

## 1 Introduction

Acknowledging that there is little consensus among individuals and agencies about the meanings of Gender and Development (GAD), let alone about the potential place of men in GAD, this article considers a series of conceptual, practical and strategic reasons why gender policy and planning might benefit from incorporating men to a greater degree than has been the case so far. The article is divided into three main sections. The first sketches in some of the background to the emergence of GAD's interest in men. The second outlines some of the main problems associated with the exclusion of men from gender and development projects. The third identifies how a more active and explicit incorporation of men as gendered and engendering beings in gender policy and planning has the potential to expand the scope of gender and development interventions, and to further struggles to achieve and sustain greater equality between women and men.

## 2 From 'Man-Blind' to 'Man-Kind'? Growing Interest in Men in GAD

While men have always been involved in one way or another, both conceptually and practically, in gender and development policy and planning, interest in men as a gendered constituency in their own right has been a more recent phenomenon.

From the late 1980s onwards there has been a notable tendency in academic (and some policy) literature on gender to become more self-conscious about its tendency to focus primarily on women. This is reflected in an increasing number of field studies which include male as well as female respondents, not to mention analyses which concentrate primarily on the subject of men and masculinities (see Foreman 1999; IPPF 1996; Sweetman (ed.) 1997; White 1994). This emerging attention to men seems to have its origins in two main arenas, one being a quite dramatic series of changes which have occurred in patterns of gender in different parts of the world in the last decades of the twentieth century, the other being the evolution of thinking within the field of GAD itself.

# From 'Woman- Blind' to 'Man-Kind' *Should Men Have More Space in Gender and Development?*

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## 2.1 Changing patterns of gender at a world scale

Various changes in gender in the last thirty years have prompted rising interest in the subject of men and masculinities, particularly shifts that have taken place in education, the labour market and family organisation. While there is seemingly incontrovertible evidence that women, as a whole, continue to face greater social and economic disadvantages than their male counterparts, there is also mounting acknowledgement of the fact that 'women are not always the losers' (Sweetman 1998). More specifically, the late twentieth century has witnessed growing talk of 'men in crisis', 'troubled masculinities' and 'men at risk', with young lower-income males singled out as especially vulnerable to insecurity and marginalisation (Barker 1997; Cornwall 1998:46). In a number of countries North and South, for example, male youth are beginning to fall behind their female counterparts in rates of educational attainment, and seem to have more difficulty obtaining employment (Chant and McIlwaine 1998; Hearn 1998; Kazman 1992; Lumsden, 1996). Declining prospects for assuming the economic responsibilities attached to the widely idealised male role of 'breadwinner' have undermined men's status and identities, and are often linked with their weakening integration into family units, especially as spouses and fathers (Escobar Latapí 1999; Güendel and González 1998; Moore 1994; Williams 1998). This, in turn, has been exacerbated by shifts in domestic power relations as women have entered the labour force in rising numbers and are increasingly heading their own households on a *de jure* or *de facto* basis (Chant 1997a, forthcoming; Gutmann 1996).<sup>1</sup> Rising emphasis in social policy on female household heads, and the intensification of social problems such as crime and violence, have been important corollaries of these trends (Sweetman 1997:4; Moser and McIlwaine 1999). These changes are not only important for men, but are important for women too, and, accordingly, have prompted a groundswell of enquiry within the gender and development community.

## 2.2 The evolution of GAD thinking

Aside from changes in gender on the ground, rising interest in men in GAD may be further accounted for by the fact that the field of gender and development is now nearly three decades old. While its

origins in the United Nations Decade for Women and Women in Development (WID) movement in the 1970s has undoubtedly marked gender and development as an arena for women and women's rights, the evolution of GAD thinking, with its progressively greater emphasis on gender relations (as opposed to women *per se*), over time, has brought about a situation in which the need to give men more dedicated space in this domain has become paramount.

One of the basic conceptual premises of GAD is that, as a dynamic social construct, gender is shaped not only by a multiplicity of interacting time- and place-contingent influences (culture, mode of production, legal and political institutions, for example), but is further mediated by men's and women's insertion into other socially generated categories such as class, age and 'race' (Moser 1993:3). In this light, an undifferentiated and unilateral focus on women is not only conceptually inappropriate, but deprives gender interventions of their transformative potential. Planning for change in women's lives clearly entails changes for men, with structural shifts in male-female power relations being 'a necessary precondition for any development process with long-term sustainability' (Rathgeber 1995:212).

