



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 November 2012

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-seventh session

4-15 March 2013

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by International Center for Alcohol Policies, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Introduction

In 2013, the International Center for Alcohol Policies will release *Human Total: a Violence Prevention Learning Resource*, which focuses on the gender discrimination and behavioural patterns that encourage many men and boys to be violent and reckless, including where relevant, by drinking harmfully. *Human Total* is the latest, most concrete effort in the Center's 17 years of work aimed at understanding alcohol-related violence, and in identifying and promoting good practice for its prevention.

The Center conducts this work in its role as a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting understanding of the role of alcohol in society and to helping to reduce harmful drinking worldwide through dialogue and partnerships involving the beverage alcohol industry, Governments, the public health community and other stakeholders. The Center has been recognized by the Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organization in special consultative status, and is supported by major international alcohol producers.

The international public health and scientific communities' efforts to define the association between violence and alcohol use are ongoing. This complex relationship is mediated by personality, expectancy, situational factors and sociocultural norms. While data support an association between certain drinking patterns and some forms of violence, there is no evidence that alcohol consumption actually causes violence.

Research does, however, suggest that more men than women respond to conflict with violence, report unhealthy alcohol use and engage in alcohol-related violence. Experts in the United Nations, as well as those contributing to the Center's publication on alcohol and violence (see below) and elsewhere agree that toxic notions of masculinity underpin many of the dynamics leading to violence and reckless behaviour. For those reasons, the learning resource prioritizes fostering healthy notions of masculinity as the most effective way to prevent violence, including against women and girls, and reckless behaviour, such as harmful drinking.

Focus on masculinities

After more than a decade of examining, reporting and dialoguing on specific contexts where violence and harmful alcohol use were known to interact, including in collaboration or consultation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization, the Center decided to take a more integrated approach to the dynamic. In early 2008, it published "Alcohol and violence: exploring patterns and responses", a compilation of research and experience from experts working around the world in the fields of anthropology, mental health, law enforcement, alcohol policy, gender, human rights and violence prevention on how to reduce violence and harmful alcohol use. On the basis of those findings, the Center decided to create a cross-cultural learning resource adaptable to the reality and needs of a broad spectrum of contexts.

It then invited experts from diverse regions of the globe, working in the above-referenced fields, plus education, to discuss the design of what eventually became *Human Total*. Although the group recognized that people as old as 24 could benefit

from a learning resource of this kind, its members agreed to produce in the first instance one for children aged 10 to 14. The following are Human Total's objectives:

- To enhance understanding of the intersection between toxic masculinity and other unhealthy learned behaviours, such as interpersonal violence and problem drinking
- To challenge, on the basis of international human rights law, assumptions about personal identity, gender roles, and power imbalances that lie at the root of much interpersonal violence and reckless behaviour
- To empower young people and persons in a position to protect them to prevent, avoid and defend against violence and reckless behaviour
- To foster, in both potential targets and possible perpetrators of violence, life skills that facilitate respect for one's own dignity and human rights as well as the dignity and equal rights of others

Field testing

In 2010, with the help of a human rights education organization and the Mexican Institute for Family and Population Research, the Center partnered with a life skills centre in Kenya and the Quetzalcoatl Foundation in El Salvador to pilot Human Total in a variety of settings (rural, urban and semi-urban; community and classroom) and contexts (famine, displacement, the aftermath of ethnic conflict, extreme poverty and spreading gang violence). One of the learning resource's authors, an expert in human rights law, violence prevention and gender, spent two days with each team: one in a workshop, helping facilitators, project managers and evaluators assimilate and work with the learning resource, and one visiting implementation sites to dialogue with the team members about the upcoming piloting stage.

Feedback tools were used to gather information on the Human Total text, as well as on its application and effect. Owing to implementation challenges in El Salvador, the feedback from the centre in Kenya proved the most reliable overall. The Kenyan experience, with 96 participants, 6 facilitators, plus parents and guardians, was extremely positive regarding the material's relevance, presentation and impact on all involved. The Quetzalcoatl Foundation reported using the learning resource effectively with young people up to 21 years; both country teams believed it could and should benefit those up to 24 years of age. The International Center for Alcohol Policies has relied on this input, plus the input culled during the workshop and site visits, to enhance the draft and produce the learning resource that will be published online in English and Spanish.

Strategy

While Human Total addresses discrimination against women and girls — especially where such bigotry fosters destructive presumptions about the justifiability or utility of using violence against them — the heart of its lessons, parent outreach and facilitator guidance examines how unhealthy notions of masculinity straitjacket and cripple many men and boys, and how the psychosocial damage that results leads to much of the violence and reckless behaviour.

Human Total incorporates the following key elements that both human rights education specialists and alcohol education experts have found lead to a successful

education programme, as presented in the above-mentioned publication on alcohol and violence:

- Participatory format, involving the family, where appropriate
- Multidisciplinary approach, based in the participants' reality
- Curriculum that emphasizes life skills
- Programme design that allows repeated interplay between the learning environment and the real world, over a period of time that permits reflection on the application of these strategies

Human rights are central to Human Total. By ensuring that young people understand and assimilate their rights and those of others, the learning resource aims to enhance in the participants, their parents, and facilitators the empathy and respect for the inherent dignity of all people that is imperative for the prevention of discrimination that causes, catalyses, or is used to excuse much violent behaviour. In addition to the right to freedom from discrimination, the learning resource examines the right to personal security, the right to freedom of expression and the rights of the child. Human Total does not delve into the details of conventions; rather it foments an empowered understanding of, and respect for, human dignity, equality of all and each learner's own agency.

Human Total develops the following life skills that are key to modifying learned behaviours that pave the path to violence: problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, coping with stress and emotions, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness and creative thinking.

The sessions and material on alcohol consumption aim to enhance understanding of the difference between responsible drinking and irresponsible drinking, as well as the effects that drinking alcohol can have on body, family, and community. They also underline the fact that reckless drinking is not a valid excuse for violence. By understanding that harmful alcohol consumption does not eliminate personal responsibility, young people learn to be more answerable for their choices and actions.

Human Total has already proven to be both versatile and wide-reaching in its effect. First, it can be used in any context, whether or not harmful alcohol use is perceived to be a problem. The learning resource could, for example, be used in "dry" communities (where consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited) or in ones where the only concern at the outset is violence. Second, a user- and translation-friendly facilitator's guide, plus eight annexes of supplementary information and additional resources, allow all sorts of actors concerned with violence (educators, youth leaders, faith leaders, community organizers) to facilitate/teach Human Total and scale it up for older, or more advanced, participants. Third, although the overt targets of the learning resource are the young participants, piloting revealed what the Center had hoped for: both facilitators and parents reported their own conceptual paradigm shifts and behavioural modification after accompanying their children through the process.

The Center will make Human Total publicly available for use, translation and adaptation.