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ENGAGING WITH MEN AND MASCULINITIES IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS

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Foreword

Sustainable peace, inclusive institutions and gender equality are rightly at the heart of Agenda 2030. Around the world, conflict, fragility and gender inequalities erode people's opportunities to fulfil their potential and undermine our prospects for sustainable development. These challenges also reinforce each other: societal norms that discriminate against women can fuel conflict and violence, and conflict and fragility in turn multiply the burdens faced by women and girls.

In recent years, the international community has increasingly recognised the importance of the connection between gender inequality, conflict and fragility. This is reflected in an increase in the official development assistance (ODA) committed by the members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in support of gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected settings. However, more can and must be done to ensure that resources are used effectively to achieve meaningful progress towards gender equality, sustainable peace and development in fragile settings.

Aware of the immense stakes and challenges involved, the OECD-DAC Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Team and the International Network on Conflict and Fragility have jointly prepared practical notes for integrating gender equality into donor programming in conflict and fragility-affected settings. They present new research on effective approaches and provide concrete implementation recommendations for programming in fragile settings with a gender lens. The note at hand is part of this initiative.

The practical notes follow on from the OECD Development Policy Paper "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations: A Review of Donor Support" published in October 2017. The study aims to improve the understanding of how development partners can address gender equality aspects in their strategies and initiatives on conflict and fragility. The operational notes address knowledge gaps identified in the Policy Paper and provide practical tools for programmes and policies to contribute to achieving gender equality and sustainable peace and to realise the vision of Agenda 2030.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings
GBV	Gender-based violence
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
KAP	Knowledge-Attitudes-Practice
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolutions
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Executive summary

Engaging with men, boys and their masculinities in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) is not new. While the vast majority of interventions in FCAS do involve men in significant ways, their masculinities often remain invisible. This has been changing over the past few years, as an increasing number of NGOs, national governments, donors and international agencies are seeking to engage in a transformative manner with masculinities. This shift is an important one, as men and the gendered expectations which they hold and which are placed on them are often central to conflict and fragility, and to either enabling or preventing more gender equitable and inclusive societies.

Masculinities are the various ways of being and acting, values and expectations associated with being and becoming a man in a given society, location and temporal space. Many of the institutions and activities associated with conflict and peacebuilding are often centrally associated with what is considered as male-ness; they are also heavily male dominated, be it military groups or political decision-making bodies at various levels. While many of the perpetrators of violence are men and boys, they can also be victims of violence, and face particular gendered vulnerabilities. In some cases, these may be the same as those faced by women and girls, and in others they might manifest differently.

Situations of conflict and fragility will empower some men, such as warlords and their patronage networks. However, they might also undermine the possibilities of many men to live up to societal expectations to be economic providers, protectors or decision-makers. The new, often limited, societal and economic openings for women and girls that may arise in these situations may lead to fears of loss and a backlash from men and boys. Preventing violence both in the public and private spheres as well as building more inclusive societies requires engaging with men and boys as well as transforming expectations and practices of what it means to 'be a man.' This requires understanding and addressing men's and boys' needs and vulnerabilities, but also addressing the structural privileges that they hold in comparison to women, girls and persons with other gender identities. While promoting gender equality is not a 'zero-sum game' in which men lose what women gain, there is a need for challenging men's privileges – and highlighting the benefits of not adhering to harmful gender norms. The work of transforming masculinities can be central here, but needs to be accountable to women and girls and not lead to a stabilisation of patriarchal power.

The increased interest in engaging with men and boys has raised legitimate fears that it may lead to a de-prioritising of the unmet needs of women and girls. The choice between working with men/boys or women/girls is a false dichotomy to a degree – changing the gendered power dynamics that fuel conflict and fragility requires both. Working to address gendered vulnerabilities should not be a competition of harms. Instead of trying to divide the already small amount of funding available to promoting gender equality into smaller slices, the overall amount of funding needs to be increased.

Furthermore, gendered power relations need to be seen as being relevant to all aspects of policy and programming, and as fundamental to addressing fragility and conflict, not as a separate niche theme.

The increasing engagement of various actors in FCAS on transforming masculinities has started to produce key lessons learned and emerging best practices. This is especially the case for working with men and boys in preventing violent behaviour, particularly in the private and domestic sphere, which has been a focus of much of this kind of work to date. Norms and expectations around masculinities do not only influence violence. Even in violence prevention work, other social, economic, emotional and political aspects of men's lives need to be taken into account. Therefore, the scope of engaging with men and boys in a gender transformative manner should be broadened – but not to the detriment of women's empowerment and the promotion of broader equality and inclusivity.

1. Learning from existing practices

1.1. Introduction to gender norms, ‘masculinities’ and working with men and boys in fragile and conflict-affected settings

There is a paradox at the heart of engaging with men and boys in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Men and boys, and the masculinities that they perform and live out, are ubiquitous in situations of conflict and peacebuilding – but they remain invisible *as* men. The social expectations placed on men and boys because of their gender often remain unquestioned, even though they may be central to understanding and tackling conflict, fragility, violence or inequality. Expectations of masculinity play a key role in conflict and peacebuilding, yet they are still seldom taken comprehensively into account when examining gender, conflict, peacebuilding and security.

Many of the institutions and activities associated with conflict and peacebuilding are often closely associated with male-ness and are heavily male dominated, for example military groups or political decision-making bodies at various levels. While many of the perpetrators of violence are men and boys, they can also be victims of violence, and face particular gendered vulnerabilities, which in some cases may be the same as those faced by women and girls, and in others they may be different.

Masculinities encompass the various socially constructed ways of being and acting, values and expectations associated with being and becoming being a man in a given society, location and temporal space. While masculinities are mostly linked with biological men and boys, they are not biologically driven and not only performed by men. Although associated mainly with men and boys, masculinities can also be performed by women, girls and other gender identities. For example, women in male-dominated environments, such as the military, may be seen as performing in a ‘masculine’ manner when carrying out their duties as a soldier. In addition, certain behaviours by men and boys may be seen by others as being associated to femininities rather than masculinities (Wright, 2014; Barker and Ricardo, 2006; Cornwall and Edström, 2014; Duriesmith, 2017b).¹ Although masculinity is not tied to sexual orientation, often-dominant forms of masculinity are linked with heterosexuality, but this is context-specific. For example, the dominant expectations on men may be more around economic success with sexual orientation being seen as a less relevant factor (Connell, 1993; Demetrakis, 2001).

One of the reasons that masculinities often remain invisible and unquestioned is because they are often seen as the norm. For example, in public discussions about women political leaders, it is not uncommon for the fact that they are women to be raised – whereas for male politicians their gender goes unmentioned, unless it is linked to social misconduct. Likewise, research and policy discussions on the role of gender in peacebuilding, peace negotiations and peacekeeping has tended to focus on the benefits of including women – but has often remained silent on the roles that men and masculinities play in terms of either promoting or hindering peace and gender equality.

Over the past decade, there have been increasing calls for **engaging with men and boys as partners for change**, in particular for reducing gender-based violence (GBV), misogyny and for increasing gender equality. These calls have also been incorporated, either implicitly or explicitly, in global, regional and national policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or the various UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) (Kirby and Shepherd, 2016; Myrntinen, 2018).² The number of national governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international agencies and donors seeking to engage with masculinities and work with men and boys for increased gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) has been steadily increasing, and best practices are beginning to emerge.

Much of the work on transforming masculinities and changing male behaviour has focused on violent, controlling and abusive male behaviour. This has sometimes been labelled ‘toxic’ masculinity in the media and academia, and by practitioners and activists, though there is no universally accepted definition for this term. A more common academic term is ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (or hegemonic masculinities). It was popularised especially through the work of Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell. The term refers to what is the most valued form of being a man in a given time and society. It is sometimes erroneously conflated with violent and abusive behaviour, which is incorrect because such behaviour is usually not widely socially accepted. A key difficulty with using these terms is that the acceptability of certain behaviour changes over time, both historically and situationally, and depending on whose perspective it is examined. For example, domineering and controlling behaviour by men over women family members and spouses may be seen as unacceptable by intervening NGOs; however it may be seen as not only acceptable but perhaps even ‘honourable’ behaviour by the men themselves and their peer group. Young men and boys in gangs may equally see their violence as acceptable and as a protest against oppression, while broader society may see their masculinities as antisocial; broader society may laud hard policing masculinities as the right answer to these gangs, while the communities the gang members come from may see these as oppressive and representative of historical biases.

There is a difference between interventions seeking to engage with masculinities and those working with men and boys for increased gender equality. When engaging with masculinities the focus is on transforming adverse social norms that can affect both women and men, in different ways. On the other hand, programmes also engage men and boys in other gender equality actions such as working together with women on income-generating activities in order to avoid backlash to women’s economic empowerment activities. However, many approaches include both engaging with men and boys for gender equality *and* transforming masculinities.

This guidance note examines some of the **best practices and experiences** in the field of engaging with masculinities and working with men for gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected situations, as well as the reasons for working in this field. It builds on findings and follows from the 2017 OECD “Review of Donor Support for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations”. Henceforth referred to as the OECD Policy Paper, it identified working with masculinities in FCAS as one of the areas that required further examination (OECD, 2017). The guidance note at hand draws on a review of key literature from critical studies in the area of men and masculinities, as well as other fields such as violence prevention or development studies. It also draws on the experiences of various actors, in particular civil society, on working with men, boys and masculinities in contexts of conflict and fragility.

The audience for this guidance note includes donor agency staff in headquarters and on the field. The guidance should assist them to integrate the links between gender and conflict and fragility into policy formulation and implementation, and to integrate critical masculinities perspectives throughout project cycles and in outreach and advocacy.

1.2. Background on programming

While engaging men and boys in gender equality work in FCAS may seem to be new, most donor, governmental and NGO engagement in these situations already includes men and boys. The new element is that of bringing in a gender lens that explicitly examines and works with the social expectations placed on men and seeks to transform the behaviour of men and boys to tackle negative masculinities. Gender equality work with women and girls mostly involves empowerment and increasing the possibilities of participation in various social, economic and political spheres. In contrast, working with men and boys can mean increasing their possibilities, in case they are marginalised, but may also require encouraging them to relinquish some of the power, structural privileges and space they occupy.

