Reframing men and boys in policy for gender equality: Understanding transformation of gender norms in dynamic structural contexts

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The project

- ‘Engendering Men: Evidence on Routes to Gender Equality’ (EMERGE) was a two year DFID-funded project to build an open repository of accessible evidence and lessons for working with men and boys.
  - implemented by a consortium of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Promundo-US and Sonke Gender Justice.

- It builds on earlier work by IDS and partners, with Sida engagement and support over a decade;
  - ‘Politicising Masculinities’ in 2007/8
  - ‘Undressing Patriarchy’ in a ‘Gender, Power and Sexuality programme’ 2011-2015
  - Including a project on “Mobilising Men” in India, Kenya and Uganda
The project

Over 2014-2016 EMERGE has, in three phases:

1. **Reviewed Evidence:** A major (165 page) Evidence Review on working with men and boys across nine themes, and a 4-page brief, ‘Evidence Summary’

2. **Documented Good Practice:** A series of eight detailed Case Studies of promising approaches in this field, with associated 4-page ‘Stories of Change’

3. **Provided Guidance:** A set of resources, including; a Conceptual guidance paper, two briefs on ‘Lessons in good practice from work with men and boys for gender equality’ and ‘Reframing men and boys in policy for gender equality’ and a collection of on-line resources from design and training to M&E
Men, Boys and Gender Equality

We are building an openly accessible basis of evidence and lessons for working with boys and men to promote gender equality, by gathering, inter-relating, analysing and strategically disseminating evidence and lessons in targeted and accessible formats for improved learning, policy and practice. More about our work

Evidence
Case Studies
Guidance
Themes

EMERGE blog: Reframing gender equality - should men and boys be in the picture? 22.03.16
In this final blog of the series, Thea Shahrokh discusses the vision of the EMERGE project - a better approach to working with men, boys and masculinities in policy on gender equality for the future.

EMERGE blog 8: Collective struggle and sustainable change for economic and gender justice 18.03.16
In this blog, Thea Shahrokh and Alan Greig discuss the work of Nijera Kori, a national social movement in Bangladesh fighting for the rights of landless people. The movement works with women and men together, using strategies that highlight the links between economic and gender justice.

Evidence: Document library
Get the most significant recent literature on engaging men and boys, including datasets, books, articles and programme reports
So, what’s the problem with men and boys in gender work?
Challenges for policy in changing gender relations

- **Men and boys are often invisible in gender policy frameworks and theories of change**
  
  - the focus is almost exclusively on women and girls
  
  - the roles that men and boys can play in challenging unequal gender power relations are not often recognised.
  
  - where men, boys, male or masculinity do appear, they tend to be framed only as barriers to gender equality
DFID’s strategic vision for girls and women

Unlock the potential of girls and women to stop poverty before it starts
Empower girls and women to have **voice, choice and control**. Leaving no one behind.

**VOICE**
- Increased collective action for change
- Participation and leadership in politics, peace negotiations, business and civil society

**CHOICE**
- Legal rights and access to justice for all women
- Discriminatory social norms ended e.g. FGM/C, early and forced marriage

**CONTROL**
- Sustainable access to food, water and energy for all girls and women

Enabling environment of open economies and societies that unlock girls’ and women’s potential
- Boys and men engage as active citizens for change
- Equitable, accountable public services
- Inclusive political settlements
- Accessible new technologies
- Infrastructure that benefits women
- Responsible business provide safe, quality employment
- Legal frameworks & systems uphold women’s rights
- Natural resource management
- Markets that enable women to trade
DFID’s strategic vision for girls and women

Unlock the potential of girls and women to stop poverty before it starts. Empower girls and women to have voice, choice and control. Leaving no one behind.

