



## Engendering Men

### A Collaborative Review of Evidence on Men and Boys in Social Change and Gender Equality

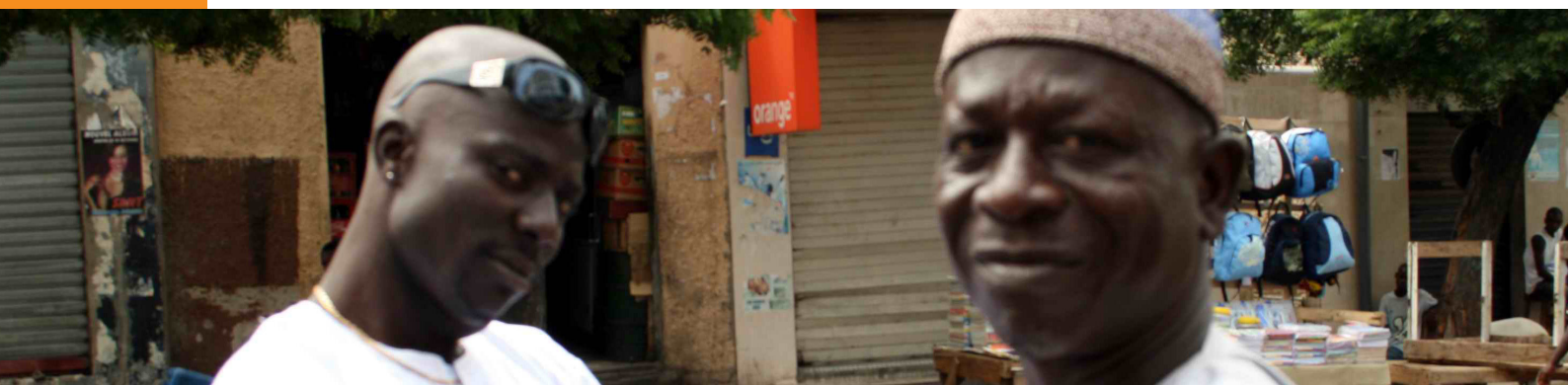
Twenty years after the Fourth World Conference on Women and its Platform for Action, in Beijing 1995, the call for working with men and boys to promote gender equality and women and girls' empowerment has become commonplace in development. Yet, this agenda still needs a better overview of available evidence to inform policy and practice.

'Engendering Men: Evidence on Routes to Gender Equality' (EMERGE) is a two-year project to build an open repository of accessible evidence and lessons for working with boys and men to promote gender equality. A consortium of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Promundo-US and Sonke Gender Justice collaborates in gathering, reviewing, synthesising and disseminating evidence for improved learning and policy. This evidence summary highlights lessons from a major literature review of evidence on men and boys in relation to social change and gender equality. The full report is planned for electronic publication as an open-access Evidence Report on the project website (<http://menandboys.ids.ac.uk/>). The supporting evidence across nine themes, as well as the methods employed in the desk-based literature review, is described in detail in the full report.

The review seeks to find out what works best in engaging men and boys for gender equality in terms of changing social norms and the institutional arrangements and structures which sustain or shift norms and attitudes. It explores processes of change with men and women at different levels, as well as why and how to factor in or engage men and boys in support of change for gender equality. To achieve these aims the review addresses questions, such as:

- Which political, social and economic processes can bring about sustainable long-term attitudinal and behavioural change towards gender equality among boys and men?
- What is the interplay between such change and formal or informal policies and institutions?
- What are the various roles that boys and men can play in influencing or enabling interventions aimed at girls and women?
- How can development interventions and approaches effectively support long-term attitudinal and behaviour change, facilitating men's and boys' support for gender equality?

Access the evidence on <http://menandboys.ids.ac.uk/>



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### Social, economic and political processes and trends impacting on gender equality

The review of evidence found that social, economic and political processes and trends have important links with gender equality. Key trends identified are:

- Globalisation
- Urbanisation
- Increasing enrollment in education
- Changing nature of conflicts
- Conservative fundamentalisms

Globalisation, migration and increased mobility appears to have, in different ways, facilitated women's increased political participation and engagement in work. Yet, this has come alongside increasingly insecure employment at lower income levels for both women and men. There have also been rapid increases in rural to urban migration over the past 20 years, with developing countries experiencing 90 percent of urban growth globally, between 1990 and 2010, with increasing numbers living in urban slums.