Related to the adoption of 'gender relations' (rather than women) as its primary focus of attention, GAD calls for the integration of a gender perspective in all development activities and at all levels of the planning process (Levy 1996:2). Widely referred to as 'gender mainstreaming', this entails the re-working of structures of decision making and institutional cultures such that gender is recognised as central rather than peripheral, and that it needs to be rescued from the ranks of 'optional extra' on a social development checklist. As MacDonald *et al.* (1997:12) point out: 'The gender dimension cannot be 'added' to an agency's values or practice; it is already there, because all aspects of an agency's functioning are affected by gender relations within the agency and in its relations with its interlocutors' (see also Jahan 1995).

In spite of the priority attached to gender relations in GAD thinking, and increasing rhetoric about men, however, there appear to be few concrete guidelines as to where, when and how to include

men in gender planning, whether at institutional or grassroots levels. In one respect this relates to lack of a critical mass of experience and expertise in the field of men in GAD. At a more fundamental level, this itself possibly owes to scepticism about men's place in feminist politics, and uncertainties surrounding potential conflicts of interest in joint gender struggles. As observed by Kajifusa (1998:7):

... feminist scholars have seldom argued about how men can be committed to gender issues. This appears to be a significant contradiction which assumes that women and men can challenge gender inequality against women on an equal footing, whereas it is too often mentioned that a majority of men are resistant and few men are supportive. How can men and women share an ends and means for the transformation? The argument of gender mainstreaming alone is insufficient unless one makes men an issue.

Other factors responsible for the slow take-up of men in GAD include the desire to protect it first and foremost as an arena for women, and the practical difficulties of tackling gender relations. Difficult though the challenge of working with gender relations may be, however, failure to broach substantive tactical issues in respect of male involvement runs the risk of pushing GAD into an intellectual and political cul-de-sac. For one, it may render reference to men no more than an act of 'window-dressing', much in the way that rhetoric about, and interventions for, women have often been a smoke-screen for 'non-action' as far as the confrontation of fundamental gender inequalities is concerned. Second, when the practicalities of including men are ill-defined, it is understandable how development agency personnel may be unwilling to take risks and fall back on the old WID-centred approach instead. As noted by Harrison (1997b:61):

Over the last fifteen years, feminist analyses have apparently influenced both thinking and practice in international development agencies. The language of gender and development has been widely adopted. For example, awareness of the differences between practical and strategic gender needs is evident in the policy documentation of many multilateral and bilateral donors. However, the tendency for women's

projects to 'misbehave' noted by Buvinic in 1985 is now replicated by the tendency of 'gender planning' to slip subtly and imperceptibly into the much older 'projects for women'. A relational approach to gender is replaced by a focus on women while male gender identities lie unexamined in the background.

At its logical extreme, if including men persists as an uncharted territory, it could prove impossible ever to identify the extent to which a gender relations approach is actually the most appropriate method for achieving equality between men and women in the context of development assistance.

### **3 Problems for GAD of Male Exclusion**

With the above in mind, and recognising that the road to male involvement in GAD is unlikely to be straightforward, it is important to identify some of the reasons why it is now more important than ever to make greater space for men. One important set of factors relates to observations about the consequences of men's exclusion from gender and development projects.

#### **3.1 Imagining men: exclusion and stereotyping**

A common charge levelled at gender and development projects is that 'women are treated as an identifiable single category, thought of in a narrow range of stereotypical ways' (Cornwall 1998:46). The fact that men are similarly constructed is arguably more prejudicial still in light of their routine exclusion from any participation in gender initiatives. This said, as Cornwall (1998:46) notes: "Men", equally thought of as a single category, lurk in the background, imagined as powerful and oppositional figures' (see also Harrison 1997b:61).

