Let’s Talk MEN: The South Asia Masculinities Film Project

1. What is the product?

Well-known documentary filmmakers from Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bangladesh have made four films on masculinity. The idea of the project was from Indian documentary filmmaker, Rahul Roy. Now it is ‘owned’ by him and other South Asian filmmakers; Farjad Nabi and Mazhar Zaidi from Pakistan, Kesang Tseten Lama and Tsering Rhitar from Nepal and Manzare Hassin Murad from Bangladesh.

“When Four Friends Meet...” directed by Rahul Roy of India. Four boys share with the camera their secrets: sex and girls; youthful dreams and failures; frustrations and triumphs. The four friends, residents of Jehangirpuri, a working class colony in Delhi, are trying to make their living in an environment which is changing rapidly. Girls seems to be very bold, stable jobs are not easy to come by, sex is a strange mix of guilt and pleasure.

“Yeh hui Na Mardon Wali Baat (Now That’s More Like A Man)” directed by Farjad Nabi and Mazhar Zaidi of Pakistan. The video relies upon popular clichés and provides the space for constructing men, real and imagined. A series of women give form to men through words. A group of children play endlessly – the game of life, of gender.

“Listen To The Wind” by Tsering Rhitar and Kesang Tseten of Nepal is the only fiction film among the four. A Sherpa boy in the high mountains of Nepal is different. An old nomad with deteriorating eyesight who wishes to see the rare Kalma Metok flower before he dies is his best friend. In the face of mounting obstacles at his new school – bullying classmates, diminishing chances of securing a much-needed scholarship and the threat of expulsion from school, can he realise his friend’s advice to Listen to the Wind to find his own answer?

“Amader Chheler (Our Boys)” directed by Manzare Hassin of Bangladesh. Winds of change are sweeping through the country. The West is irresistible, and the East refuses to disappear. In these confusing times boys from a pop group and a young artist, all from the newly emerging middle class families of Dhaka, open their lives to the director. Duties and obligations, women and desire, confusion and contradictions, the boys can feel the wind but do not really know which way it blows.

2. What is the intention?

SC UK-OSCAR and UNICEF-ROSA initiated this filmmaking project by supporting the initial phase in making the selection of filmmakers. This project started in November 1997 and the
films were completed as well as launched in New Delhi, India in February 2000. SC UK-OSCAR and UNICEF-ROSA will work with their Country Programme Offices in South Asia, Save the Children Alliance partners, the filmmakers, other national-international NGOs, media and other networks to package, market and screen the films. Wide distribution of the films in order to maximise its usage and dissemination of its ideas is crucial for achieving the purpose of making these films. The distribution, screening and evaluation of the films will involve the following activities:

**Discussion Guide:** Development and testing of a masculinities films discussion guide for the four video films to be used by facilitators in showing and discussing the films to youths and other target groups. The discussion guide will be designed to also be used by young people to facilitate the discussions (peer education).

**Research component:** A methodology for implementation will be designed to document a clear approach to the process of taking the four films to schools to screen and evaluate them, so that it can be duplicated/implemented anywhere without a primary resource person. In addition, a simple evaluation sheet will accompany the videos to ensure ongoing feedback.

**Impact evaluation:** The evaluation in the four countries where the films have been made will be done through controlled screening to find out if and how the films and the discussions affect attitudinal and behaviour change among young people. The evaluation will enable us to understand how a socialization experience can be affected through films in the absence of such possibilities in schools and families. This evaluation process will take place over a period of two years.

3. **What can you do with the films?**

The *primary target audience* for these films is adolescents within the age group of thirteen to twenty years, particularly boys, in formal and informal settings in urban, semi-urban and rural areas.

The *secondary target audience* is the general public that are interested in gender issues related to men and masculinities and would benefit from viewing/using the films as a teaching/learning tool.

The films can be used within existing programmes to present to young people, particularly boys, with alternative male role models to dominant paradigms, which are violent towards women and girls and where this behaviour often is accepted as the norm. They can be distributed widely in carefully planned interactive screenings with young people in a variety of settings: through schools, SCF and UNICEF partners/projects, NGOs, government educational departments, and interested others.

The films can also be seen as stand-alone films or in different combinations. The idea is to show them to a wider audience, so that it leads to questioning the entrenched patriarchal family, society and institutional practices in South Asia - that might have lead to a situation where
gender discrimination and violence against women is exceedingly high, with severe oppression of girls and women.

This may involve mapping of potential distribution channels, including national TV and cable networks, satellite TV channels, dissemination through government information channels, INGOs/NGO partners, education administration of state/province and central governments; schools; women’s groups; through university departments of gender studies, women’s studies, sociology, psychology, family studies using AV material for sensitisation and training purposes; and through workshops for NGOs, media and communication agencies.

4. How can discussions be led?

It would be better to screen the films in a controlled environment, for quality discussion to take place. By the end of the screening it might be helpful to:

- Collect a set of responses from the participants on the film.
- Compare these with the objective of the South Asia Masculinities Film Project

The films can be screened for a variety of audiences. Following are some of the possibilities:

- Young boys and girls / College youth
- Communities
- Children’s clubs
- Working children
- Development workers
- Persons from related sectors namely education, media, law, political etc.

FOR COPIES OF PROMOTIONAL & THE ACTUAL FILMS AND ANY OTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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