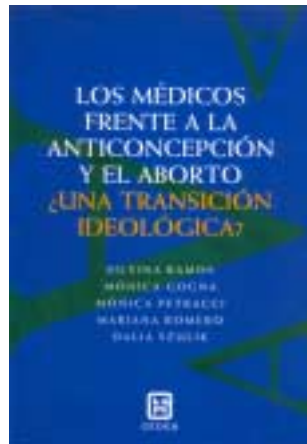


Women and the Legislation Against Racism, collection translating the legislation from a gender perspective.

Source: CEPIA

activities; training of future trainers; research. They have a methodology that distinguishes three levels, first to allow men to recognize their situation of violence; secondly to redefine their emotional experience in the context of violence against their partner; third to define and negotiate a plan of personal satisfaction with their partner. This strategy is developed throughout at least 16 group sessions, in which different individual and group therapy techniques are applied. The main goal of the work is to reduce what is called fatal risk.

- The White Ribbon Campaign, whose proposal is to work with men to put an end in violence against women was another presented at the Dialogue. The general objective of the campaign is to sensitise and mobilize institutions and men in general for their engagement in the struggle against gender violence. The expected new attitudes are that men can participate in initiatives to put an end in gender violence; that men are not silent when faced to gender violence; that men can develop non-violent strategies for conflict resolution. When this campaign was presented, it has been reminded that



Source: Center for the Study of State and Society (CEDES)

one of the first actions of the National Council for the Rights of Women, when it was created in Brazil, has been a sensitising campaign with the participation of the famous Brazilian actor Raul Cortez, a man with great legitimacy; talking about the need to end domestic violence.

- PROSAD (Adolescents' Health Program), Local Administration, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – The program works with adolescents (boys and girls), through educational programs; distribution of preservatives, together with information and activities. According to Viviane Castelo Branco the program aims to make the access of adolescents to health units easier, including the access to information about the beginning of sexual life, pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, STDs, sexual and domestic violence. It also works through a specific reference centre for adolescents (Adolescentro), which aims to train adolescents as health agents, in a wide range of knowledge fields.

A woman abandoned the assistance program and was contacted by contacted by our coordination so that we understood why she had left. Throughout her explanation, it was possible to tell that the aggressions had stopped because she had 'ceased to give her husband the reasons for it'. That meant that she stopped wanting to work, stopped wanting to divorce him, stopped refusing to have sex when she wasn't in the mood for it, etc. (Cecilia Soares, CIAM, Brazil)



Source: Instituto PROMUNDO

Training Police officers

The police has to perceive domestic violence as a crime. First it is necessary to reach the high hierarchy of the corporation, in order to make the policeman at the bottom receive the message. (Carla Bakboard, CAFRA, Suriname).

One of the most fertile areas of action in the prevention and reduction of gender violence is the training of policeman and police officers that will deal directly with women victims of violence. The following experiences in this area were described in the Dialogue:

- Leila Linhares from CEPIA, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – In the work with public security and justice workers, CEPIA has organized, together with the Academy of Police, the training of 300 policemen, with the perspective of continuing this work in the future. CEPIA has also organized last year, together with CNDM (National Council for the Rights of Women) a national meeting to exchange experiences among dozens of women's groups and NGOs who develop training programs for policemen. In all of these initiatives it has emphasized the need of articulation among the different areas involved in the work with women victims of violence, in order to have better integration between them.
- Carla Backboard presented the work of CAFRA and Women's Rights Centre, Suriname – These two organizations have an experience of creating and coordinating a training program for policemen and social workers, with the support of IDB. Beyond that, they have established an interinstitutional network designed to combat gender violence and will soon organize training programs for health professionals, judges, lawyers and prosecutors. CAFRA and WRC have also developed the training of 30 policemen, activists and religious leaderships who have become multipliers. In this methodology, 460 policemen and 200 social agents have been trained. Also, taking in account this experience in Suriname, 200 policemen and social agents have been trained in 21 Caribbean countries.

The women's movement has got a very clear demand: use the strategy that you wish but stop violence against women! It is a legitimate demand. (Roberto Garda, CORIAC, Mexico)

Working with women to prevent gender violence

There were also registered initiatives, which work directly with women, both victims of violence and also community activist who will become multipliers and will be able to act in the prevention and reduction of gender violence.

- CIAM (Integrated Centre for Special Attention to Women), CEDIM, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – CIAM was created in 1999, having as a starting point the demand put by women who attended the activities of the State Council for the Rights of Women (CEDIM). Cecilia Soares explained that until May 2002, four thousand women have been oriented, with an average of 130 news cases per month. In 95% of the cases domestic violence (physical injuries and threats) were registered. CIAM intends to be a space of attention, caring, listening, reflection and change, working for a transformation of how women are in the world, taking in account the improvement of their life, with dignity, happiness, freedom and safety.
- Leila Linhares Barsted from CEPIA, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil presented strategies of work with women from low-income communities who are victims of violence. In these communities, where people can hardly count with the police, the construction of a solidarity network is fundamental. In this sense, CEPIA also publishes regularly a guide for the defence, orientation and help to victims of violence, widely distributed, which is already in its 4th edition.