Much of the gendered masculinities work to date has focused on men's violence in the public and private spheres. It has tackled to a much lesser extent their particular vulnerabilities. Therefore, there is a need and scope to focus more on the gendered expectations put on men. Equally, there is a need and scope to engage men in projects focused on gender norms and on women and girls to ensure that men are sensitised and supportive of these.

Working with men and boys can take different forms and there are varying degrees to which change is envisioned. Three basic, different approaches would be **involving men, engaging men** and work on **transforming masculinities**. *Involving men* is the least ambitious approach, and seeks to bring in men as participants and/or expose them to topics that they would not usually get involved in themselves. *Engaging men* goes further and seeks to have men dynamically participate in activities they might otherwise not participate in (e.g. childcare) or dissuade them from behaviours they currently display, such as violence in the home. *Transformative* approaches go further and seek to change significantly the ways in which men and boys relate to themselves and others in society.

To use an illustrative example of a hypothetical project on ante- and post-natal healthcare:

- *involving men* would focus on having men attend sessions on the topic;
- *engaging men* would seek to change their behaviours i.e. participate actively in health care;
- *transformative approaches* would seek to change men's attitudes and practices on sexual and reproductive health, including for example not insisting on controlling when women are able to access healthcare services (some of these approaches are covered in the case studies in the OECD Policy Paper, 2016).

These three approaches are not mutually exclusive and depend on the degree to which participants are willing to change. For some men, the experience can be transformative whereas for others only ensuring participation can prove a struggle.

1.3. Examples

The following examples give a broad overview of two areas where critically engaging with men and masculinities has been implemented, to varying degrees, in fragile and conflict-affected situations – *working on violence prevention* and *the reintegration of former combatants*. Public and private violence prevention and reintegration of former combatants are by far not the only areas of work in FCAS where transformative masculinities perspectives could and should be integrated, but they tend to be the two areas where there has been the most focus, be it from research, policy and/or programming.

Working with men and boys on reducing violence

One of the main areas in which there has been an active engagement with men and boys in a transformative manner has been in work on violence reduction, especially in terms of reducing or preventing domestic violence, intimate partner violence (IPV) and other forms of gender-based violence. However, masculinities perspectives are also being discussed for addressing public forms of violence, such as gang violence, or preventing men's involvement in groups that are seen as extremist. Still, the focus has been on domestic violence/IPV, which is often a major and on-going threat to human security, especially of women. In situations of fragility and conflict, many of the contributing factors to domestic violence/IPV such as economic precarity, food insecurity or mental health issues can be exacerbated.³ The types of violence prevention interventions vary greatly in size, scope, duration and focus, from short term awareness-raising campaigns and use of prominent men as 'gender champions', to long-term and in depth engagement with men and boys for individual and communal change.

Box 1. Gender champions

Research and experience in institutional and societal change has highlighted the importance of role models and the public buy-in of senior or respected members of the community to affect transformation. In terms of engaging with men on gender equality, the use of 'gender champions' at different levels and in different campaigns has gained prominence and popularity over the last decade. Pop stars, athletes, senior political and military leaders have been brought in to different kinds of publicity campaigns to promote equality, women's empowerment and to prevent domestic and gender-based violence. The He4She campaign has been among the most prominent global endeavours of this sort.

The use of gender champions can be an effective way of raising public awareness and giving men positive role models to emulate. Moreover, for the implementing side they tend to be comparatively easy to organise. However, on their own, they can remain superficial and due to their set-up, they are often not able to address structural issues and other complexities that sustain and perpetuate inequality. Furthermore, they tend to centre on the individual agency of already powerful or successful men, thus enhancing their personal position while side-lining women and other men. They also have the inherent risk that their impact and credibility, their rise and potential fall, are intimately tied to the acceptability, reputation and behaviour of the champion in question. For instance, there is a difficulty in monitoring and evaluation regarding the personal lives of champions - i.e. a gender champion in a community may commit GBV or other forms of misogyny in their homes but not publicly.

In using gender champions, the principle should be that men use their privilege to open spaces for women and marginalised groups who are excluded. It should not be a role or space for them to reinforce their own status, voice, and privilege.

Unfortunately, **measuring longer-term impacts is challenging** for many of these interventions due to a lack of comprehensive pre- and post-intervention data and the fact that only in very rare cases are the impacts of interventions revisited after the end of a project. Furthermore, data on GBV is often ambiguous: higher levels of reporting can mean better reporting systems, more confidence in service providers or a higher level of understanding of the issue – or, more negatively, an actual increase in violence. Therefore, a clear recommendation for future investments would be into **better gathering, tracking and analysis of data** around these issues. Nonetheless, data on men’s attitudes to violence, gender equality and levels of perpetration is increasingly being collected, often with striking levels of perpetration and acceptance of violence.

Box 2. Measuring Men’s Attitudes to Gender Equality and Perpetration of Violence

A key series of studies on the attitudes of men and boys to gender equality, including in a number of FCAS, are the “International Men And Gender Equality Surveys” (IMAGES) carried out by the NGO Promundo and its partners in various countries.⁴ The studies use the Gender-Equitable Men (GEM) scale ‘to measure attitudes toward gender norms in intimate relationships or differing social expectations for men and women.’ (Pulerwitz and Baker, 2018). The 24-item GEM scale measures the respondents’ attitudes on issues pertaining to:

- the acceptability of violence;
- sexual and gender diversity;
- sexual relationships;
- reproductive health and disease prevention; and
- domestic chores and daily life.

Because it is modular, it has been adapted to different socio-cultural contexts or particular issues (Singh, Verma and Baker, 2013).

Another important data set on men’s gender attitudes, life situations and perpetration of GBV is the research by the Partners for Prevention consortium in the Asia-Pacific region.⁵

In terms of emerging best practices, one key approach is understanding GBV dynamics in more complex ways than just examining the violence itself, but rather also working on **norms and attitudes** that underpin violence as well as on other potential contributing stress factors (see also Box 3 below).⁶ These include mental health issues (e.g. frustrations, shame, stigma), economic precarity and food insecurity. An important source for new and emerging, rigorously evaluated research on GBV levels and the efficacy of different types of GBV prevention interventions particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations is the DFID-funded “What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls” consortium.⁷ The “What Works”-consortium does not focus exclusively on men and boys but it includes numerous interventions that assess what works best in terms of involving men and boys in violence prevention.

Box 3. Combining Gender Norm Change and Income-Generation: Comprehensive Approaches to GBV Prevention

Some approaches, such as the South African “Stepping Stones/Creating Futures” model explicitly seek to link change in gender norm with livelihoods training. That is not to say that different forms of GBV only occur in situations of poverty, but research does point to there being correlations between economic stress and violence; interventions seeking to address both have been shown to be successful.

The model used in this particular project combines three elements. The first is focussed on changing people’s everyday behaviour, through trainings that enhance communication and listening skills, and discussions and activities around norms on gender and violence. The model combines this with economic skills and, in some cases, income-generating activities. The approach explicitly works with men and women and seeks to change men’s attitudes and behaviours towards more gender equality.

The combination of norm change and economic components came out of field trials and research in South Africa especially, where only having one or the other component was not as successful as was having both (Jewkes et al, 2014). As part of the “What Works” consortium, this approach was tested in two locations which were very different from the South African urban and peri-urban informal settlements where many of the other trials had been run, namely in rural Nepal and Tajikistan (detailed in Part 4 of this section).

The interventions were adapted to the local conditions such as dealing with extended families and the role of the mother-in-law, local religious and cultural norms, high levels of male labour out-migration and the after-effects of civil war. The income-generating activities were adapted to the rural setting as well, with activities such as beekeeping or animal husbandry, but also setting up bakeries or rental of plates, silverware and chairs for community events and weddings.

Extensive quantitative and qualitative data was gathered, and marked decreases in GBV were recorded (What Works to Prevent VAWG, 2017, 2018).

The attitudes of men and boys to gender equality, as well as controlling behaviour and violence, vary depending on social and cultural mores, and interventions need to be aware of these differences. For instance, there is often a link with education levels, but this is not linear: in several studies, increased education levels of men have correlated to a point with higher levels of acceptance of violence and controlling behaviour due to an elevated sense of men’s entitlement, which then may start dropping off again as education levels increase. Ideally, interventions should base their design on fine-grained research that looks at these various issues in the particular context. Therefore, the design will be based on an understanding of local dynamics and how these feed into various forms of GBV.

GBV prevention work with men in practice is often a combination of the local and the international, in which internationally tested approaches are adapted to the local context. This adaptation is crucial, as is the vernacularisation of these approaches so that they are understandable in the local context. This can happen through the involvement of local community leaders, sometimes faith-based leaders (see box below). In some approaches, such as the “Ugandan Role Model Men” and Burundian “Abatangamuco” models, there is a strong use of peer-to-peer networks and public celebration of the change in behaviour to ensure sustainability.

Box 4. Religion, faith and faith-based leaders

A potentially impactful avenue of working with men and transforming behaviours is through engagement with religion and faith in settings where these are powerful transmitters of social mores, as is the case in many FCAS. All of the major religions have the potential for both patriarchal and more equitable readings of their key tenets of faith, as well as for violent or non-violent, tolerant and intolerant interpretations.

Examples of this kind of work include:

- the work of some Catholic and Pentecostal churches in Latin America in either preventing especially young men from joining violent gangs or helping them exit these;
- using the leaders of all official faiths in Lebanon as spokespersons against domestic violence/IPV in campaigns;
- using Christianity- and Islam-based messaging in gender equality and domestic violence/IPV prevention campaigns in countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Central African Republic (Tearfund, 2017) or Democratic Republic of Congo (Sandilands, Jewkes, Lele and Scott, 2017); or
- faith leaders speaking out against the stigmatisation of survivors of sexual violence and children born of rape in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Nigeria or Syria.