These trends have been linked to men's crises of masculinity and backlash against women's empowerment, in some settings. Women's increased involvement in paid work has seen increasing burdens of care on women, with little evidence of any major shift towards men shouldering more unpaid care work.

Gender equality in enrolment in primary education has improved, but slower progress has occurred in secondary education or in reducing girls' drop-out rates in higher grades. Some countries have also seen trends towards neglect of boys in education and poorer retention rates.

Relations between men and women must be understood within these and other rapidly changing contexts, such as conflict. Although state-based conflicts have declined globally over the past 20 years, approximately 1.5 billion people still live in areas that are fragile, in conflict or are subject to large-scale, organised violence.

Women tend to show greater levels of support for gender equality than do men, but the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (2011) shows that attitudinal changes towards supporting gender equality are taking place particularly amongst younger men, those with higher levels of education and who live in urban areas.

### The interplay between broader processes of social change and policies and institutions

Social processes and trends are mediated by policies and institutions. These can influence shifts in gender equality

range from macro-level policies and frameworks down to local services and institutions. A key finding from the review of evidence is that there has been a focus on individual women's or girls' empowerment rather than policy attention to gender relations or structural perspectives.

Since the 1990s, normative global frameworks have recognised relationships between men and women's rights and

wellbeing, such as the 1994 International Conference on Population Development. These agreements have been essential tools for enabling social movements to influence national governments, for example on gender-based violence policy. However, pre-existing patriarchal cultures embedded in institutions can provide resistance to change. Patriarchal social norms can also create barriers to progress, sometimes prompting a backlash against women's empowerment.

Well-crafted policies and supportive institutions can support more equitable gender norms, but change also requires addressing institutional cultures. Whilst women's political participation has improved, patriarchal cultures and structures within political institutions often remain intact, minimising women's influence in decision-making.

Policy emphasis on economic growth and income generation aimed specifically at women's empowerment has not meaningfully taken into account the role of men, economic redistribution or caring roles, with the result that women and girls are often overly burdened. Similarly, global policy on girls' has been driven by targets for gender parity in primary education enrolment with less attention to institutions and pedagogy, needed to address inequitable social norms. Other areas of service provision, such as health, care and social well-being, have often been restricted by a narrow policy focus on women and girls, lacking policies for engaging men.

A global expansion of women's organisations in civil society has been pivotal to advocacy for women's rights, whilst 'men's rights' backlash organisations have emerged in some contexts. Men's health movements have also emerged to promote policies and interventions for men's health, but men's activism on gender equality remains more limited to gendered violence prevention.



“ ...engaging men in interpersonal gender issues have been shown to be an important entry point for more political and public pro-feminist engagement ”

## Key findings on men's roles

The perceived roles of men in gender and development work have shifted: Initially they were invisible, then promiscuous, violent perpetrators; towards understanding them as socially constructed within wider contexts of power relations and dynamics of masculinities (including as victims); towards understandings that men also have interests in ending gender inequalities (e.g. violence, health etc.) from self-interest to broader perspectives based on equality and rights. Some key findings in the available evidence highlight:

- **Diversity:** Men's support for women can be different based on in which capacity men appear (fathers, brothers, bureaucrats etc.) with implications for how different men and boys are constructed or engaged in policy and practice.
- **Complexity and change:** Men relate differently to women's empowerment; from 'obstructive', through 'ambivalent' to 'supportive', and can change their stance. Each man can also take multiple roles in public vs. private spaces, depending on personal and political interests (e.g. publically supportive whilst privately unreconstructed, or vice versa). Understanding these complex – or conflicted – positions and interests are important in helping different types of men to change and take on more constructive roles.
- **Intersectionality:** When other social inequalities and interests (such as class or race) converge with – or override – gendered differences, this can affect how men may support women's empowerment or representation. Much of the work has become seen as depoliticised by pro-feminist men, who call for 'making the personal political', by raising men's consciousness of gender injustices, whilst also holding them to account for their use of privilege. Linking gender to other issues of social injustice can facilitate men working more effectively with women for gender-equality.

