About the Study

Exploring Male Engagement in Premarital Abortion: Perceptions and Lived Experiences of Young Women and Men in New Delhi, India is a study done in partnership with Promundo-US with support from MacArthur Foundation.

The study aims to:
- Contribute to the small but growing body of research on how men are involved; and
- Understand how they can become more involved as supportive respectful partners in abortion care.

An intersectional (considering various axes such as gender, caste, class, education, etc.) qualitative study based on discussions and interviews with young unmarried men and women seeking abortion, and general unmarried youth as well as service providers, including healthcare professional and policy experts.

Study Context

- Unsafe abortions are the third leading cause of maternal deaths in India, they contribute to 8% of such deaths annually.
- Despite legal access to abortion services, unmarried people face challenges due to secrecy, shame and stigma.
- Limited evidence on the vulnerability of the young and unmarried.
- Little is known about the socio-economic and gender dynamics underlying an unmarried couples’ abortion decision-making process.

MEN ARE INVOLVED IN WAYS THAT ARE SUPPORTIVE

- Accompanying partners to seek services
- Procuring medicines & information

MALE INVOLVEMENT OFTEN A TIGHTROPE BETWEEN GENDERED EXPECTATIONS & CARE FOR PARTNER

- Men seen as ‘protectors’ & ‘responsible’ for women’s honor. Hence, feel pressured to ‘take control’

SHAME & STIGMA SHAPE MALE INVOLVEMENT

- Men afraid of being considered sexual predators
- Some support partners behind-the-scenes due to fear

MEN TEND TO HANDLE THE SITUATION ALONE

- Lack of information & guidance
- Stigma prevents men from reaching out

It is strange for me to speak about all this. I have never spoken about this to anyone. This is the first time I am opening up about that experience. I was reluctant initially.”
- 29 yrs, Unmarried male whose female partner went through an abortion

For more information, please see the report: Exploring Male Engagement in Premarital Abortion
Engaging Men in Abortion Care

PRIORITIZE MEN’S ROLE IN DISCUSSIONS AROUND SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS
• Capture what men think, feel & do

LEVERAGE MEN’S ROLE AS QUASI-SERVICE PROVIDERS
• Not only as partners, but also as friends, peers, family members, etc.

STRENGTHEN ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN SERVICE PROVIDERS & MEN
• Healthcare professionals, clinicians, chemists, etc.

ENGAGE MEN TO ADDRESS GENDER NORMS
• Around contraception, consent, notions of honor & dignity, etc.
• Men’s expression of their vulnerabilities

MEN RELY ON PEERS & INTERNET FOR INFORMATION
• Men reluctant to reach out, even to their peers. They depend on ‘one trusted friend.’
• Peer ‘whisper networks’ often provide hurried and inaccurate information, resulting in complications.

LIMITED INTERACTION BETWEEN MEN & SERVICE PROVIDERS
• Service providers reprimanding of men

MALE INVOLVEMENT VARIES WITH THE COUPLES’ SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS
• Lesser dependence of economically independent women on their male partners for abortion services; they mostly sought emotional support.

MALE SUPPORT DEPENDENT ON MOBILITY OF THE MALE & FEMALE PARTNER
• Male involvement greater when cohabiting with female partner & when living alone/away from family.

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