Even in more conceptual strands of gender and development work, such as gender analysis, where growing attention is being paid to heterogeneity among women, tendencies remain towards the dichotomous categorisation of women and men into 'good girl'/'bad boy' stereotypes (White 1997:16), and to the crude and cursory representation of men as 'pampered sons and patriarchs' (Jackson 1999). Moreover, habitual emphasis (by design or default) that men benefit from

development in ways which women do not, gives the very misleading impression that men's power and privileges are fixed and universal (Kajifusa 1998:11).

Within this context, 'gender relations' become used as a 'shorthand for relationships that are regarded as inherently oppositional' (Cornwall 1998:52). Women are established as a 'vulnerable group' with limited ability to resist oppression by their 'villainous' male counterparts. Aside from the fact that excluding men gives them little chance to challenge the stereotypes ascribed to them, however, dealing with 'the problem' *through* women can burden the latter with a task that would perhaps be better shared rather than shouldered single-handedly.

### 3.2 Gendered rivalries and hostilities

Leading on from the above, another common set of consequences of excluding men from GAD projects relates to the potential emergence or aggravation of hostilities between men and women at the grassroots and to the blocking or sabotage of moves to enhance women's lives and livelihoods. Indeed, whether men's retaliation is passive *or* active, there is a large amount of evidence that their exclusion can significantly jeopardise the success of gender initiatives.

One example is provided by the experience of PROCESS, a Filipino grassroots NGO with origins in the women's movement and a strong participatory agenda. In the early 1990s PROCESS started running women-only seminars in gender-awareness and women's rights for wives of male trade union members in a big mining plant in the Central Visayan region of the country. Due to the fact they had neither been informed nor invited to the seminars, some of the men demanded that the organisers either let men into the meetings or give-up running them altogether (Chant 1995).

Another analysis of women's income-generating projects in Greece, Kenya and Honduras by Constantina Safiliou-Rothschild (1990) indicated that projects aimed at raising women's access to income in situations where men have difficulty being breadwinners were often unsuccessful. Men facing pressures of long-term employment insecurity responded to what they regarded as 'threats' posed by improvements in women's economic

status by taking over projects, by controlling the income they derived from them, and/or, as a further backlash, increasing their authority and control within the home. Whether or not these backlashes stem in part from men's general anxieties about the fragility of their livelihoods and status, their exclusion from such projects is unlikely to help.

### 3.3 Overload for women

Aside from deliberate responses on the part of men to being 'left out', a major consequence of male exclusion from gender projects is the likelihood of women ending-up with greater workloads and responsibilities than they can actually take on. As summed-up by Sweetman (1997:2), a focus on women alone can lead to 'overload and exhaustion'. In the field of family planning, for example, focus group discussions held with low-income men aged between 20 and 38 years in Chimbote, Peru, revealed that men did not use family planning services themselves because they felt these had been designed only with women in mind. The fact that health personnel were predominantly female made men feel embarrassed about attending family planning clinics, besides which the opening hours were inconvenient for male workers. As a result, women were left with virtually exclusive responsibility for reproductive matters (Cobián and Reyes 1998).

The notion that failure to target men can lead to overload on women is echoed in work on Costa Rica which suggests that the increasing emphasis in social policy, and particularly in poverty alleviation programmes, on female heads of household can drive men still further from assuming responsibilities for care of dependents (Chant 1997b, forthcoming; see also Folbre 1994 for a more general discussion).

This Costa Rican example is typical of many social programmes established in response to debt crises and neoliberal restructuring during the 1980s and 1990s insofar as targeting women has become a favoured route to economic and developmental efficiency. Referred to within the gender and development community as the 'efficiency approach', interest lies in harnessing women's purportedly 'under-utilised' labour to cushion low-income households from the consequences of macro-economic reform such as cut-backs in public expenditure, rising prices, declining wages and falling levels

of male employment. While the main goal of the efficiency approach is to make development more efficient, there is also the belief that women's increased economic participation will lead to increased equity. None the less, while some practical gender needs may be fulfilled by targeting women, such interventions often result in women working for development rather than *vice versa* (see Blumberg 1995:10; Elson 1989, 1991; Kabeer 1994:8; Moser 1993:69–73). Moreover, persistent assumptions about women being altruistic mothers and housewives with the capacity to extend their working days in the interests of others, means that gender inequalities may end-up being intensified rather than alleviated (Andersen 1992:174; Chant 1995). For example, UNICEF-endorsed programmes aiming to protect basic health and nutrition, such as the 'Vaso de Leche' (glass of milk) and 'Comedores Populares' (popular kitchens) schemes in Peru, have drawn heavily on women's unpaid contributions. By capitalising on and reinforcing the undervaluation of female labour, this clearly does little to redress gender inequalities (see Moser, 1993:73).