Faith-based approaches and references to religion can help in assuaging fears about gender equality being a foreign plot to subvert local culture or being against religious mores. They can also offer locally understandable and readily acceptable models, in particular of respectable male behaviour. However, these approaches are by necessity constrained by the central tenets of the particular religion in question and may either face opposition from, or work to buttress and legitimise the power of less equitable structures, individuals and schools of thought within the particular religion.

As mentioned above, work focusing only on men's agency for change can run the risk of sidelining women and cementing patriarchal power dynamics. Similarly, entry points that appeal to men, such as highlighting masculine self-respect, and that are not seen to threaten dominant notions of masculinity can make interventions more palatable to men and thereby successful. However, they can also risk reinforcing gender inequitable behaviour. Men may also seek to retain control over how much they are willing to change and under which conditions, thereby retaining gendered power hierarchies and reducing their accountability to the needs and wishes of women (Pierotti, Lake and Lewis, 2018).

Working on changing harmful gendered practices and attitudes requires both **individual level change as well as broader societal change**. While no intervention can change the whole of a society, there is a need to work not only with individuals but also with the social networks that they inhabit, be it families or peers. In terms of preventing GBV, especially IPV and domestic violence, men's partners and the broader family need to be involved as well. However, this involvement often needs to happen in separate spaces, to a degree. Working with peer groups and having broader societal messaging around the unacceptability of violence and the promotion of gender equality are also important

elements, as men who do make positive changes may face opposition or ridicule from others in society.

Much of the focus in research, policy and implementation has been either on men in state/non-state armed forces and other security institutions, or on domestic/sexual violence perpetrated by men. While both of these fields are extremely important and some excellent work has been done at many levels, other areas of masculinities work have received far less attention. Civilian masculinities, broadly speaking, have received little attention beyond GBV prevention and, to a far more limited degree, as victims of sexual violence. Issues that are often central to constructs of masculinity, such as being a breadwinner, are seldom examined as well.

Bringing masculinities work into DDR work

DDR, the process by which former combatants are reintegrated into civilian society, is often a key donor-supported activity in conflict-affected societies. Although often the vast majority of those being reintegrated are men, and in some cases boys, work on their particular gendered needs or on transforming masculinities has mostly been absent. In terms of integrating gender in DDR processes, the focus has been narrowly on women ex-combatants, and often conducted superficially (see also Mazurana & Eckerbom, 2012; Shekhawat, 2015; UN Women, 2009). This common oversight can contribute to ineffective implementation of a DDR process, as many of the issues faced by former combatants, and the resentment that may arise after reintegration, are closely linked to particular gender norms and expectations. The degree to which issues of gender and in particular of masculinities have been integrated into DDR processes globally has varied greatly, from simplistic and often gender-blind “guns, camp, cash” approaches to more sophisticated and individualised processes such as the latter stages of the reintegration programmes for former Colombian paramilitaries and guerrillas in the mid-2010s.

The degree to which violent masculinities, misogyny, and patriarchal values were espoused by or even actively inculcated into combatants varies between contexts, and this needs to be taken into account in the DDR processes. In Nepal, for example, the Maoist People’s Liberation Army explicitly championed gender equality, at least on paper, and this continues to resonate to different degrees with former combatants post-conflict, something that also holds for some former left-wing guerrillas in Latin America (for Nepal see Riley, 2017; for Latin American examples see Dietrich Ortega, 2012). In South Sudan and Sierra Leone, on the other hand, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army and Revolutionary United Front, respectively, actively encouraged violently militarised masculinities within their organisations, with impacts not only for the degree of violence against civilians during the war but also in its aftermath (Duriesmith, 2017).

A key area of gendered DDR work is therefore the deconstruction of violent militarised masculinities, but this is not the only area where masculinities play a role. The expectations on men to be economically self-sufficient, the need for former combatants to gain a livelihood and the wish to keep these men – and women – from taking up arms again and/or joining criminal groups mean that vocational training is often a part of the DDR package. However, the training given has been inadequate at times for the needs of the labour market, because it was too short-term or based on untested assumptions of what the needs and wishes of the former combatants may be. Programmes often lack the time and resources to consider these holistically.

What has often received less attention in DDR processes are some of the other gendered challenges former combatants face upon reintegration beyond ‘unlearning’ violence and gaining legal and gainful employment. Expectations on men to be unemotional, stoic and self-reliant, qualities that are often further enhanced in military and military-like organisations, can get in the way of dealing with conflict-related issues (trauma, anger management problems, frustration,

depression, or substance abuse). They can also deter men from seeking help and support for physical combat-related injuries. The shift from being a combatant whose embodiment of attributes associated with that role was celebrated or brought respect, if in some cases only through fear, to becoming a civilian, of whom very different attributes are expected, can be immensely disorientating. These impacts can be exacerbated by the loss of a sense of purpose, male camaraderie, and the social networks that being in a combatant organisation brought.

Box 5. Demobilising the mind – Working with militarised masculinities

Although transitioning from a military or militarised masculine identity to a civilian one is not always a problematic process, for many it can be. Military socialisation and drill aims specifically to deconstruct soldiers' civilian identities and construct new, militarised ones. During reintegration, the process needs to happen in reverse. The ease or difficulty of this depends on individual factors (e.g. how invested is the person into their militarised identity), past experiences and skills (e.g. is there combat-related trauma? Is the skill-set of the person useful in civilian life?), as well as structural and historical factors (e.g. are there support systems in place? Is the economy able to absorb the demobilised people? Is the process happening in peacetime, during a conflict or in its aftermath? How does the rest of society view the former combatants?)

Working with the gender-identity related aspects of DDR and its psychosocial effects has often not been part of the design of these processes. Moreover, in many of the FCAS where these processes take place, there is little to nothing in the way of trained support staff or accessible support infrastructure in place for this. Nonetheless, local NGOs and former combatants' self-help organisations have been able to do important transformative work with few resources, as for example the "Centre d'Encadrement et de Développement des Anciens Combattants" (CEDAC) in Burundi. Valuable lessons have also been gathered from reintegration processes in spaces where there is more of a care and support infrastructure in place, such as Colombia, Northern Ireland and South Africa (see for example Ashe, 2012; Ashe and Harland, 2014; Theidon, 2009; Xaba, 2001; Langa and Eagle, 2008). However, again, much of the work has been done outside or in addition to official DDR processes, highlighting the gaps that exist in this respect.

While the participation of men in military and military-style organisations may in some cases be celebrated as a path towards attaining manhood and respectable male status in society, soldiering may leave other men with feelings of loss, frustration and of having less rather than more opportunities for achieving respectable manhood. This is because they have missed out on economic and educational abilities and have to bear the stigma of being former combatants (Friðriksdóttir, 2018). Depending on the country context, being a former combatant or being assumed to be one might even put men, in particular young, lower class men, at the risk of violence and death from other members of society (Menzel, 2011).

An increased focus on the particular needs of male former combatants in DDR programming however needs to go hand-in-hand with addressing the particular gendered needs and challenges of women former combatants. Furthermore, assistance to former combatants through DDR processes should also be balanced with support to civilian victims of conflict, to avoid exacerbating societal tensions.

1.4. What has worked

Safe spaces and building trust

One entry point to working with men is to create spaces for men to speak about their personal experiences, including vulnerabilities and the struggles they may have with meeting – or defying – role expectations in the face of structural and societal constraints. This requires creating **safe spaces and trust**, as well as **long-term, contextualised, tailored approaches that take intersectional concerns into account**, rather than relying solely on easily replicable and transferable quick fixes.

A key way of achieving this is **working with local partners** and being open to incorporating their insights into models that have worked elsewhere. This requires more long-term engagement and funding, the latter in particular for staff salary costs. While these are often not very high, they can be very challenging to fundraise for, given the preference of many donors for funding activities rather than salaries and reluctance to allow overhead costs to be included.

Box 6. Tackling harmful gender norms in the justice sector

Between 2015 and 2017, the Geneva-based justice and security sector reform-focused institute for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), together with the Atlantic Initiative implemented an extensive project called “Gender and Justice: Toward a Fair and Impartial Judiciary” in both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It aimed at changing harmful gendered dynamics in the justice sector (including harassment and inappropriate behaviour in the courtroom, including against women judges), reducing gender bias across the sector and improving the responses to domestic violence. Much of these intrinsically required changing notions around what is and what is not considered acceptable male behaviour, and a key component of the training programme with judges, clerks and prosecutors was shifting gender norms and attitudes. While the trainers who were trained were open to these changes, some of the male judicial staff who they in turn trained were sceptical of the need to take gender into account, or even initially resistant to change.

The training, based on real-life and hypothetical cases, challenged both explicitly and implicitly sexist behaviour by staff in the justice sector, but also harassment and bullying – also of men – based for example on age, for being unmarried because of body shape and size or sexual orientation. It also challenged dominant notions of the acceptability of violence in the family space and its disciplinary use in upbringing, as well as around fatherhood and family roles more broadly. Some of the most significant shifts according to programme staff were around gender biases in civil decisions on divorce and child custody.