- All girls complete primary and secondary education
- Universal Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for girls and women
- All girls and women economically empowered
- All girls and women live free from violence

Enabling environment of open economies and societies that unlock girls’ and women’s potential

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Challenges for policy in changing gender relations

- *Change towards equality is seen in linear cause and effect ways*
  - Many frameworks for change focus on tackling ‘barriers’ to gender equality ‘head on’,
    - But, do not factor in alternative routes or build on positive change.
  - By leaving males as implicit problematic barriers to gender equality, opportunities to engage different men or boys as different change agents are lost.
  - Viewing change as a linear pathway from an intervention addressing a barrier to positive outcomes can result in the creation of silos
    - This also limits the potentials for strategically engaging men and boys across different areas of work around gender.
Challenges for policy in changing gender relations

- *Change is often conceptualised without recognition of broader shifts in societies and institutions*
  - Theories often do not recognise the ways that broader changes in societies impact on gender equality strategies and outcomes – often more so than do policies or programmes.

- Whilst young, urban and educated men may live by increasingly progressive beliefs about gender equality, it is essential to factor in concurrent trends of patriarchal backlash.

- By leaving the multiple, complex/conflicted and shifting roles of men invisible in policy frameworks, strategies remain vulnerable to the winds of fortune.
  - E.g. modernising misogynies co-opted in rising fundamentalisms.

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How to reframe gender through work with men and boys

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How to reframe gender through work with men and boys

- Gender is ‘relational’ and socially constructed
  - Gender equality goals and strategies need to be reframed in relational terms.
  - Initiatives should address power relations between women and men, rather than working with women and girls – or indeed men and boys – in isolation.
    - This does not mean meeting everyone’s needs with equal urgency
    - Taking a relational approach may also involve divesting some men of vested privileges.

- For example, EMERGE research in Latin America has highlighted the importance of working with men and boys to increase their recognition of women’s unpaid care role, and to engage men in redistributing this work (Santos 2015).

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How to reframe gender through work with men and boys

- **Gender is ‘intersectional’**
  - Gender needs to be understood as operating along with other inequalities of power based on class, race, sexuality and ability.
  - Making these links increases opportunities for men to work more effectively with women for gender equality,
    - based on shared interests and solidarities

- EMERGE research in Bangladesh demonstrated how the social movement Nijera Kori works with male and female landless rights group members to understand the ways that gender and class hierarchies work together. (Greig et al. 2015)
  - This has increased solidarity between women and men and built shared commitment to addressing gender inequalities.

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Men and women from landless rights groups making shared decisions on community based action. Image from Nijera Kori

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How to reframe gender through work with men and boys

- **Social ‘norms’ are embedded in ‘institutions’ and shaped by trends**
  - Social norms influence individuals’ behaviour, but it is essential to recognise that norms are dynamic and are reproduced through social, political and economic institutions.
    - Thus, initiatives aiming to engage men and boys for gender equality need to work across individual, community and institutional levels
    - They also need to engage men in different positions of power

- In Ethiopia, the EMERGE project found that initiatives to end female genital mutilation-cutting that were community owned, engaged religious leaders and related to policy change at the national level were able to generate lasting change (Stern 2015).
A beneficiary of KMG, chairperson of the uncut girls club, and mother, holds her baby proudly. She had a safe delivery, which she attributed to not being circumcised. Image by Franz Stapelberg
How to reframe gender through work with men and boys

- **External trends impact on gender roles and relations**
  - International and national social, economic and political trends (e.g. migration, urbanisation, conflict, changing labour markets) often play more significant roles than do targeted programmes, in:
    - shifting men’s attitudes on gender equality.
    - shaping power relations and ideals of masculinity
  - Initiatives to engage men and boys need to take account of such trends, which may have positive or negative impacts on gender equality.

- In Egypt, for example, EMERGE research demonstrated the flexibility of youth movements set up to challenge the emergence of sexual harassment in public spaces (Tadros 2015)
  - for example, the movements adapted their strategies for a changing political backdrop and realigned their work to take advantage of new sexual harassment legislation
Imprint’s security patrol volunteers lining up into formation, receiving final instructions and getting ready to patrol the street of Talaat Harb against sexual harassment, August 2014, Eid Patrols. Image from Imprint

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How to reframe gender through work with men and boys

- **Context is key**
  - Gender relations differ across societies and are deeply rooted in structures, histories and cultures.
    - E.g. ‘harmful masculinities’ need to be understood in context; in terms of different ideals of ‘being men’.
    - Efforts for change need to be grounded in local knowledge, priorities and histories, and needs to be driven through local ownership.
  