### 3.4 The limits of 'women-only' projects

Last, but by no means least, lack of male involvement can also mean that benefits of women-only projects may be seriously constrained. In the PROCESS example cited previously, for instance, although women claimed to have enjoyed the seminars on women's rights, the benefits were held in check by the fact that they could not exercise the rights they had learnt about in their own homes (Chant 1995). Conceivably male involvement may have made men more sympathetic. In a similar vein, the poverty alleviation programme for women household heads established by the Figueres administration in Costa Rica in 1996 (see earlier) had arguably less impact than it would have done if it had included men. Despite proposals for a male-inclusive 're-socialisation of roles' component in the programme, this was dropped on grounds that it would be too difficult to execute. Instead, workshops on rights, self-esteem and so on were restricted to women who continued having to deal with unsensitised men in their personal lives, and with patriarchal structures in both the private and public arena (Budowski and Guzman 1998). The limitations of this approach were felt so deeply by some women that they actually asked local organisers of the programme if their menfolk could participate (Chant 1997b).

Leading on from the above, acting as if men are irrelevant can impose demands on women which are impossible to fulfil. In the field of health, for example, Wood and Jewkes (1997:45) note that ignoring men belies misplaced assumptions about women's ability to 'control their bodies and thereby achieve and sustain sexual health'. Such assumptions are perhaps particularly serious as far as AIDS is concerned, with Foreman (1999:xi) noting:

Attitudes towards sex are in a state of flux almost everywhere, but in many societies men are still expected to have frequent intercourse with their wives or regular partners and occasional or regular intercourse with their casual partners. Women are expected to accede to men's demands, abstinence is seen as harmful, and condoms are seen as unmasculine or as restricting a man's pleasure. As long as men – and women – are influenced by such concepts of masculinity, HIV will continue to spread.

Another example is provided by Wallace's (1991) discussion of women-focused nutritional training schemes. Although women in many cultures may have the main responsibility for food provision, they cannot necessarily influence the dietary behaviour of other household members. By omitting men, therefore, it is possible that women's training may not be as effective as it might be and that time and other resources will be wasted (*ibid.*:185).

## 4 Including Men: Whys and Wherefores

The various problems identified as emerging from the exclusion of men in GAD present a persuasive case for bringing them on board to a greater degree than in the past. They also feed into arguments of a more general, speculative nature, which would seem to make sense if GAD is (a) to move beyond the bounds of theoretical supposition, and (b) begin to have major impacts on the ground. As we have already seen, women-only approaches to development have very limited impacts on gender relations and, in this light, involving men may be a more effective alternative for scaling down gender inequalities. Although this may smack of an instrumentalist 'technical fix', there are also other objectives which may be fulfilled in the process, as explored in greater detail below.

#### 4.1 Relevance, responsibility and equity

Women rarely operate as autonomous individuals in their communities and daily lives, so programmes which take into account, and incorporate, male members of their households and neighbourhoods may well make interventions more relevant and workable. Indeed, in practice it is entirely possible for men to be allies, as evidenced by UNICEF-supported women's farming groups in Luapala province, northeastern Zambia, where male membership was justified by women on grounds that they needed the men, and could not see any reason why men should not take part (Harrison 1997a:128–9).

Even where male–female relations may be less cooperative, active efforts to engage men in gender projects can help not only to dismantle gender inequalities, but make men bear greater responsibility for change. For example, a pilot project called 'Stepping Stones' in Uganda, which consisted of a training programme combining HIV/AIDS awareness, gender issues and communication and relationship skills among young men, was shown to result in a decline in domestic violence and alcohol consumption after sixteen months of participation (Large 1997:28).