Over the course of the project, a course on gender training for the justice sector was developed and 27 trainers trained; a sexual and gender-based harassment policy for the sector was developed and implemented, as were a domestic violence bench book and a gender bias curriculum. The trainers – who were all judges and prosecutors – delivered three curricula on domestic violence, gender bias and sexual and gender-based harassment multiple times in both entities. These courses have managed to win over the ‘sceptics’ and change gender dynamics both in the courtroom and, more indirectly, contribute to gender equality promotion and shifting gender expectations in Bosnia and Herzegovina more broadly.⁸

In opening up spaces for discussions on men’s vulnerabilities, it is however important to also focus on men’s privileges, in order to avoid discourses of men being the ‘actual’ victims of societal power imbalances, of dismissing inequalities faced by women and calls for rolling back on gender equality. Focusing only on negative aspects of what are sometimes labelled ‘toxic’ masculinities can also often lead to a shutting down of discussion spaces and defensive postures by participants. For these discussions to occur, the interveners and service providers also need to shed some of their own assumptions that may get in the way, such as assuming from the outset that men will not be willing to talk or open up.⁹

Box 7. Psycho-social support for men in collaboration with women’s organisations for reducing violence

In many societies globally, men are socialised into not expressing or dealing with emotions, apart from narrowly defined ones, such as anger. Even this might be seen as acceptable only for some men, such as younger men. Furthermore, seeking help, in particular for emotional and mental health problems, comes with a high degree of stigma. In addition, in many FCAS the requisite systems are either inadequate or non-existent, in particular outside urban centres. The resulting lack of engaging with emotional and mental health issues or not having anger management training leads not only to emotional harm and negative coping mechanisms among the affected men themselves, but it also has broader societal impacts as men channel their frustrations into violence. This can happen in the domestic sphere or in the public sphere and can escalate quickly in societies where men are expected to react to violence with more violence.

Local efforts to undo violent masculinities, give psycho-social support to men, including to perpetrators of violence, and to ground these in gender equality by **working together with women’s rights organisations** have been successful in challenging FCAS contexts such as in Albania (Counselling Line for Men and Boys), Bosnia and Herzegovina (‘Men’s Centre’ in Modriča) and Lebanon (Abaad), and others. The work is often comparatively small-scale, given the need to focus on individual support and change, and can require long-term engagement by trained staff, but it has been successful at the micro-level.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the approach that the Men’s Centre in Modriča took was to encourage perpetrators to take responsibility for their violent behaviour against family members and taught alternatives to violence in solving problems or conflicts. The therapeutic work was undertaken in a group environment with two male counsellors. If a beneficiary required additional motivation or sensitisation, individual work was also undertaken alongside group work to avoid disrupting the group.

Integrated approach

What has been found to work well is a **combination of social norm change**, giving participants **life skills** (such as communicating about emotions and needs, and listening to others) and **economic incentives/income-generating activities**, which also speak to expectations of men to be providers. Economic empowerment and livelihoods components can help address, at least to a degree, some of the structural challenges faced by men and boys in fragile and conflict-affected environments. The lack of these components can contribute to the medium- and longer-term failure of programmes only aimed at norm and behaviour change (Gibbs, Jewkes, Sikweyiya and Willan, 2015). While there is often a

need for spaces disaggregated by sex and occasionally age (if for example younger men are expected to defer to older men), engaging with men works best when combined with engaging with the women – and other men – in their lives. Interventions are often based on a “trickle-down” Knowledge-Attitudes-Practice (KAP) approach.¹⁰ However, it has been also found that approaches that work the other way can be more effective, for example using adapted approaches based on the South African “Stepping Stones”/“Creating Futures” model discussed in Section II 2) or the “Ugandan SASA!” approach.

In working on social norms change and providing life skills training, it is also important to take resistance to change seriously, and “work through it”, rather than dismiss or ignore it. This includes resistance to change both by the men themselves and the broader society around them, such as by the women in their lives, male peers and family members. Men and boys need to see a benefit in change, such as better relationships, or increased well-being and emotional health by not having to try to live up to unattainable gender norms.

Box 8. Combined approach for reducing intimate partner violence and domestic violence in rural Tajikistan¹¹

The “Zindagii Shoista” (“Living with dignity”) project in Tajikistan was aimed at preventing violence against women and girls and it was implemented in rural Tajikistan, in four villages. It was adapted from the “Stepping Stones/Creating Futures” model in South Africa. To cater to the local context the project focused on the family level. This was because young women in Tajikistan marry into strong extended families and face violence from the family.

First, the project conducted **social empowerment sessions** to encourage reflection on values and attitudes towards gender equal relations within the family, sharpen communications skills and raise awareness of VAWG. The meetings were conducted both with separate gender and age groups and with all peer groups.

Following this, **economic empowerment** activities were led to build an understanding of women’s contribution to household economics, strengthen the financial management skills of the household and assist families to develop their own income-generating activities. The sessions on business development were targeted at young married women and another member of the family with this focus being essential for women’s economic empowerment.

The result was that the combined approach was found to be effective in reducing domestic violence and IPV among the beneficiaries. The percentage of women who reported experiencing violence reduced from 64% to 33%, and the percentage of men who reported perpetrating violence decreased from 48% to 5% - though the drop in reporting by men may not actually accurately reflect a drop in perpetration but rather an unwillingness to be as open about disclosing as at the beginning of the intervention.

Adapting to the local context

Furthermore, approaches work best when they are based on **listening to and actively adapting to the particular local needs and conditions**, rather than merely imposing models developed elsewhere. For outside actors, this often requires self-reflexivity and an element of self-critique (e.g. not depicting western societies as idealised normative models to emulate which are already allegedly gender equal and violence free, as they are not). While there are good, workable models that have been used in various contexts, these need

to be **adapted locally**, taking **local concerns, dynamics and approaches** (and the **capacities of local organisations**) into consideration.

For instance, there is currently a nascent trend to focus heavily on positive fatherhood, including in fragile contexts, as a way to reduce men's violent behaviour and give children positive male role models when growing up (see for example Promundo, 2017). While this is often an important issue, fatherhood is not the only or a principal aspect in the lives of men in different contexts and of different ages. It is not necessarily the main dynamic affecting gender equality. Therefore, there should be a variety of approaches to address issues around masculinities, depending on the demographics of the community targeted, as well as on the challenges and needs in that context. Moreover, while it is important not to focus only on negative aspects of masculinities, these should neither be airbrushed out nor should there be an over-emphasis of positive masculinities.

To illustrate some of these points, a global photo exhibition on Nordic fatherhood that has been shown in numerous countries across the world with the intended aim of inspiring men, fathers and families. However, it can be seen by many as irrelevant to their context and lives, as being an imposition of outside norms, and/or lead to pushback and resentment. One of the reasons for this is that optics do matter as they can either further or hinder efforts at change. If people cannot identify with the models promoted (because of different cultural norms, appearance, symbols of religion, etc.), then they might not be responsive, or even reject the values that the photographs portray.

There is a risk that the work of international NGOs on masculinities and men leads up to seemingly easily “replicable” and “up-scalable” one-size-fits-all approaches, which may not be appropriate in all contexts.

Over the past decade, several influential international NGOs have established themselves as major players on men and masculinities at the global level. While they have been and are doing excellent work, focusing only on international actors and approaches risks crowding out local organisations and local approaches, with the larger NGOs setting agendas with major donors. Furthermore, channelling funds and projects primarily through international NGOs often places local organisations into positions of mere service providers and data collectors to the internationals, thus missing rich local knowledge, nuance and understanding of local complexities, and reducing the effectiveness of interventions. This also further cements unequal power relation between international NGOs and local organisations.

1.5. What are some of the challenges in aiming to transform gender norms and measuring change?

As with other kinds of gender equality work, working on transforming masculinities can also encounter resistance based on gender being seen as an outside threat and/or western import. Opposition can be often articulated through cultural and/or religious narratives. Men and boys may easily see gender equality as a ‘zero-sum game’ where they stand to lose. Thus, it is important to work with men and boys to help them see the benefits of gender equality: having relationships that are more equitable with women and girls and not having to live up to rigid gender norm expectations.

Resistance against change towards more gender equality can take different forms. For some men, holding on to what might be labelled “toxic” or “protest” masculinity can be an

act of broader class-based or other identity-based resistance and needs to be addressed in programming rather than ignored (McGeeney, 2015; Ratele, 2015). Resistance may also be linked to notions of gender equality being seen as an ostensibly “western” import, rather than being inherent to local belief systems. Men going through processes of change can also often face resistance, ridicule and sanction from their peers, family members, partners, and broader community. This contributes to the difficulty of acting more positively as a man, and increases the risk of falling back to problematic masculine behaviour (see for example Shefer, Kruger and Schepers, 2015; Dworkin, Fleming and Colvin, 2015; Myrtinnen, 2014).

Furthermore, the very real social, economic and political constraints in fragile and conflict-affected situations may often make it **challenging to enact longer-term change**. Changing gender norms, expectations and power dynamics are long term societal processes, often beyond the time horizon and possibilities of most interventions, making it difficult to report on impacts and successes.

Box 9. Omitting controversial issues or addressing them frontally?

One key question in designing gender change programming is the approach, and within this the degree to which the project addresses sensitive aspects. Assessments of projects aimed at gender norm change in the Western Balkans have seen benefits in both going to the core of sensitive issues as well as omitting them.

On one hand, three projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina (running between 2001-2005), Croatia (2004-2007) and Serbia (2007-2008) aimed at transforming violent masculinities, **only sought to address and change some parts of dominant expectations** of masculinities while leaving others untouched, as one of the pathways to success (Schroer-Hippel, 2017). By not challenging especially some of the more controversial issues, these approaches made ‘entry’ into the programmes easier for men.¹² They can also be said to have laid the foundation of this type of work in the respective settings.

For instance, the project examined in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a local campaign for the right to conscientious objection to military service. Activists challenged the idea that men have to attend military service to achieve full masculinity. Because they were already questioning such a politically sensitive aspect, they did not challenge on purpose controversial topics to do with gender norms, such as heterosexuality.

On the other hand, the Young Men Initiative (YMI) programmes take a very different approach. They have started in 2007, therefore more recently than two of the projects discussed above, and are still being implemented in the countries of former Yugoslavia and Albania with young men in vocational schools. They **address at the outset some of the most controversial issues** such as misogyny, homophobia and transphobia (Namy et al., 2015). YMI also focuses on male agency and provides the young men with ‘cool’, but gender equitable and non-violent, role models in the persons of the trainers.

A challenge in social norms projects delivered with the help of trainers is that there is always the danger of collusion between trainers and trainees. There is also the risk of the perpetuation of non-progressive gender norms and the centring of male agency. This can happen especially if the projects are short term and little time is available for the training of trainers, as is often the case (Gibbs, Myrntinen, Washington, Sikweyiya and Jewkes, forthcoming).

