



# Redefining Manhood, Rebuilding Nations: How Men Can Empower Women to Lift Post-Conflict Communities

"[T]here is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity or to reduce infant and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation. And I would venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended."

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at the Beijing +10 meeting in New York, March 2005

As Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan asserts, "[T]here is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women." However, the involvement of men and boys is vital to achieving the rights of women and girls. Men and boys must be an active, engaged part of the solution.

As violence against women has become epidemic, and with the increasing feminization of poverty, migration and HIV/AIDS, it is vital to reinvigorate the fight for gender equality. No longer is gender equality simply a women's right issue. It is a crucial social justice issue necessary for the longer-term well-being of humankind and the planet.

Women are disenfranchised,

economically excluded and disempowered in many parts of the world:

- ☆ Women and girls make up 70% of the 1.3 billion people worldwide living in extreme poverty (those living on less than \$1 per day).
- ☆ 33% of women globally are homeless or live in inadequate dwellings, such as slums.
- ☆ Women work 66% of the world's working hours and in most developing countries produce 60 - 80% of the food<sup>1</sup> but only own 1% of land and hold only 14% of parliamentary seats.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of their disenfranchisement, women have less access to education at all levels and fewer economic opportunities. Women's work is generally less prestigious, less desirable and less well paid. Women have less voice in household and community decisions. They are given fewer opportunities to participate in leadership positions. As a

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result, women are more vulnerable to exploitation and have fewer options available to them. Often economically dependent on spouses and partners, they are unable to leave abusive relationships.

Men, on the other hand, are advantaged, purely on the basis of being born male because masculinity is equated with power, access, resources, differential treatment and preferential opportunities.

Gender equality:

- ☆ increases families' income;
- ☆ is required for the eradication of poverty and the reduction of HIV/AIDS;
- ☆ leads to sustainable development;

- ☆ enhances the education and health of all family members.

### Men and boys must be involved

Achieving gender equality is not possible without changes in men's lives as well as women's. Too often men have been the missing factor in gender discussions and in the promotion of gender equality. Men are the gatekeepers of the current gender roles—and, as such, are potential resisters to change. However, as long as systemic gender inequalities persist that deliver advantage to men over women and promise future advantage to boys over girls, men and boys have a responsibility to use

## Consequences of Gender Inequality

- \* Over 100 million women have been subject to female genital mutilation (FGM).<sup>3</sup>
- \* 48% of women in Zambia and 25% of women in the UK have been victims of domestic violence.<sup>4</sup>
- \* The financial costs of violence against women was estimated to be \$5.8 billion in the United States in 2003 (costs associated with medical and mental health care, lost productivity and lost lifetime earnings).<sup>5</sup>
- \* 47% of adult women in Peru report attempted/completed rape by an intimate partner.<sup>6</sup>
- \* 32% of girls in Costa Rica have been sexually abused.<sup>7</sup>
- \* 25% of women aged 15 - 29 are married by age 15 in Ethiopia.<sup>8</sup>
- \* An estimated 10 million women work as prostitutes in India and an estimated 60,000 girls work as child prostitutes aged 12 - 17 in Taiwan.<sup>9</sup>
- \* Women and girls spend an estimated 700 hours per person per year in Ghana fetching water, which keeps girls out of school and limits the productivity of women.<sup>10</sup>
- \* The World Health Organization estimates that 40 billion working hours are spent carrying water each year in Africa.<sup>11</sup>
- \* Globally, more than 1 in 5 girls of primary school age are not in school.<sup>12</sup>



their power and their resources to change the system.

### How to involve men and boys

Programs and services for refugees and displaced persons must be intentionally designed to help men and boys be sensitized to the needs and suffering of women and girls. These programs and services are seldom gender neutral but, in fact, either blindly reinforce traditional biases or strategically address historic discrimination.

Conflict, displacement and post-conflict return provide opportunities to address this historic discrimination. Men and boys, though, must be

engaged as individuals and groups actively working for and promoting full inclusion, equal access and a more socially just world. Positive role models and mentors need to be identified and promoted that show men as providers, care-givers, peace-makers and protectors.

**"Without women's participation we won't have meaningful development in south Sudan."**

Churchill Mundia, program manager for SKILLS for Southern Sudan in Juba

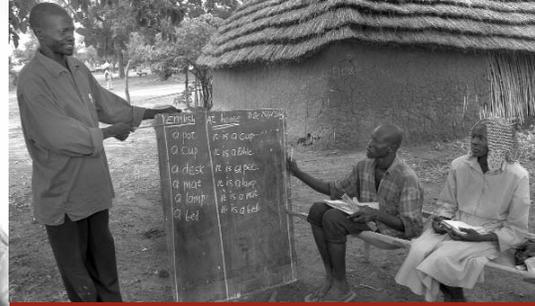
### Masculinities:

Conveys that there are many socially constructed definitions for being a man and that these can change over time and from place to place. The term relates to perceived notions and ideals about how men should or are expected to behave in a given setting.

### Gender:

Refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviors of both women and men. Gender roles and expectations are learned. They can change over time and they vary within and between cultures.<sup>13</sup>





## Positive Examples of Changing Gender Roles in Conflict and Post-conflict Settings

\*Through the support of their husbands and fathers, reproductive health services were introduced to Afghan refugee women in the refugee camps in Pakistan—often the first time these women had access to such services.

\*In Sierra Leone and Guinea, refugee men formed men's groups to combat gender-based violence, counsel male perpetrators of domestic violence and engage in prevention and awareness raising activities.