  - EMERGE research in India highlighted the way that the *Samajhdar Jodidar* project, shaped within a historical and political context of demands for inclusive governance, including gender quotas for local government representation, (Edström et al 2015)
    - This has enabled men to successfully support women privately *and* publically; from their homes to in politics and public life.
Men for Gender Equity project village animators during a group discussion exploring their strategies for supporting women’s participation in politics and public life. © J Edström, 2015

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How to reframe gender through work with men and boys

- **The personal is political - and vice versa**
  - Changing gender norms and relations is not in all men’s interests and many men will resist change.
    - Even men who are open to change may find it difficult in practice, as it may involve ongoing and deeply personal challenges.

- Initiatives to engage men and boys in gender equality should both challenge and support men to be accountable for transforming harmful gender norms in their societies, lives and in themselves.

- Processes to engage men as agents of change in addressing gender inequalities have been successfully used in work to address gender-based violence.
  - For example, in the Men’s Action to Stop Violence Against Women campaign, consciousness raising with men led to shifts in personal commitments to equality, as well as public action with women to challenge systemic gender inequality (Shahrokh with Edstrom 2015).
TIME SCALES
Link: long-term trends, medium-term shifts and short-term cycles

‘LEVELS’:
- Political society (Law, ideology, governance)
- Institutions (Sectors, services)
- Communities (Multiple, intersecting)
- Relationships (Kin, peers, friends)
- Individual (Psychology, identity)

INTERVENTIONS
- Political strategy
- Institutional strategies
- Community work
- Relational work
- Individual work

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Elements of good practice across contextualised ‘levels’ in real-time

- Create safe spaces for deepening personal change work and building egalitarian relationships
- Engage men across public and private spheres for individual and relationship change, promoting role models

Work strategically and politically at collective and institutional levels
- Work with institutions and processes of institutional change
- Strengthen links between organisations and build movements, engaging strategically with policies and laws
- Work across personal to collective social change, politicising men’s engagement
- Nurture ‘staying power’ from below and sustainable momentum
- See beyond the project and anticipate implications for resourcing
- Learn for change, through monitoring and feedback, adapting to evolving contexts

Engage men and boys on interpersonal issues to oppose inequality

Learn, adapt and nurture sustainability

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How to reframe men and boys in policy

- Tracking and adapting to external trends
- Using contextualised strategies across levels
- Adressing gender norms in relation to institutions
- Treating gender as relational and socially constructed
- Holding men to account, making the personal political
- Treating gender as intersectional

Change in understanding gender issues
- Change in discourse and narratives
- Change in policy and practice

Relationships between Policy Makers, Activists, CSOs, Researchers

Local, National, Global Levels
Recommendations

- **Reframe policy on gender in relational terms (involving females and males)**
  - (i) systematically make visible a greater range of male and female roles and potential contributions,
  - (ii) resist using stereotypes and frame people of all genders as potential ‘agents of change’

- **Recognise gender in intersectional terms, leaving no-one behind**
  - (i) increase resources to support cross-issue work, beyond - but linked to - gender
  - (ii) improve ‘gender mainstreaming’ in other programme support, to focus on the most marginalised women and men, girls and boys

- **Enable work with men and boys that links the personal and political, facilitating movement building and alliances**
  - (i) support critical consciousness-raising with men and accountability of duty bearers, and
  - (ii) support alliance-building and institutional level work

- **From short project modalities toward longer-term, adaptive approaches**
  - (i) support strategies that have longer term perspective and are more adaptive to changing realities
  - (ii) approach evaluation with a longer term view and frame strategies as ‘contributing’ to change
  - (iii) funding is needed to enable process oriented and adaptive theories of change and approaches

- **Hold men accountable to women’s calls for gender justice**
  - (i) support initiatives with men that engage with the work of women’s movements
  - (ii) support collaborations between women’s movements and men and boys
Thank you!

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