A further challenge for working with men and masculinities is that of avoiding taking a men-only focus, while still creating the necessary spaces for men and boys to engage critically with patriarchy, male entitlement and issues of masculinities. On the practical, personal/community level, taking a male-only approach and not engaging with women who are in the lives of men risks undermining the efforts at gender norm transformation. At a broader level, though, focusing only on men risks under-cutting women’s empowerment efforts (especially if funding is taken from women’s empowerment to finance projects engaging men). It also risks stabilising rather than transforming patriarchal power relations by placing men’s agency in the centre or succumbing to benevolent sexism (see for example assessments from Burundi and Uganda: Myrntinen and Nsengiyumva, 2014).

Therefore, there have been challenges to working on masculinities at multiple levels, from gaining acceptance for masculinities work to the opposite, the risk of an over-emphasis on men and masculinities at the cost of other gender equality work. In this sense, it is important

to ensure that the policy initiatives to engage men and boys in gender equality and tackle negative masculinities remain accountable to women's rights movements.

Box 10. Accountability to women and to the women's rights movement

The increase in policy and donor interest in engaging with men and boys has raised concerns among some in the women's rights community. These include the concerns that this might lead to a reduction of political space as well as funding available for women's empowerment, a re-centring of the focus on men's agency and concerns, and an appropriation of women's hard-won and precarious gains by men. Furthermore, as discussed below, men may also seek to remain tightly in control of the content, extent and timeline of processes of increasing gender equality, from the personal to the global level.

One of the checks and balances proposed by women's rights movements and progressive organisations working on engaging with men and masculinities is that of having accountability to women when undertaking this kind of work. This can take different forms, from ensuring that beneficiary women and men are involved in project design, to meaningfully consulting with women's rights organisations at different stages of the project cycle to facilitate open and critical discussions between different stakeholders. This requires not only a willingness to listen, but also to act upon criticism if it is well founded. Crucially, broadening the work on gender equality to include men and boys should not mean slicing up the already small 'pie' of funding available to even smaller slices, but rather increasing the size of the funds available to accommodate more comprehensive approaches.

On the donor side, a number of donors (or parts of donor organisations) have been reluctant to broaden the scope of gender work to also encompass men/boys and masculinities, and the same goes for some UN agencies, some INGOs and other service providers.

Notes

¹ An example of the latter is men holding hands, which may be seen in many western societies as effeminate, but perfectly compatible with heterosexual masculinities in many other cultural contexts.

² In terms of the UNSC WPS resolutions, UNSCR 2106 (2013) mentions men and boys both as potential partners in preventing violence against women and girls, and, somewhat obliquely, as being "also affected" by sexual and gender-based violence. More explicitly, the preamble of UNSCR 2242 (2015) "re-iterat[es] the important engagement by men and boys as partners in promoting women's participation in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict, peacebuilding and post-conflict situations." While the SDGs and respective indicators do not, for the most part, explicitly mention men (SDG indicator 5.6.2. on equal access to sexual and reproductive health care is an exception), they are implicitly present and are a key target audience across the SDGs. This is for example in terms of ending discrimination and violence against women and girls (5.1. and 5.2.), ensuring full and effective participation for women in political, economic and public life (5.5.) or sharing the household workload (5.4.)

³ One of the working presumptions on domestic violence/intimate-partner violence has long been that conflict-related stress factors and militarisation lead to increases in these types of violence in

household in times of conflict and post-conflict. Whether this is indeed the case, it cannot often be proven quantitatively given a lack of reliable pre-conflict data. However, qualitatively there are continuums of violence and vulnerability, with pre-conflict patterns affecting forms of gendered violence during conflict, and the after-effects of gendered violence affecting the post-conflict period, inasmuch as that can be clearly delineated (cf. Swaine 2018). However, even in conflict zones with high levels of conflict-related SGBV, such as DRC or South Sudan, the home still tends to be the most dangerous place for a woman, see: International Rescue Committee (2017) No Safe Place. <https://www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/157-no-safe-place-policy-brief/file>.

⁴ <https://promundoglobal.org/programs/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images/>

⁵ <http://www.partners4prevention.org/>

⁶ On social norms and GBV, see Michaeljon Alexander-Scott, Emma Bell, Jenny Holden (2016) *Shifting Social Norms To Tackle Violence Against Women And Girls (VAWG)*. London: DfID, and on links between poverty and intimate partner violence: <https://www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/115-poverty-ipv-evidence-brief-new-crop>.

⁷ <https://www.whatworks.co.za/>

⁸ For background research, see <https://www.dcaf.ch/gender-and-judiciary-implications-gender-within-judiciary-bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

⁹ Lewis Turner for example has examined how NGO assumptions about Syrian refugee men being emotionally unresponsive have gotten in the way of engaging with them in transformative ways (2018).

¹⁰ Knowledge-Attitudes-Practice (KAP) approaches are used in surveying and programming. In programming they refer to models seeking to bring change by first imparting knowledge to participants (e.g. benefits of breast-feeding vs. drawbacks of not doing it), and hoping it will change peoples' attitudes and their every day practices. Programming can be delivered through peer-to-peer support groups. More participatory and praxis-oriented approaches tend to start with peoples' practices and seek to change attitudes and knowledge by changing behaviour first.

¹¹ See more at: <https://www.international-alert.org/news/new-approach-tackling-violence-against-women-tajikistan>.

¹² Successful approaches such as “Role Model Men” in Uganda or “Abatangamuco” in Burundi also have a similar logic in part, building on locally dominant understandings of male agency and respectability as an entry point.

2. Implementation: How to implement the recommendations in the policy paper?

What does this mean for implementation?

Given the vast range of different kinds of donor-funded activities in fragile and conflict-affected situations that are pertinent to men and boys, or in which men's and boys' attitudes and practices may be influential even if they are not the primary target audience, it is not possible to give a detailed checklist that would cover all eventualities in detail. However, it is possible to use the experiences of the past decades of work on engaging with men on gender equality to draw out some general pointers for various stages of policy formulation, integration into project cycles and advocacy.

Box 11. Effective programming for working with young men and adolescent boys on gender norm change

A recent longitudinal study of 34 programmes globally, two-thirds of which were in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, that work to promote gender egalitarian masculinities, identified the following key factors for effective programming:

“What promotes gender egalitarian masculinities? Although the programmes examined were very diverse, reducing their comparability, the following factors appear to have contributed to positive change:

- Critical group-based reflection in safe spaces (which may or may not be male-only depending on context and issues discussed). This most commonly takes place through group education sessions.
- Good facilitators, who have vital roles modelling gender-equitable behaviour and attitudes, communicating messages and information clearly and ensuring sessions are enjoyable.
- Programmes that are more intensive generally led to greater change; residential components and programmes with opportunities for informal socialising between participants and mentors had particularly positive impacts.
- Generally, impacts were greater in longer-term programmes, but some short-term programmes also had notable positive effects.

Three additional recommendations for more effective programming emerge:

- Rethink and reframe programmes to have an explicit focus on boys and their needs along with the needs of girls and design curricula and activities accordingly.
- Include more vocational skills and economic strengthening components, which marginalised boys repeatedly prioritise as essential for their futures.

- Schedule discussion of more sensitive issues once rapport between participants and mentors has developed and participants have already been exposed to fundamental concepts of gender equality.”

Source: Rachel Marcus, Maria Stavropoulou and Nandini Archer-Gupta (2017). *Programming With Adolescent Boys to Promote Gender Equitable Masculinities: a Rigorous Review*, London: GAGE.

As with gender perspectives more broadly, integrating critical masculinities perspectives should ideally occur at all levels of programming design and throughout the project cycle. This begins with the formulation of the overall policy frameworks guiding the programming on a particular issue, which requires an engagement with the roles that men already play in either furthering or hindering the implementation of particular policy goals. More detailed programme and project design should be based on comprehensive gender analyses, which allow for the formulation of focused interventions, entry points and ways of working. This may include expanding the scope of the people who need to be engaged with beyond the immediately obvious target group. For instance, improving women’s access to healthcare may require working on changing men’s perceptions, attitudes and understandings so that they do not deny their partners this access; changing men’s controlling behaviour in their relationships may require working with the parents of the men as well to shift attitudes and expectations.

Comprehensive gender analyses should inform project implementation and be the basis for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). In project implementation, there needs to be careful tracking of intended and unintended impacts, such as the risk of inadvertently undermining broader project aims through contradictory messaging. For example, the work on shifting young men’s attitudes and practices towards being less dominant in relationships can be subtly undermined by trainers who, because of their role in the project, are themselves projecting and using dominant, if more equitable, ways of interacting. Furthermore, engaging with resistance needs to be factored into project design and the training of implementing staff – see Annex 1 for some sample questions and approaches for integrating masculinities into programming.

2.1. Integrating masculinities into donor policies or guidelines for working in fragile and conflict-affected settings

A key challenge in integrating critical masculinities perspectives has been and is **the invisibility of men as men** in policies that have an impact on fragility and conflict. Furthermore, when gender is used as an angle of analysis, the different ways in which other social identity markers such as age, class, ethnicity, disability and others intersect with gender are often under examined. Overcoming this invisibility of men as men mostly means realising that they are often in dominant positions in processes both of working with women, and in fragile and conflict-affected situations. While in working on women’s empowerment, the challenge is often to create new spaces and opportunities, in critically engaging with men the aim often is to challenge and transform existing privileges and power dynamics – and, at the same time, create different kinds of new opportunities for men as well.

An initial first step therefore is to think through how policies and their implementation differently affects different men and women, as well as those with other gender identities, by conducting **comprehensive gender analyses**.¹ These analyses need to be comprehensive in their approach to gender (i.e. include all gender identities), take

intersectional power dynamics and forms of discrimination into account, and examine the relational interplay between gender identities. This requires asking questions that go beyond the initial key question of gender analyses, which is *how does a particular intervention differently affect different women and different men*. Additional questions to be examined would include:

- Are some men’s vulnerabilities left unexamined and unaddressed?
- Might policies inadvertently be reinforcing rather than challenging unequal power relations?
- How do relational dynamics influence attitudes and practices (e.g. mothers’ expectations on their sons’ behaviour affecting how the latter treat their partners)?

