Fight against Gender Violence

Men as a part of solution:

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- Men are usually not a part of the discussion on issues that concern women, particularly violence against women. Which is worrying considering that they are normally the ones who make the rules and drive the agenda in most nations including in India.
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- Like the family planning programme, it will be far more effective if the fight against gender violence were to involve men.
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- This is no easy task, **it takes the *undoing* of years of conditioning and the gender biases** which have become part of the DNA of our societies. In many cases, men don't even seem to think that their more violent actions are necessarily wrong.
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What is takes to make violent criminals?

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- In her searingly brutal film **Anatomy of Violence - Deepa Mehta** touches on what it takes to make such violent criminals as those who were involved in the 2012 gang rape in Delhi.
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- The male actors in the film are show as being at the receiving end of the brutalisation and horror of years of **poverty, sexual abuse, domestic violence and lack of any normal access** or mingling among the sexes.
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- In a disturbing scene, one of the killers nonchalantly blames the victim and says the fact of her death is not more significant than other deaths including his own impending one after he got the death sentence.
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- At no point, does the film make any excuses for the violence but it does show that even **the concept of right and wrong are so skewed** in the lives of

many men in India.
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Where it has to start?

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- It is not that all men are resistant to the idea of playing a greater role in the fight against gender violence. They came out in huge numbers on Delhi's streets when the gang rape took place - a spontaneous outpouring of grief for the young woman.
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- For every man who thinks that involvement in female issue somehow reduces his masculinity or challenges his control, there are others who feel the opposite, who are **willing to walk the extra mile for women's rights.**
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- But it has to start with the **education system** where instead of promoting half-baked theories about a glorious past, boys and girls should be educated and made aware of what constitutes violence against women and how this demeans and brutalises us all.
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- There will be resistance, of course, but I don't see that as a permanent barrier.
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- Anatomy of Violence shows that **gender discrimination at home** gives boys the feeling that they are superior and that women should bend to their will.
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Concluding remarks:

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- The good news is that in many countries, India included, there is an increasing awareness that male behaviour affects not just women, but the well being of society as a whole.
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- Men have to be involved in gender violence as they are the main perpetrators of it and **without their cooperation, there can be no solution.**
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- We need to hear from men about what motivates violence against women and what they think could be solutions for behavioural change.
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- In many ways, the male head of a household is not just the role model for his sons and other male relatives but he also takes the decisions which can empower women in the family should he chose to.
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- It is only when we have the opinions from a much wider cross section of men that responses and frameworks that really work can be formulated to prevent or at least minimise violence against women.
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