Encouraging men to invest time and energy in changing the gender status quo is a critical factor in the quest for gender equity, as illustrated by an evaluation of a gender training programme for male community organisers in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, facilitated by men from Canada and Nicaragua:

If women hold up half the sky, then they cannot hold up more than their half of the responsibilities towards gender change. Organisers and participants alike agreed that men of conscience should play more than just a supportive role in this search for justice. Given the critical leadership positions of many men in social movements, to expect anything less would be self-defeating. (Goodwin 1997:6)

Leading on from this, one important strategy to increase male participation and responsibility may be to bring male staff into gender-related development work. In various cultural contexts, for example, it has been argued that men are more likely to

listen to men, including when it comes to talking about gender (see for example, Tadele 1999). This has already come to light in reproductive health programmes such in Bangladesh, where the government has attempted to educate influential male religious leaders about the benefits of family planning in the hope that this will persuade more men to use and/or allow their wives to use, contraception (Neaz 1996).

Aside from the desirability of marshalling more men into operational aspects of gender and development, building a critical mass of gender-sensitive men within development agencies in general could have a domino effect, and work towards the destabilisation of patriarchy in institutional cultures. Too often the equation of gender with women has produced a weak, marginalised and often underfunded sector, especially where gender issues are dealt with by specialised female-only or female-dominated units (Levy 1992:135–6; Porter *et al.* 1999:8). In the longer term, some 'de-feminisation' of gender planning could result in greater resources for gender and development and more enthusiastic and sustained commitment to the reduction of gender inequalities. As Foreman (1999:35) has suggested: 'The challenge of the future is to create societies where women's strength achieves its full potential without relegating men to insignificance'.

#### 4.2 Men's rights as human rights

Leading on from the above, in terms of the post-Beijing GAD Equality approach,<sup>2</sup> to deny men the rights that women have (or technically should have) in gender and development is arguably unjust. As Large (1997:29) points out: 'Gender as an area of research and action should be understood as belonging to men and studies of masculinity, as well as to women and feminist studies'.

A rights-based strategy may well work to the benefit of everyone, not least for instrumental reasons. As Shepard (1996:12) asserts with reference to reproductive health: 'Stating that men have a right to care for their children ... offers an entirely different approach to the male target audience'. None the less, there is also disquiet about this, with Sweetman (1997:6) concerned that:

advocates of human rights could legitimately question the way men are being co-opted into

health debates as 'instruments' to deliver a development goal. This uncomfortably echoes the way in which women have been used as an instrument to deliver population control in the past. Ultimately both men's and women's rights to determine their own lives are compromised by this.

By the same token, it should also be noted that women's human rights have often been seen as separate from general human rights, with the consequence that they have often been unobserved, and their violation unexposed and unchallenged (Tomasevski 1993). In many respects it could be argued that men remain a privileged group in this area, and that until more is done to redress gender-based inequalities, greater effort should be devoted to enabling women to secure the basic rights and freedoms enjoyed by most men.

### 4.3 Men in crisis?

A possibly less contentious reason for including men in gender and development is that, as identified earlier in the article, many men at present seem to be caught in a 'crisis of masculinity'. As Foreman (1999:21) puts it: 'In a world in which masculine values no longer provide the security that they seemed to provide for their fathers and grandfathers, men's fear is growing'.

Among the several reasons in the 'world out there' which make it timely to address men in gender and development, one is that the changes that have undermined 'traditional' masculine identities have effectively opened up a space to imagine new futures. In the realm of parenting, for example, Engle and Breaux (1994:37) suggest that the moment has come to stop ignoring fathers, to 'recognise the social and economic situation we all share, and find ways to weave a new social fabric out of the broken strands of worn-out stereotypes'.

Another very important reason to tap into current trends in men's 'predicament' is that it could be dangerous if steps are *not* taken to intervene, not least for women and children. Castells (1997:136), amongst others, observes that individual and collective anxiety over the loss of male power is provoking increases in male violence and psychological abuse. Alcoholism and marital strife are also on the increase (Barker 1997). UNESCO further adds that

where men lose power and status and are unable to enjoy their habitual entitlements, women may be the main victims:

Where men have economic advantages over women, they have a privilege to defend, which may be defended with violence, or may make women vulnerable to violence. Economic changes which put at risk or destroy men's traditional livelihood without providing alternatives, makes violence or militarism attractive options (UNESCO 1997:6).