These analyses should feed into policy formulation processes and involve a variety of stakeholders, including women’s rights organisations and the intended beneficiaries.

By now, most donors and implementing agencies have existing guidelines and approaches to integrating gender into analyses, project design and M&E, many of which are based on years of experience and nuanced design. Rather than designing completely new frameworks for engaging with men and masculinities, a more practical approach is to revisit these frameworks. This includes reflecting on whether or not differential impacts on men and boys have been integrated, and considering whether men and boys might be in positions of being potential spoilers or enablers at different stages of the project for the intended aims of an intervention.

Box 12. Tapping into local and pre-existing knowledge

Especially at the outset of a project bringing in issues around men, boys and masculinities into analyses and programme design can seem difficult, in particular given a lack of a large body of knowledge on this in comparison to the decades of research on, for example, women’s empowerment. Furthermore, a large part of the research that does exist on engaging with men and boys in transformative ways is not directly applicable in FCAS, as the findings often are from industrialised countries with very different socio-economic and political contexts.

However, this does not mean that knowledge is wholly absent. The OECD policy paper research highlighted a number of comparatively simple but effective ways of tapping into pre-existing knowledge. One example was that of the Embassy of Sweden in Kinshasa that invited a local Congolese NGO working on transforming masculinities to run a training seminar for embassy staff on men and masculinities in DR Congo. The Embassy also engaged with academia (e.g. anthropologists) who have been studying local gender dynamics, and pooled and shared resources through regular communication between gender advisors and conducted joint monitoring missions.

Comprehensive gender analyses also require thinking through what the intended and unintended consequences might be from a gender perspective. If, for example, the aim is to reduce harmful male behaviour, the design should be based on the drivers of this behaviour (e.g. social norms, economic stress, unmet frustrations and expectations), the locally relevant entry points and the kind of methodologies might be appropriate. As highlighted in the above section on working on violence prevention, there may well be unintended consequences that may lead to a shoring up of gender inequality, which should

be mitigated in the project design. Prior to implementation, other organisations and actors working on similar issues, again for example women’s rights organisations, can be invited to give critical feedback on how they would see the intended and unintended impacts of a particular approach.

2.2. Integrating masculinities into project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), learning and follow up

As with integrating the needs of women and girls, integrating critical masculinities perspectives into project design needs to occur at all stages of the project cycle.

A key factor in ensuring high-quality project implementation is on-going **monitoring and evaluation (M&E)**, which needs to feed into the implementation itself to allow for corrections, if they are needed, as close to real time as possible. Depending on the type of project and the kind of M&E envisioned, there is a great number of M&E frameworks that have been designed by NGOs, academia, donors and other implementing agencies, including with gender perspectives (for some approaches in M&E see Myrtinnen, Popovic and Khattab, 2016). However, often times these need to be adapted to the particular context and project, as many gender equality and M&E frameworks have tended to focus on women and girls only. In addition, they may deal with gender identities as homogenous categories, thus not allowing for the differences that exist in reality due to the interplay of gender with other identity markers.

One key challenge in M&E that is also visible in projects seeking to engage with men in transformative ways is gauging longer-term impact. Given project timelines and budget constraints, impact evaluations tend to be conducted immediately at the end of an intervention, for example by measuring participants’ increase in knowledge at the end of a workshop. However, societal change processes are complex and require time. Temporary increases in knowledge may be quickly forgotten and/or not translate into changed practices. This is especially so if there is strong visible and invisible resistance to this – as is the case with tackling patriarchy. Therefore, building a better knowledge base about the impacts of interventions would also require efforts to **monitor longer-term change**.

Learning is an important tool that is often under-used in project implementation and afterwards. In parts of the critical masculinities work, however, there has been quite a high degree of mutual learning and exchange of experiences and best practices, especially between involved NGOs and academia, and to an extent the donor community. This dissemination of experiences and exchange with relevant actors and networks has been facilitated through global networks such as “MenEngage” and its regional sub-networks, as well as through conferences and workshops.² The impacts of this have been visible in the circulation of particularly successful models of engagement with men and boys, or of effective research methodologies, in different fragile and conflict-affected environments and their adaptation to local needs, concerns and challenges.

Box 13. The need for a better evidence base

Engaging with men and boys in FCAS in gender transformative ways is comparatively new. Therefore, there are gaps across the sector in understanding: what kind of interventions are effective, particularly in the longer term; what unintended consequences might exist; how to deal with resistance and backlash; or how to work with men and boys in ways which do not lead to shifts away from the still largely unmet needs of women and girls. Given the increased interest in these approaches, and thus increased use of funds for these, a key recommendation would be to invest in developing a better and critical evidence base on engaging with men and boys. It is also important to ensure that there is an open debate about these findings among not only donors, implementers and academics, but also engaging women's rights organisations in this. The emerging evidence is not necessarily straight-forward,³ as is to be expected from complex societal processes, but needs to be engaged with at this critical juncture where interest in this field is surging.

2.3. Co-ordination within and between agencies, engaging with local actors that work on gender, conflict, fragility and governance

As with other areas of work, in fragile and conflict-affected situations working in a transformative manner with men and boys tends to face challenges, such as scarce resources and the pressure for quick impacts. This is especially the case of fragile situations because they are very complex and beset by both immediate short-term and more intractable long-term obstacles. Co-operation and co-ordination between different local and international actors can help reduce costs and avoid duplication of efforts; it can also help in avoiding the repetition of mistakes or of unintended consequences. The pooling of resources can also take on forms identified as good practices in the OECD policy paper, such as the sharing of research (including of gender and conflict analyses), joint study and scoping missions and joint workshops with local and international actors working on similar issues. For outside actors, an important starting point is interacting with local organisations and activists working on these issues as well as, in many cases, academics who have been researching gender norms and dynamics. In most cases, there are more resources available for understanding norms and dynamics linked with masculinities and femininities than is assumed.

Notes

¹ A good introduction to gender and conflict analyses is Sanne Tielemans (2015) Gender & conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders. London: Conciliation Resources, <http://www.c-r.org/downloads/CR%20Gender%20Toolkit%20WEB.pdf> and Saferworld's comprehensive toolkit <https://saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1076-gender-analysis-of-conflict>.

² <http://menengage.org/>

³ See for example: <https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs1356/f/downloads/Lancet%20Article.pdf>.

3. Specific recommendations: How to integrate masculinities into programming?

This section looks at five categories of programming and gives concrete recommendations for integrating masculinities perspectives.

3.1. Infrastructure

Project example: Road construction

Key gender analysis question at baseline: How will the project affect different women and men in the community differently?

Possible questions to be asked from a gender/masculinities perspective:

- Will the project itself lead to new direct or indirect employment opportunities for men in the community? If yes, which men?
- If there was a consultation process, how inclusive was this from an intersectional gender perspective?
- Will there be new job opportunities for women?
- Will there be an influx of labourers from elsewhere?
- How will men react to these developments?
- If land is requisitioned, do compensations go to men and women?
- Is there a risk of unintended gendered consequences (e.g. increased sex work)?

Possible implications for programming:

- Ensure community understands impacts of project;
- Manage expectations;
- Ensure local men and women benefit from project;
- Work with men to ensure benefits to women do not lead to backlash from men;
- Build in safeguarding mechanisms to avoid negative impacts and consequences.

Possible indicators:

- Gendered monitoring and analysis of quantitative and qualitative socio-economic indicators in the community to see impact on different women and men;
- Monitoring of men's and women's attitudes;
- Monitoring of labour practices.

3.2. Women's political empowerment

Project example: Supporting the participation of women in political processes

Key gender analysis question at baseline: What are the key gendered obstacles and opportunities to the increased participation of women in the political sphere?

Possible questions to be asked from a gender/masculinities perspective:

What are the gendered obstacles to women's political participation coming from men and women in the:

- private sphere (e.g. partners, siblings, parents, uncles, mothers-in-law),
- public sphere (e.g. media, social media, neighbours), and/or
- professional sphere (e.g. other politicians)?

Possible implications for programming:

- In addition to supporting women, engage with men in the private, public, and professional spheres to reduce men's objections and backlash to women's participation.
- Encourage and give incentives to men to play an active role in making space for women's participation.

Possible indicators:

- Monitoring if women feel safe to participate in politics;
- Men's and women's attitudes to women's participation;
- Politically active women's perceptions of male colleagues' attitudes and of their own possibilities of affecting change;
- Monitoring of media coverage and social media discussions of women's political participation.

3.3. Economic empowerment

Project example: Income-generating activities (IGAs) with IDPs

Key gender analysis question at baseline: How do IGAs differently affect women and men in the IDP community?

Possible questions to be asked from a gender/ masculinities perspective:

- How are the IGAs changing gendered power dynamics?
- Is there backlash from men to the IGAs?
- Have both women's and men's vulnerabilities been taken into account?
- Possible implications for programming:
- Ensure men's buy-in and ensure that potential unintended negative outcomes or backlash are reduced.
- Examine whether men and women need to be trained differently on the aims of the intervention and its benefits.

Possible indicators:

- Levels of men's and women's access to earnings, savings and loans;
- Qualitative indicators on who controls and gendered usage pattern of additional income (e.g. through proxy indicators – is more money used for gambling or for children's schooling).

3.4. Violence reduction

Project example: Supporting the reintegration of former gang members

Key gender analysis question at baseline: What are the push/pull factors for (young) men and women to join gangs; how can these needs be met through other avenues?

Possible questions to be asked from a gender/ masculinities perspective:

- How do gendered expectations (e.g. being a provider, 'coolness') play a role in joining a gang?
- What role do gendered vulnerabilities play (e.g. abusive families, repeated targeting by security forces)?
- Which combination of interventions best addresses these needs (e.g. economic / educational opportunities, positive role models)?