## Effective and promising interventions

Getting men's support for gender equality requires progressive policies, but these must be complemented by various strategies for wider social change that influences norms, behaviours and attitudes at multiple levels, such as:

- **National policy** change provides an important framework for facilitating work towards gender equality with men and boys. For example, the Brazilian government have developed a specific national policy on men's health that provides guidance on the relationship between harmful masculinities and men and women's health outcomes.
- **Working within institutional settings to challenge gender inequalities** provides key opportunities for embedding gender equitable approaches at a national scale. Workplace policies and initiatives in health, education and justice settings are critical for translating international agreements and national policy into practice, for example through implementing gender equitable parental and family leave policies, and in addressing gender violence.
- **Working with men and women together in a synchronised way**, addressing both women's and men's needs, have been shown to be effective. Economic empowerment outcomes have been shown to improve when men are engaged as partners in interventions traditionally targeted at women, such as in micro-finance.
- **Community interventions** engaging men in interpersonal gender issues, such as within the home, have also been shown to be an important entry point for more political and public pro-feminist engagement. Men's accountability for addressing gender inequality at personal and political levels is an important avenue for further exploration.

Strategies with men and boys shown to be effective at the individual and community level in changing gender attitudes and behaviours include a combination of peer education, using male advocates, large-scale media programs, workplace programs and community/rights-based programming that aim to reduce gender inequality by working to change social norms. Common characteristics of effective strategies include those that:

- Are linked to national, state-level or municipal policies, which are sensitive to gender equality
- Are based on relational, intersectional conceptualisations of gender for engaging men and women/boys and girls
- Use group and participatory approaches for challenging harmful masculinities and patriarchal ideologies
- Emphasise participation, mobilisation and ownership by socially just and democratic actors and institutions
- Are complemented by awareness raising campaigns to reinforce messaging

## “ Men’s activism on gender needs to go beyond speaking out on women’s rights, to supporting women in politics and demanding reform of patriarchal institutions ”

### Gaps and blind-spots

There is a need for more research on the contextualised understandings of men’s and women’s experiences in relation to changing social, political and economic trends and processes. Research could also focus better on how relations between these trends and gender relations at different levels develop over time, ideally through longitudinal research. Limited information about men and boys’ gendered needs and development (in health, education, violence prevention and work) creates a poor foundation for interventions that engage men and boys in transformative change. In terms of operations and policy research, key gaps include:

- There is still a serious gap in programming and action research with men and boys that goes beyond interpersonal issues, and thus also a lack of research into the effectiveness of such strategies.
- Most interventions with men and boys are still small scale and intensive, leaving the need for research into the sustainability of interventions and how such approaches could best be scaled up through policies or other means.
- Longer-term evidence on impacts on boys’ and men’s development remains scarce, as programmes and evaluation approaches tend to be quantitative, short-term, and instrumental, with little attention to processes of change.
- Research is lacking on strategies to challenge gender inequity in within specific settings affected by broader political economy processes, such as addressing militarized masculinities as part of conflict prevention.

### Directions for the future

**Future research** should focus on gaps identified and build on what we already do know about how men and boys relate to gender equality in the following areas: processes of change, actual and potential roles and what seems to work best in work to engage them. Strategies that employ a relational, structurally contextualised approach to addressing gender inequality at different levels and scales must be developed and evaluated. This means new indicators of process and impact are needed and more ‘researching up’ on the gender dynamics in institutions of power.

**A Policy and Practice** priority for the future is to ensure that men are recognised within a transformative and inclusive conceptualisation of gender and engaged in processes of social change for gender equality, such as in care work and education policy. Other directions include:

- Men’s engagement and activism for gender equality needs to go beyond speaking out on the violation of women’s rights, to actively engage men in supporting women’s participation in politics and public life, or demanding reform of patriarchal social, political and economic institutions.
- Policy makers and activists need a greater focus on institutions to ensure that their strategies and policies support transformation in gender relations and that the opportunities for engaging men are understood and explored.
- New gender sensitive indicators (not simply sex-specific or disaggregated) should be developed to track change and guide policies and programmes.

Access the evidence on <http://menandboys.ids.ac.uk/>



### Credits

This Research Summary briefing was drafted by Jerker Edström and Thea Shahrokh with substantive inputs from Gary Barker, Alexa Hassink, Julia Hamaus, Erin Stern, Tim Shand and Dean Peacock.

Key reading:

- IDS, Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice (2015) *Engendering Men: A Collaborative Review of Evidence on Men and Boys in Social Change and Gender Equality*, EMERGE Evidence Review Report, IDS: Brighton, April 2015

The full report will be posted online and summaries of key references to the evidence on themes covered in this review can be accessed on: <http://menandboys.ids.ac.uk/library>

Learn more about EMERGE and upcoming activities of the programme – country case studies, conceptual framing and policy guidance – on: <http://menandboys.ids.ac.uk/>

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