"Gender roles limit what both males and females can do. In effect, these sex roles enslave us, forcing us to be what others want us to be."<sup>14</sup>



## What we can do

### Sensitization

- ☆ Challenge men and boys among both agency staff and within the displaced population to become involved in the protection and promotion of the rights and participation of women.
- ☆ Sensitize men and boys about the positive aspects of a more socially just world. Use gender-sensitive males as positive role models and mentors for male youth in the community.
- ☆ Provide gender training for police, security and camp management personnel, magistrates and community leaders.

### Education

- ☆ Promote equal attendance of girls and boys in primary and secondary school and develop targeted activities to address girls' barriers to access, such as the recruitment of female teachers, initiating in-school feeding programs, the provision of uniforms and sanitary materials, and the construction of separate latrines.
- ☆ Sensitize teachers to gender-based violence and sexual harassment and have them sign Codes of Conduct to make schools safer places for girls.

### Economic opportunities

- ☆ Promote female participation in non-traditional skills training activities—computer, mechanics, electronics and the like—as traditional male occupations are generally more prestigious and better paid.
- ☆ Ensure that all income generation programs target women and men on an equal basis and that at least 50% of micro-credit loans are disbursed to women. Recognize that in the context of displacement, women are often the primary source of income for their families.

### Leadership

- ☆ Nurture women's roles in community leadership and decision-making by advocating for 50% female participation in all leadership structures and implementing women's leadership training and empowerment programs to ensure that their participation is meaningful.

### Male involvement

- ☆ Encourage 50% male participation in sexual and gender-based violence committees and encourage active male participation in reproductive health and HIV/AIDS programs. Likewise, ensure that gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS awareness activities target both men and women.
- ☆ Engage men in peer counseling programs targeting male perpetrators of domestic violence.
- ☆ Involve men and boys in childcare, daycare and preschool activities and programs and include men as active partners in foster care programs.
- ☆ Involve both men and women in the protection of women and children through neighborhood watches, refugee security patrols and accompaniment patrols with women and girls during firewood collection.

### Documentation

- ☆ Collect sex- and age-disaggregated participant data on all programs and services—education, health, vocational training, etc.—to ensure equal access and participation.
- ☆ Ensure that all refugees have individual identity documents, that husbands and wives are both included on ration cards and that food rations are distributed to women.

### Staffing

- ☆ Bolster the recruitment and hiring of female field and management staff with the aim of achieving gender parity. Recruit male staff for non-traditional positions such as community services officers, preschool teachers and nurses.

### Violence against women

- ☆ Advance policies of zero tolerance for incidents of gender-based violence and sexual harassment. Ensure that there are safe, accessible confidential complaints and reporting mechanisms; that investigations are conducted in a professional, timely fashion; and that survivors are provided the full range of health, legal, assistance and psycho-social support.

## What It Means To Be A Man

Views about what it means to be a man and a woman are rooted in children's earliest experiences and memories. The birthright or privilege that comes with being born male begins early, with differential child-rearing strategies and parental expectations. Men and boys are socialized to be competitive, aggressive and dominant and pressured to follow rules about how a man should think, feel and act.

Boys and men, however, suffer as a result of current male gender roles and gender inequality. Men and boys are under considerable pressure to stick to their gender roles and norms of masculinity, which make it difficult to be different. Failure to live up to agreed upon male norms can result in personal insecurities, internal conflict, emotional tension, isolation and aggression. Shaky "masculine credentials" can lead to self-doubt, ridicule and social exclusion.

When traditional means of acquiring male status, such as desired employment, are unavailable, men will assert their masculinity in other ways—through violence, vandalism and risk-taking behaviors such as promiscuity, unprotected sex and drug and alcohol abuse. Conflict settings are often especially difficult for men because their traditional roles as providers and protectors of their families are disrupted and the resulting frustration and humiliation often lead to increases in risk-taking behaviors and domestic violence.

Conformity to narrow definitions of manhood—those that promote male roles as strong, fearless, aggressive breadwinners—impose a terrible burden on men, resulting in disengaged fathers, high levels of stress, poor health, overwork and a lack of emotional responsiveness.

In a gender-equal world there are clear benefits for men—less risk in experiencing and expressing the full range of human emotions; the ability to enjoy more intimate, trusting and respectful relations with women and other men; opportunities for sharing the care and contributing to the growth and development of children; fuller, more balanced work and home lives; a richer personal life; and the opportunity to be a more rounded, complete human being.

For a copy of the report, **Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality, A Resource Packet**, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, September 2005, go to [http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/masc\\_res.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/masc_res.pdf)

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), *Gender and Food Security in Agriculture* (1995),

<http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/agri-e.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Oxfam Great Britain's *Generation Why*, Gender Quiz, [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/generationwhy/do\\_something/campaigns/healthandeducation/quiz/index.htm](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/generationwhy/do_something/campaigns/healthandeducation/quiz/index.htm).

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization, Fact Sheet no. 241, June 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Kelly, L. and Regan, L., *Violence against Women: a briefing document on international issues and responses*, British Council, pp. 8 & 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, *Case study on the Role of Women in Rural Transport* (1994).

<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization, *Evaluation of the Costs and Benefits of Water and Sanitation Improvements at the Global Level* (2004), [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/wsh0404/en/](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/wsh0404/en/)

<sup>12</sup> WaterAid, *Gender aspects of water and sanitation*, [www.wateraid.org](http://www.wateraid.org)

<sup>13</sup> *Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework: Baseline definitions of key concepts and terms*, UNESCO, April 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Tucker-Ladd, Clayton E., *Psychological Self-Help*, Chapter 9: *Society Establishes Gender Roles for Men and Women*, p. 100, published online at: [www.psychologicalselfhelp.org](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org)