Possible implications for programming:

- Ensure programming considers gang members' gendered needs and engages constructively with potential resistance to change.
- Address, to the degree possible, structural constraints to change.

Possible indicators:

- Monitoring levels of engagement/disengagement from gangs;
- Monitor participants' attitudes to violent behaviour;
- Assessments of family members/community members' engagement with gangs.

3.5. Gender norms change

Project example: Transforming masculinities

Key gender analysis question at baseline: What are the key gendered obstacles and opportunities to transforming men's attitudes and practices to make them more gender equitable and less violent?

Possible questions to be asked from a gender/masculinities perspective:

- Which personal and which socio-economic factors hinder positive change?
- Who are the key persons and institutions that affect gendered behaviour?
- Which behaviours should be encouraged, which discouraged for change to occur?

Possible implications for programming:

- Ensure programming takes into account structural and societal factors that may hinder change;
- Take reasons for participants' resistance to change seriously;
- Support participants who have gone through the change process, in case of societal resistance to this;
- Ensure accountability to women.

Possible indicators:

- Monitor attitudinal and behavioural change with participants;
- Validate findings and ensure accountability by inquiring with partners, family and community members about change;
- Use proxy indicators for change (e.g. use and control of personal and family finances).

4. Background on gender norms, ‘masculinities’ and working with men in fragile and conflict-affected settings

4.1. Why are gender norms important in fragile and conflict-affected settings?

The centrality of gender to fragility, conflict and peacebuilding has long been established (see for example Myrntinen, El-Bushra and Naujoks, 2014). Gender is one of the key factors that influence, positively and negatively, people’s place in a given society, social power dynamics and the ability of societies to manage conflict without resorting to violence. Gender relations, roles and expectations are central to power relations and thus central to conflict and fragility, to inclusion and exclusion. They both influence conflict (e.g. expectations on young men to be fighters) and are influenced by them (e.g. women having to take up new socio-economic roles as heads of households). As gender relations are a factor in perpetuating violence, conflict, fragility and discrimination, they can also be transformed into a strategy for building more peaceful, inclusive social relations.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and expectations that are attributed to men, women, girls, boys and those who identify outside of the gender binary on the basis of their sex, gender identity or gendered performance. The term ‘gender relations’ refers to the combination of roles, identities, institutions and ideologies, which have enabled societies to allocate the different functions of production and reproduction to different sexes and to uphold a specific social order.

The following considerations constitute a basic conceptual framework to integrate gender analysis into programming:

- Gender is just one, albeit important, aspect of people’s identity and cannot sufficiently capture social reality unless it is seen as connected to a multitude of identities and power relations, such as class, ethnicity, race, sexual identity, age, dis/ability, often referred to as intersectionality.
- Gender relations are created by societies and differ from one context to another. They are dynamic and change over time. Gender identities are constructed jointly by men, women and people with other gender identities, in a given context. They are often constructed in relation to each other. For example, what is considered masculine is defined in relation to, in opposition or as complimentary to what is considered to be feminine; so-called respectable masculinities in relation to so-called disrespectable masculinities. Masculinities are also often defined in competition between men against one another.
- A person’s vulnerability to violent conflict and their capacity to respond are partly determined by gender relations. There is a relationship between gender relations and continuing cycles of violence. Norms that promote narrow, intolerant and violent identities for boys and men are an important underlying cause of high levels of violence at all levels of society. Individuals who have the courage to break prevailing gender norms may risk losing fundamental rights and endanger their own safety.

- Conflict and fragility are also drivers for changes in gender relations. In many cases, women have taken on a broader range of economic and societal roles in times of conflict. However, conflict and fragility can also give rise to more rigid gender stereotypes that men, women and those of other gender identities are expected to fulfil. Shifts in gender relations and roles may lead to calls for reducing the gains that women may have made and a 'return' to an imagined patriarchal past (see for example Gardner and El-Bushra, 2016; El-Bushra, Myrntinen and Naujoks, 2013).

Gender relations are relations of power. Men's traditional role in the public sphere has, in most societies, given them greater access to decision-making both at formal and informal levels, but these processes also side-line many men. The majority of women do not necessarily have their interests represented, even when individual women are able to participate politically – and even more so in the case of persons with non-binary gender identities or biological sexes. However, a gender analysis of power is not only about understanding access to decision-making and representative leadership. Norms, stereotypes, perceptions and rumours – which can all be considered less visible manifestations of power – make gender roles and relations seem very natural and discourage us from questioning our place in family and society.

It is not possible to develop a truly gendered approach to understanding conflict and peace without bringing men – as men – into the analysis, and in particular without holding a view about men's relationships to violence. Men, especially younger men, are often socially, culturally and politically conditioned, by other men and by women, to be more liable to engage in public and private physical violence and be exposed to physical violence in the public sphere. The relationship between masculinities and violence is produced through the social valorisation and privileging of certain types of masculinities over others (e.g. tough "warrior" masculinities over "effeminate" non-militarised masculinities), which is reproduced by women and men alike in society and through its various institutions, from the family to the state.

Societal expectations of violent male behaviour or male dominance can also be reproduced - even among organisations and individuals working on promoting peace and gender equality. Men who embrace non-violence and gender equality, or have been working on promoting peaceful masculinities may face resistance, ridicule and a questioning of their masculinity and sexual orientation because of this.

4.2. How do gender norms shape violence, conflict and fragility?

Why do masculinities matter for conflict and fragility?

Examining masculinities in situations of conflict and fragility is necessary because the expectations often placed on men and boys – to be tough, to be defenders, to be ready to use violence, to be in control, to be decision-makers, to be economic providers, to be heterosexually active and virile – have a direct bearing on conflict and fragility, as well as on the lives of women and girls. However, this is not a one-way relationship. Rather, it can be a mutually reinforcing one: contexts of fragility often greatly narrow the opportunities for men and boys to live up to the societal expectations placed on them, and some of these options (e.g. joining gangs for economic reasons or political pressure groups) can actively contribute to increasing fragility.

While patriarchal societies and rigid gender norms confer many benefits on men and boys, they also have harmful effects for them (Barker, 2005). Often, especially younger, lower class men are more exposed to violence and expected to use violence to respond to real or

perceived slights. For example, young men in Central America make up 80-90 per cent of the victims of armed violence. Expectations on men to be stoic and unemotional take a toll on their psychological and physical wellbeing. Men and boys often feel emotionally distant from others, and the emotions ‘allowed’ for men to show publicly often have negative connotations, for example anger.

Challenging and changing these harmful notions of masculinity not only reduces these directly harmful, masculine-coded behaviours. Engaging with men in transformative ways also has indirect benefits in terms of women’s empowerment and participation, because it is often men who oppose these changes. One of the challenges in this respect is to shift discourses away from ‘zero-sum game’ understandings of increased gender equality towards highlighting the benefits this has for all persons.

Fragility and expectations of masculinity

In terms of the engagement of local governments, NGOs, donors, and others such as UN agencies, it has been the potential violent behaviour by men, both in terms of participation in armed violence and in terms of GBV in the private sphere, which has received the most attention in fragile and conflict-affected situations. However, these are not the only areas of life where masculinities play a key role.

Other common expectations placed on men include being an **economic provider and decision maker**, be it in the private sphere or the public sphere. The social, economic and political shifts that occur during conflict, displacement or in times of fragility can often reduce the space for men to fulfil these roles. This may be due to a lack of opportunities, such as a lack of jobs, decision making being taken over by armed groups or by outside agencies, as well as because of the risk of being targeted by armed groups as a man (see for example Hollander, 2014). Women often step into roles previously held by men because the circumstances enable or force them to do so, which may lead to resistance by men who see their position in society being eroded. For the most part, men do tend to remain in socially dominant positions, but the perception alone that women are gaining more than men can lead to what has been termed ‘aggrieved entitlement’ (Kimmel, 2017). This sense of perceived loss of control may contribute to opposition to gender equality and the empowerment of women, which can be harnessed by reactionary political forces and lead to direct violence against women – especially against those women who are politically and publicly active.

In conflict-affected situations and displacement, men and boys may feel the denial of the expected possibilities of being in control, having agency, being the decision-makers and protectors. At times, this denial of men’s agency and control is used deliberately by armed actors as a means of humiliation, be it at checkpoints and roadblocks or, more drastically, through acts of sexual violence against the men themselves and/or family members, especially if this is done publicly. However, this undermining of men’s expected positions as decision-makers and protectors can also happen inadvertently, for example in refugee or IDP camps where relief agencies take over the roles previously occupied by men.¹

Conflict and its aftermath often create a chasm between, on one hand, the expectations placed on men and boys that are frequently internalised, and the possibility of achieving them on the other. These expectations often focus around being economically self-sufficient and being able to provide for a family, being decision-makers, or being in control and having agency. As Chris Dolan (2002) has noted for northern Uganda and Luisa Enria (2016) for post-war Sierra Leone, the impossibility for most men to live up to the expected norms does not necessarily lead to a change in the norms and expectations. Rather, their

unattainability increases their value, the power and the status of those who are able to fulfil them. Dolan (2002) refers to the masculinities that are not able to live up to the norms as 'thwarted masculinities', and Kabachnik et al. refer to similar dynamics among Georgian IDPs as 'traumatic masculinities' (2012). Norms around male behaviour, such as **not expressing emotions, not seeking help, and stoicism**, can exacerbate these impacts, as can masculine-connoted negative 'coping' mechanisms including alcohol and drug use, violence against others or extreme measures such as suicide. The shame and social stigma for men associated with the failure to live up to expectations of being a provider can be immense. It can lead to situations where they themselves and their partners go to extreme lengths to cover up the fact that the family relies on the income of the female partner and/or of the children (see for example Ekeoba, Makanjuola and Nagarajan, 2016; Sleggh, Barker, and Levto. 2014).