Looking Ahead: Proposed Strategies

Women - and some men – are becoming more and more aware of the need for new strategies to defend achievements that were so hard to conquer in the fight for gender equality and to take this struggle to other spaces. (Ilija Luciak, Österreichisches Lateinamerika Institut, Austria)

Working from the Cairo Conference and the Belem do Para Convention participants at the dialogue concluded their work with the following recommendations:

- 1) There must be a difference between tactical and strategic gender alliances. The tactical alliance strengthens the quest for formal equity, transforming the power relations at public space. On the other hand, the strategic alliance promotes substantive equity, based on a fundamental change of the traditional relationships that prevail between both sexes.
- 2) The medical community and health professionals, as a whole, must always be seen as an important target public in the prevention of gender violence and in the promotion of women's sexual and reproductive rights strategies. Sensitising and training actions, destined to widen these professionals' perspective providing a more holistic understanding of women's needs, are essential.
- 3) The opening of a wider channel of dialogue was suggested, in order to promote an inter-exchange amongst different countries' governmental sectors of discussions such as different ways for training the police, different methodologies for working with men, etc.
- 4) The organization of a meeting of representatives of District Attorneys, and/or police deputies from different countries was proposed to discuss, for instance, domestic violence, health and reproductive rights. This meeting would be similar to the one organised by the Civil Society Forum of the Americas in 2001 "New Challenges of Political Responsibility". It was highlighted, however, that it isn't easy to promote this articulation, for members of the District Attorney's and of other sectors of justice and public safety normally attend meetings regarding transnational themes (organised crime, traffic of human beings, etc) that rarely approach gender issues.

Domestic violence should not be considered as a crime of less dangerous potential. (Leila Linhares Barsted, CEPIA, Brazil)

- 5) Within the organisations present at our Dialogue, the continuation of the inter-exchange of methodologies, the comparison, for instance, of the materials, such as training manuals, produced was suggested. This dialogue may continue through other meetings and also through the Internet. There has to be a reflection and a political evaluation on the projects, including issues such as institutional articulation, funding, etc.
- 6) Some strategies were presented by the Technical Chamber on Domestic and Sexual Violence of the Brazilian Ministry of Health: improve the production and promotion of information; reorganise and evaluate the assistance network; invest on training human resources; sensitise the media and other opinion makers; sensitise the population in general; act in partnership with the civil society; articulate the health sector with security, justice, education and culture sectors.
- 7) The ethnical and racial dimension is not sufficiently considered at the day-to-day development of the projects discussed at the Dialogue. This is a challenge launched to all that work in this field. The different projects must incorporate the issue of diversity, getting to know the colour, age, and other characteristics of the population assisted and of those suffering violence.
- 8) Data issues must be given some thought. The implementation of national and regional database and the documentation of the experiences in course are fundamental.
- 9) PAHO should publish and distribute documents destined to promote the inter-exchange of information regarding violence against women, health and reproductive rights.
- 10) In the media sphere it was highlighted the need of definitely removing the news on domestic violence from the police occurrences' pages, giving much more visibility to the theme. The media must be able to highlight the facts without being grotesque. We must remember that not only gender violence but violence in general, occur in the real plan and then are often reconstructed by the media. Due to the great responsibility of the media professionals, it was suggested that it is necessary to promote sensitising courses directed to journalists and media university students (like Cepia's project developed with medical students).

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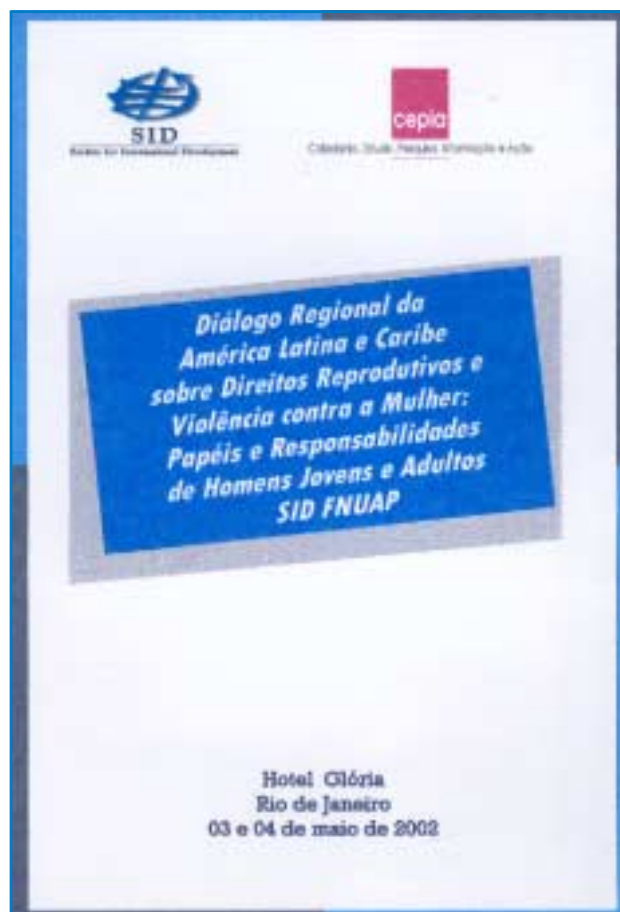
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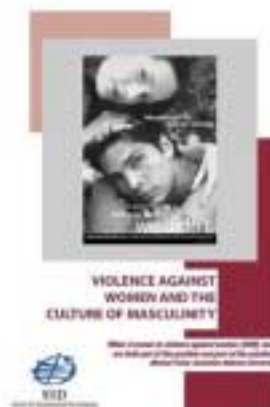
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Violence Against Women and the Culture of Masculinity



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