Aside from the potential spin-offs for women, men's suffering is worthy of attention in its own right. In many areas of the world, including Eastern Europe and urban Latin America, men are beginning to bear a greater burden of ill-health than women, notwithstanding that whereas women's poorer health profile has traditionally been linked with pregnancy, overwork and gender discrimination, men's rising morbidity rates are more to do with 'lifestyle' factors, such as road accidents, work injuries, and cardiovascular illness (Barker 1997:5-6; Jiménez 1996). Men's sexual behaviour is also a major factor, with sexually-transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS spreading in large part from unprotected sexual liaisons (Campbell 1997). Moreover, men are currently 80 per cent of the 6-7 million injecting drug users worldwide (Foreman 1999:128).

Last, but not least, there are signs that men themselves are seeking help. As asserted by Barker (1997:4):

Worldwide, men largely derive their identity from being providers or 'breadwinners', and lack ideas, or alternative gender scripts, to find other meaningful roles in the family in this changing economic environment. Research worldwide reports that men are confused about their roles in the family and about the meanings of masculinity in general and are requesting opportunities in which to discuss and deal with these changes.

## 5 Conclusions

In summing-up, there are distinctive signs that gains may well be made by the greater engagement

of men as clients and personnel in gender and development planning, not least in respect of providing a potentially more effective route to redressing gender imbalances. In addition, wider benefits from male inclusion could follow in their wake. In the field of family planning, for example, Judith Helzner (1996:5) has argued that:

A number of goals could be served by changes in patriarchal male–female dynamics: the social justice objective of increasing equality, the demographic objective of lowering population growth rates, and the public health goal of reducing disease, especially sexually-transmitted infections. Greater participation by men could thus contribute to the goal of reproductive health in a variety of ways.

Convincing men that gender equality might be good for them may not be quite so difficult as anticipated if it is emphasised that empowering women does not necessarily mean disempowering men (Kanji 1995:4). Moreover, given the fact that men as well as women have problems with ‘gender culture’ (White 1994:108), especially in an era increasingly identified as one of ‘male crisis’, the idea that men might be able to shake-off the straitjacket of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ may be decidedly appealing.<sup>3</sup> This is especially the case for those men who suffer domination, discrimination and violation from other men (Quesada 1996:47), and/or who are caught up in acts of violence and/or armed conflict as a result of social and ideological pressures surrounding manhood (see Large 1997; UNESCO 1997:6).

As Foreman (1999:14) has summarised:

Masculinity brings with it privileges and, in many societies, freedoms denied to most

women. Such privileges, however, impose burdens ... Furthermore, subconsciously, some men resent the obligations imposed on them; that resentment is often manifested in anger and violence towards women and other men.

Although GAD practices seem to be trailing behind GAD principles, and important tactical issues remain to be worked out, a moment has undoubtedly arrived in which it is timely to negotiate more male-inclusive strategies for change, and to put the ‘man’ into ‘humankind’ in gender and development

## Notes

1. Although there are elaborate (and contested) typologies of ‘*de jure*’ and ‘*de facto*’ female household headship, the term *de jure* woman-headed household usually refers to a unit in which women live without a male partner on a more or less permanent basis and receive no economic support from one except in the form of legally prescribed child maintenance (which is low and poorly-enforced in most developing countries). *De facto* female-headed households, alternatively, either denote households which are temporarily headed by women (due to male labour migration), or in which women play the primary role in economic support of dependent members (see Chant 1997a:15–18).
2. The so-called ‘Equality’ approach to Gender and Development emerged in the aftermath of the Fourth World Conference for Women in 1995. Its goal is to achieve equality between men and women as a means, and end, of the wider exercise of human rights and people-centred sustainable development (see Levy 1999; Moser 1999).
3. ‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is defined by Robert Connell (1987:186) as an idealised, dominant, heterosexual masculinity, ‘constructed in relation to women and to subordinated masculinities’, and ‘closely connected to the institution of marriage’.



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