Expectations placed on men and boys to be providers can also place them in positions of vulnerability, which are seldom recognised by service providers, who tend to assume that adult men have few or no vulnerabilities (Turner, 2016). Displaced or refugee men, but also other men and boys in fragile and conflict-affected situations may also be forced to accepting dangerous and precarious working conditions, including commercial sex work, or be at risk of trafficking, in particular for exploitative labour practices. Even when not trafficked, men who are migrant labourers may find themselves burdened with high debts linked to the process of migration. As with women and girls, men's and boys' vulnerabilities can be exacerbated or reduced by various other factors that interact with gender, such as age, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, social capital or disabilities. Broadening the focus of assessing the vulnerabilities of men and boys should however not imply moving away from addressing the vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls as well.

Box 14. Men's vulnerabilities: the example of Syria

The civil war in Syria, the resultant humanitarian crises and mass displacement have placed millions of Syrians, regardless of their gender identities, into positions of extreme vulnerability. However, the degree to which they face particular vulnerabilities is often contingent upon their intersectional gendered identities. Girls, for example, are at an elevated risk of early and forced marriage; single women (including widows) risk various forms of sexual exploitation and persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI) face a whole range of risks from extortion to targeted killings.

Analyses of the Syrian War and its impacts also highlight some of the distinct vulnerabilities that men and boys have faced – which in part are similar and in part different from those faced by women and girls. These include for example:

Within Syria:

- Forced recruitment of men and boys and/or targeting by armed groups as potential enemy combatants;
- Punishment of men and boys who do not adhere to strict dress codes or hairstyles, in particular in Islamist-controlled areas;
- Targeted use of sexual violence against men and boys, in particular in sites of detention;

In situations of displacement:

- Heavily reduced mobility and subject to police controls due to fears around the danger that especially younger refugee men are assumed to pose;
- Exploitation in the labour market and having to work in dangerous conditions, with little possibility to seek redress due to their precarious residence status;
- Having to resort to in part unsafe commercial sex work for economic survival;
- Not seeking mental or physical health care due to expectations of male strength and stigma around showing ‘weakness.’

The more patriarchal a society, the more men and boys tend to play a role in regulating the lives of women in their lives. Men and boys may seek to control women’s and girls’ access to services, in particular in situations of fragility and conflict, where men may seek to increasingly control women, be it out of a sense of protection and/or to compensate for their own loss of control. Interventions aimed at improving the lives of women and girls need to also sensitise men and boys to ensure women’s lives can indeed be improved. Involving and sensitising men to women’s empowerment interventions can reduce the risk of violent backlashes against women who are participating in these activities.

Particular drivers and manifestations of fragility may also be very much male-dominated and linked to local understandings of what it means to be a man. These include for example patronage and corruption, as well as participation in organised violent crime in particular. While these practices may not be necessarily fully approved of in a given society, they are often linked to particular notions of masculinity (e.g. either being a ‘big man’ or needing to join a ‘big man’s’ socio-economic or political network for survival). They might also be linked to the greater societal tolerance accorded to men, rather than to women, to participate in illicit activities. These dynamics can be exacerbated by outside agencies, be it national or international security actors, if and when they aggressively target men and boys of particular ethnic, religious or social profiles as suspected trouble-makers. Thereby, they often foreclose other possibilities for them *not* to join gangs, political pressure groups or movements seen as extremist.

Masculinities and violence

One of the most obvious and most researched ways in which masculinities affect conflict and fragility is the association between masculinity and **military violence**. In all countries, state militaries are predominantly male by a wide margin, as are most military-style organisations such as paramilitaries, guerrilla groups, militia, village guards, private security companies and the like.² Being a soldier and the use of force is often explicitly linked to manhood. Similarly, gangs and extremist groups tend to be heavily male dominated. They also often espouse attitudes, ideologies and practices that draw on extreme understandings of masculinity, misogyny and intolerance of those with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI). The recruitment of men into armed groups often draws explicitly on social expectations that link masculinity and the use of violence. The socialisation and training of men and boys in these groups and institutions often explicitly fosters aggressive, dominating and violent masculinities. These have obvious repercussions in the public sphere in times of violent conflict, but can also have less visible impacts in the private sphere, through intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence as well as self-harm (substance abuse, risk-taking behaviour and suicide). ‘Unlearning’ violent

masculinities can be a major challenge in post-conflict transitions, in particular for former combatants, as will be explored further in section II. However, other factors can also constitute a root cause for violence.

Prevalent and often **dominant patriarchal norms** about men's supposed right or obligation to control women and their behaviour, as well as false assumptions of men's entitlement to sex, mean that men of all walks of life tend to be the main, but not only, perpetrators of IPV, domestic violence, sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. All too often, men's and boys' violent behaviour is either socially tolerated, normalised or condoned, and in the case of public violence (e.g. being a warrior), often even celebrated. However, over the past decade, there has been an increasing amount of GBV prevention work globally by NGOs, governments, multilateral institutions and UN agencies. It has focused on engaging men and boys as partners for GBV prevention and aimed to transform harmful and violent masculinities (for critical stocktakes see Duriesmith, 2017a; Flood, 2015; Myrtinnen. 2018).

However, **men and boys can also be victims** of various forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.³ This continues to be a taboo topic and one fraught with misunderstandings, such as presumed links between victimisation and sexual orientation or gender identity (Sivakumaran 2005; Schultz, 2018). Public forms of sexual violence are more likely in conflict, while sexual abuse and violence in more closed institutions.⁴ As with sexual violence against women and girls as well as against those of non-binary gender identities, sexual violence against men is about gendered and patriarchal power and domination. One of the main reasons why SGBV against men and boys is so effective in undermining survivors' selves is that it strikes at multiple levels what it means to 'be a man' in many societies. This includes: to be able to protect oneself, the family, and the community; to be a breadwinner - as this might become impossible because of the injuries incurred, especially where manual labour is the main opportunity available; to partake in the leadership of the family and community; and to not seek outside help or support.

Notes

¹ As a Burundian refugee woman living in a refugee camp in the United Republic of Tanzania quoted by Turner (1999) wryly noted: “The UN is a better husband.”

² This is not to say that women and those with non-binary gender identities are completely excluded; some guerrilla groups such as the Colombian FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) or Nepal’s Maoist People’s Liberation Army have had a large proportion of women, around 30-40 %, as does the Syrian Kurdish YPG (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel) and other Kurdish armed groups; still, the majority of combatants were still men.

³ For an excellent guidance note on sexual and gender-based violence against men and boys, see Callum Watson (2014), *Preventing and Responding to Sexual and Domestic Violence against Men - A Guidance Note for Security Sector Institutions*. Geneva: DCAF. https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/SDVAM_FINAL%20online.pdf and for a comprehensive overview of SGBV against men and boys, see Marysia Zalewski, Paula Drumond, Elisabeth Prügl and Maria Stern (eds.) (2018) *Sexual Violence Against Men in Global Politics*, Abingdon/New York: Routledge.

⁴ It happens in both conflict and peacetime. It can, however, be more prevalent in times of conflict, for example in the case of systematic and widespread use of sexual violence, torture and humiliation against prisoners, as for example in Syria, see Sarah Chynoweth (2017) “*We Keep It In Our Heart*” - *Sexual Violence Against Men And Boys In The Syria Crisis*. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Conclusion

Working with men and boys in fragile and conflict-affected settings requires both addressing their needs and vulnerabilities as well as addressing the privileges that they may hold at the expense of others in society. As important as engaging critically with men and boys is, it cannot be done at the expense of addressing the still unmet needs of women and girls, and of those who identify outside of the gender binary. For engaging with men and boys to be effective in addressing conflict and fragility it needs to be transformative and change gendered power dynamics, not entrench a kinder, gentler patriarchy.

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Conflict: Several criteria are used to define which instances of violence amount to ‘conflict’. They include the nature of the violence; the number of fatalities; the type of actors involved; their level of organisation. International humanitarian law distinguishes international armed conflicts between states, using armed force, and non-international armed conflict where hostilities reach ‘a minimum level of intensity’ and parties demonstrate ‘a minimum’ of organisation. The Uppsala University Conflict Data Program (UCDP) generally defines armed conflict as the use of armed force between organised groups resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year, and differentiates state-based from non-state based armed conflict depending on whether the government or the state is involved (ICRC, 2008; OECD, 2016; UCDP, 2017)

Fragility: The OECD characterises settings as ‘fragile’ when an accumulation and combination of risks are faced, combined with insufficient capacity by the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate the consequences (OECD, 2016). This situation of exposure to risk can lead to negative outcomes, including violence, conflict, protracted political crises and chronic underdevelopment. The OECD’s fragility framework measures risks and coping capacities in five dimensions to include societal, political, economic, environmental and security aspects (OECD, 2016).

Gender: This term refers to the socially constructed roles associated with being male and female and the relations between women and men, and girls and boys. Unlike sex, which is biologically determined, gender roles are learned and change over time and across cultures (OECD, 2013; UNEP, 2016).

Gender equality: Gender equality requires that women and men are treated equally, including by ensuring that they have the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities, equal access to public goods and services, and equal outcomes. Gender equality and non-discrimination are fundamental human rights under international law, as established by the International Bill of Rights and subsequent treaties, in particular the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UNFPA, 2017, UN Women, 2009).

Intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw as “a way of framing the various interactions of race and gender in the context of violence against women of color” (1991). It has since been used more widely in research, policy and programming to analyse how gender identities and expectations interact with other societal markers such as ethno-religious background, age, social class, sexual orientation, marital status, disability or the like. Using an intersectional approach not only means looking at the interplay of these different social identity markers but also at how these structure power relations, thus creating differential positions and dynamics of privilege, oppression and exclusion.

Masculinities encompass the various socially constructed ways of being and acting, values and expectations associated with being and becoming being a man in a given

society, location and temporal space. While masculinities are mostly linked with biological men and boys, they are not biologically driven and not only performed by men.

Misogyny is the hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women or girls. It can be manifested in numerous ways, including social exclusion, sex discrimination, hostility, male privilege, belittling of women, violence against women, and sexual objectification.

Patriarchy refers to systemic societal structures that institutionalise male physical, social and economic power over women (Institute of Development Studies, 2000).